IDENTITY RE/CONSTRUCTION
OF CROSS-CULTURAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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Abstract

This research explores the identity reconstruction of graduate students in additional language (AL) contexts. It addresses not only the issue of language proficiency in self-representation, but also more complicated factors that influence self-positioning and perceived social positioning in an additional culture, as well as ways of establishing the self in academic writing. The research is grounded in language learning theories in second language education and identity theories in linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies. Eleven graduate students participated in the study, among whom five were international students at a Chinese university and six were Chinese students at a Canadian university. Data were drawn from a questionnaire, writing samples, interviews, and email correspondence. Commonalities and divergences were found between groups and within groups. I developed a framework of writer identity for AL graduate students prior to the study and modified it in the discussion. Based on the data, I elaborated on the connections of personal identity and writer identity, and conceptualized for AL speakers a mediated space incorporating home culture and host culture but going beyond the overlap of the two, as well as a mediated self that is achieved through negotiation with the available options in their respective social context.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This research project addresses four key concepts: language, culture, identity, and writing, with identity being the primary one. I examine the phenomenon of additional language academic writers studying in an additional culture, and how their migrating experiences, crossing from one culture to another, affect their personal and writer identities. I start this introduction with some questions about identity, followed with some narratives that are important to this research. Then, I provide a rationale for the research and my research questions. Finally, I outline briefly the structure of the thesis.

Questions about Identity

Identity is an important issue. However, it is not equally important for everyone, nor is it important at every time in every place. Then why is identity important? When and where does identity become an issue? And who is more concerned with identity?

The answer to the first question seems apparent. According to social identity theory, “individuals need a firm sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of well-being. … simply being a member of a group provides individuals with a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive self-concept” (Phinney, 1990, p. 501). De Vos (1995) also asserted that, from a psychological perspective, defining oneself in social terms simply meets the basic human needs to belong and to survive; failure to remain in one’s group leads to negative feelings of oneself. The quest for identity is particularly important to members of a marginalized group that is poorly represented or discriminated against. Finding a way to construct or reconstruct a more positive identity is important to the well-being of the individual.
To answer the second question, identity is less likely to become an important issue in a homogeneous, stable society in which the sense of self is relatively uncomplicated and individuals’ instrumental goals and expressive needs are inseparable. In such a culture, people’s sense of belonging and social meaning in the past, present, and future life are defined more or less unproblematically. However, where there is conflict or difference, there is also an identity issue. In a flexible society during a mobile era, identity is a dynamic, changing concept; whenever and wherever there are changes, identity becomes a concern.

After answering the first two questions, the answer to the third is almost self-evident. Those who are more concerned with identity are often the marginalized individuals in a society dominated by the majority, a society in which they have to struggle to earn a membership that is not guaranteed. In this research, I focus on the migrating bilingual/multilingual, bicultural/multicultural individuals in academic institutions. It is an issue for them as to whether they should retain their original identities or establish new ones, or to construct hybrid identities that seemingly resolve all the problems.

**My Journey to This Inquiry**

My interest in identity issues is closely related to my personal experiences in the past seven years. Because of the “identity puzzles” I have experienced in England and Canada, I started to pay attention to and reflect on the connections of identity, language, and culture (Li, 2006).

Before I left China, it never occurred to me that identity would become an issue for me. I was certain of my different roles at home and work. My students never challenged my authoritativeness in my classrooms, and I never doubted my status as an English instructor who had power over my students. My visit to England during 2000-2001 was mind-blowing in the
sense that I was confronted with many questions regarding my identity: why I was from Mainland China instead of Hong Kong or Japan as some people I encountered assumed; how I got my “American” accent but was not from, and surprisingly to them, never even visited, the United States; to mention just a few. My confidence in my ethnic, cultural, and social identities started to collapse.

My graduate studies in Canada since 2001 have presented me with more puzzles; I was constantly juggling and struggling amongst different identities—graduate student, non-native speaker of English, writing tutor, and course instructor, for instance. Issues around my accent, my flawed language, my ethnicity, my skin color, and my different perceptions of learning and teaching, among others, were all forces pushing me to question who and what I was. I had students dubious about my credibility being a writing tutor upon seeing me; I was warned of the possible problems with me being a non-native-speaker at my job interview for an international EFL (English-as-a-foreign-language) teacher training program because the trainee teachers might expect to see pure native-speaker instructors; I felt powerless in my TESL (teaching English as a second language) methodology teaching simply because I was not confident of my colloquial English. Some of the people I encountered, be they native-speakers or not, viewed me through colored lenses; and I viewed myself through a colored lens as well. These experiences were good food for thought; my article Identity Puzzles (2006), a theoretical discussion on language and identity based on my personal narrative, is the product of my reflections.

In addition, my previous research on second language writing (Li, 2003; Li & Wang, 2004; Li, 2007b) led me to explore writer identity in second or additional language contexts. I felt deeply for the participants in my studies, who were very confused about the expectations of their ESL (English-as-a-second-language) teachers which were different from what they had been taught at home, about the different beliefs pertaining to teaching and learning at home and abroad,
about the varied genres and conventions in academic writing; and about how to present a
desirable voice in their English writing.

I feel that I have been drawn to this research by a natural force all the way along the path
of my life. I can see myself mirrored in the research—I am one of the “souls in exile” (Li, 2007a)
who is struggling with languages and identities in my border-crossing experiences, but is aiming
at becoming a “global soul” (Iyer, 2000; Li, 2007a) who feels at home everywhere in any
language. Some bilingual or multilingual literary writers reflected on the tears and cheers,
dilemmas and decisions regarding the changes of their languages and identities, such as Djebar
to name a few. However, student academic writers rarely articulate the puzzles and struggles they
have to deal with in their cross-cultural educational endeavors. I feel an urge to hear what they
have to say and would like more people to hear their voices.

The following are several true stories or incidences that intrigued me before and during
this research. They are good illustrations of why I started to investigate language, culture and
identity, and ended up undertaking this research project.

Over six years ago on an informal occasion at a university in England, a student from
Cardiff tried to teach a group of international students and visitors some simple Welsh
expressions. She finished her teaching by saying, proudly, “We are a nation, because we have our
own language. We were conquered, but we are a nation.” I was struck by her sense of pride in her
native language and her awareness of a language representing a people.

Four years ago, I interviewed a Chinese first year student who struggled with her
academic writing. She said “How can I criticize [the views of] these famous people?” I realized
that critiquing the works of people of higher status or better language competence was a
challenge to an ESL student like her, not only because she was not confident about her language,
but also because she hesitated in confronting authorities and their views, whether in person or not. So, why did she think she could not criticize the ideas of established scholars? And how could she cope with an academic culture that was different from one in her home country?

Three years ago, I talked with a faculty member at a Canadian university who was a non-native speaker of English. She said, “I don’t have my own voice in writing. I just report my research findings in the way others do, there’s no such thing as identity.” Did she mean that writers did not have a voice when writing academic papers in plain, technical language? Or did she mean that writing in such a way was not her real voice? In other words, did she not exhibit a real self in writing but rather chose a mask to disguise her real self that she was uncomfortable exposing to people?

Drawn from the interview data for this dissertation, two students from the same “individualistic” country made different comments about their written assignments while studying in China. One could not care less about the possible responses of the reader, namely, the course instructor. “I’m not going to change my perspectives, my opinion is based on who my audience is. My opinion is still mine, whether they agree with it or not, I am not going to alter my arguments for that.” The other felt frustrated with the evaluation of the reader. “I do have a couple of concerns regarding the written assignments. Given the fact that they can all be conducted in English, I still feel rather uncomfortable about the grading criteria.” Did the first student care too little about the reader’s response and the second care too much? Did their views resemble or differ from each other about writing in an additional culture? Did the second student’s complaint imply an attempt to conform?

The Chinese students studying in Canada also articulated thought-provoking points, some aligned with the commonly agreed cultural norms while others defied cultural stereotypes. Here is an example of the latter. In terms of personal identity, a middle-aged male student claimed triple
identities: Canadian, Chinese, and Christian because of his Canadian citizenship, Chinese cultural heritage, and religious belief. He felt settled with his current status. However, a young female student asserted that “I’m the double minority here,” because she was an international student and a visible minority. Her statement indicated loneliness at school and in social activities despite her effort to merge in the local community. Yet another student in his early twenties declared that “I’m a Chinese, and will be Chinese all this life.” Do these students share more in common or less in their views of the self? How and why are they similar or different? What will be the result if we compare them with the two American students mentioned above?

I have probably told more than enough stories for the beginning of this thesis, but they are here for good reasons. They serve as an appetizer for the reader, and a brief illustration of the pervasiveness of the four key concepts in our life, and particularly in the lives of people traversing linguistic and cultural borders.

**Concepts Used in This Thesis**

In this research, the two major languages under investigation are English and Chinese while other languages are mentioned either in the literature or as the first or additional languages of the participants that I interviewed. I follow the convention of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) in the literature review, but adapt it to English-as-an-additional language (EAL) in my own study to avoid the inaccurate connotation of the word ‘second’, and to stress the multi-competence of the students who are able to absorb knowledge from two or more cultures and take advantage of the multiple languages in their command. For the same consideration, I coined the term Chinese-as-an-additional-language (CAL) and sometimes just additional language (AL). While I confine my exploration of writing to written academic texts produced by students in higher learning institutions, I may refer to non-academic texts in the literature occasionally.
Now I turn to the second key concept, culture. Culture is an ambiguous concept with various definitions and understandings. For the purpose of this thesis, I adopt the definition of culture by Kramsch (1998):

membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common social imaginings. Even when they have left that community, its members may retain, wherever they are, a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting. These standards are what is generally called their ‘culture’. (p.10)

As the prime key concept, identity exhibits multiple aspects and multiple definitions. Identity can mean the cultural values or perspectives an individual most strongly relates to, such as a Chinese identity or a Canadian identity. In Thornborrow’s (1999) view, identity is multifaceted; it is something we constantly build and negotiate through interaction with others all our lives. For a psychologist, personal identity usually refers to an individual’s self-image or sense of self. According to the sociologist Goffman (1963), personal identity is related to “the assumption that the individual can be differentiated from all others” and around this means of differentiation, a single continuous record of social facts and other biographical details can be attached and entangled; personal identity plays “a structured, routine, standardized role in social organization” (p. 57). In this thesis, I integrate these definitions and understand identity as an individual’s sense of self and cultural affiliation; it is multifaceted and evolving as the individual switches roles at different times on different occasions in interaction with others. A more comprehensive understanding and explanation of the concept can be found in Chapter 3.

Other frequently articulated concepts important to this research include cultural identity, social identity, ethnic identity, and linguistic identity, as well as the varied notions of self. I do not linger on them at length but I introduce them briefly in Chapter 3 focusing on their relationships to writer identity. Concepts such as gender identity and sexual identity are important,
but they are not the immediate concern of this study and are not discussed. The concept of writer identity is critical to this research; it reflects the multiple identities (e.g., ethnic identity, cultural identity, personal identity, etc.) of a person in written texts. The concept is elaborated in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Learner identity and student identity are treated as synonyms in my study and confined to the group who study in formal instructional contexts such as universities.

**Rationales and Research Questions**


Although studies on writer identity have already addressed some aspects of the ESL writer identity, such as the struggles and confusions in the process of reconstructing a new identity (Cadman, 1997; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Shen, 1989), there exists insufficient investigation of the complex identities of particular groups, such as EAL graduate students from China in Canadian universities, and their processes of identity re/construction. A greater inadequacy lies in the study of English-speaking or Western students working in a degree program in an Eastern linguistic, cultural context such as China. Researchers have not paid attention to the commonalities and divergences between the two groups of internationally migrating students learning in their additional language as well as their process of identity.
The questions that are addressed in this study are:

1. What are the factors influencing AL students’ identities, that is, their self-positioning and their perceived social positioning, in an additional (academic) culture, and how do they position themselves?

2. How do they manage the sense of belonging or not belonging in the additional culture?

3. What are the factors influencing their writer identity, that is, their self-representation and ways of expressing ideas in academic writing, and how do they do this?

4. What are the commonalities and divergences among these students in their identity re/construction in writing?

The study contributes to the research in additional language education and identity construction in a foreign culture. First, research in identity issues mostly focuses on the disadvantaged or minority groups in Western countries. Seldom have researchers looked at the issue from the reverse point of view; that is, examining the identity of Western students in an Eastern developing country. However, with globalization and the boost in the Asian economy, more and more Western students are attracted to study in a country like China for either personal interests or professional considerations. This growing population is forming a unique culture worthy of investigation. Second, research in second language education is usually directed at the more practical aspects of ESL learning such as writing conventions, learning strategies and so on. It is only recently that researchers began to look at the complex identity construction in an ESL context. How international graduate students navigate their sense of the self in academic texts in order to achieve success in the host culture is under-investigated. By examining and comparing
both groups of graduate students in China and Canada, I find a new path towards understanding the complex identity formation of additional language writers and the social, educational implications derived from the formation. Third, current research on ESL writer identity is limited in that it depends largely on Clark and Ivanič’s (1997) theoretical framework, which is insightful but does not fit very well into the diversified additional language writing. I have developed a model of AL writer identity encompassing the complexity and multi-facets of the self in AL academic writing, which I anticipate will add a new perspective to the research in AL writing.

A Road Map to This Thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters. In addition to this preceding introduction, Chapter 2 presents the existing literature on cultural influence in language learning and in writing in particular. It also introduces studies on second language writing, highlighting critical and controversial issues around the author’s voice and authorial presence in writing. Following this is the rationale for my study; that is, to address the gap in current research regarding additional language writer identity. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive account of identity theories in sociology, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics that contributes to my understanding and my formulations of the concept. Themes discussed include self and society, stigmatized identity, identity and discourse, and identity and writing. My own framework of AL writer identity which developed out of the literature and theories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 is also presented.

Chapter 4 incorporates the methodological conceptualization of this research and specific methods in soliciting participants, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 5 constitutes the first half of the data presentation. It includes data from the five participants studying at a Chinese university. I further divide them into two groups: two American students writing in their first language, and three international students writing in their additional language, be it English or
Chapter 6 presents the other half of the data on the six Chinese graduate students studying at a Canadian university. They all came from Mainland China originally and had to complete their academic work in English.

Chapter 7 discusses the major themes which emerged from the data, including personal identity in an additional culture, and writer identity in additional language and additional culture. The concepts of proximity of self to intimate language, mediated space, and mediated self will be introduced and elaborated. Chapter 8 is a further extension of the themes arising out of this study. I re-examine the issues of language, culture, and identity from a critical perspective, and revisit the theoretical framework I developed earlier. I provide answers to my research questions, and offer implications for further research and for additional language education.
Chapter 2

Second Language Learning and Identity in Writing

In this chapter, I review existing literature that has had significant influence on my original thoughts and design of this research study. I start from examining culture in second language learning contexts, a strand of research that historically focused on cultural differences, cultural stereotypes, and cultural beliefs in second language learning. Then I look at the trend of cultural integration in second language settings, and elaborate on the issues of interculture and cultural “third place” (Kramsch, 1993). Next is the other central point in this research, identity in second language learning and writing. I explore the arguable exhibition of authorial presence in text and the complex process of identity re/construction in a second culture. This body of research also starts with the cultural differences in authorial presence and proceeds with multiplicity of identities in writing. Finally, I put the writer identity in additional language academic writing into the spotlight, which is an important focus of this study.

I follow the conventional use of the term “second language” in treating the literature before and during the 1990s. At some point during the decade, the term “additional language” began to appear in publications in the field (e.g., Cameron, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Faltis & Hudelson, 1994; Fishman, 1992; Levine, 1993); I therefore shift to this term accordingly. I adopt this term in my research for the positive connotations of the word “additional” as described above.

**Culture in Second Language Learning Contexts**

Culture is a key concept in second language research. Lado (1964) maintained that language is both “a component of culture and a central network through which the other
components are expressed” (p. 23). The special relationship between language and culture determines the effect of culture on second language learning. Lantolf (1999) noted that study on second culture acquisition deserves continuous attention in order to enhance cultural awareness and facilitate second language learning.

The following two subsections represent my journey exploring the cultural factors in second language learning settings. I started from looking at native cultural influence on second language learning, and arrived at the place which Kramsch (1993) called “the third place,” a place of cultural integration.

**Cultural Influence on Second Language Learning**

Research on the relationship between language and culture adopted a modernist view during most of the 20th century. The pervasive influence of culture on language learning, thought patterns and rhetorical styles has been widely acknowledged (e.g., Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Hinkel, 1999; Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Lado, 1957, 1964; Sapir, 1949; Whorf, 1956), although the extent is debatable. Robert Lado was one of the first linguists to suggest the transferability of native language and culture in second language contexts. He claimed that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of the forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture—both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives. (1957, p. 2)

Lado (1964) noted that when the native culture experience is compatible to that of the target culture, it facilitates learning; when they are incommensurate, interference occurs.
Other earlier groundbreaking theories include the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Kaplan’s cultural thought patterns. Sapir and Whorf were anthropologists, but their hypothesis led to heated debates in the field of linguistics. They argued that different cultures interpret the world differently; their languages encode these differences and reflect their perceptions of reality. At the same time, the language people use profoundly affects their thought and world views (Sapir, 1949; Whorf, 1956). These hypotheses on the broad area of language learning were transferred into the specific application of literacy development by Kaplan. Kaplan (1966; 1987) suggested that there are preferred thought patterns inherent to specific cultures, and they are related to rhetorical features of written texts. For example, a sharp contrast is found between expository writing by Eastern Asian students and that by Western students. The former write circularly while the latter write linearly. Kaplan’s theory of cultural thought patterns has had profound influence on contrastive linguistics ever since.

Both the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Kaplan’s cultural thought patterns on the one hand have been problematized and severely criticized for their deterministic stance and Anglo-Eurocentric world view while on the other hand have attracted followers and provided some insights into language research. As examples of the latter, Mohan and Lo (1985) studied Chinese ESL students’ essays at the syntactical level and explained that the negative transfer in the students’ writing was attributable to the interference of the cultural-specific rhetorical organization of the students’ native language. At the semantic and pragmatic levels, González, Chen, and Sanchez (2001) found that Chinese EFL (English-as-a-foreign-language) writers employed Chinese rhetorical thinking patterns in format and style and did not follow the cultural conventions of the English language in their writing. However, these studies failed to see language learning as evolving and progressing. Learners at earlier stages of learning may count more on their first language and thought patterns in writing, the degree of transfer may be
reduced when the learner’s language skills improve over time. There is a need to view the
influence of first language and culture in second language learning from a developmental
perspective.

Other studies have demonstrated that the diversity of language and culture across national
and ethnic groupings can be attributed to historical, philosophical, and social elements particular
to that group. For example, Carson (1992) asserted that the philosophical foundation of Chinese
education is a Confucian focus on self-improvement. “Confucius was more concerned with
presenting moral precepts than with advocating a method of critical thinking” (p. 43); therefore,
students in China are encouraged to express what is socially shared instead of what is personal
and individual. Basic societal values such as patriotism, group harmony, and respect for authority
are reflected in school education and in students’ literacy development. Hinkel (1999) indicated
that advanced and trained L2 (second-language) learners from cultures influenced by Confucian,
Taoist, and Buddhist precepts employed the rhetorical objectivity devices and markers common
to the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writing traditions, which are beyond the expectations of
Western educators in Anglo-American academic settings. This position is supported in the field
of psychology by Nisbett and his colleagues (2001), who found, through laboratory experiments,
that people raised in different cultures think in different ways. East Asians tend to think more
“holistically,” showing the strong influence of Taoist thought, in which complexity and
dialectical argument are appreciated. On the other hand, Westerners are more “analytic” in their
thinking, which aligns with the ancient Greek tradition of adversarial debate, in which formal
logical argument and analytic deduction are common tools.

Studies on cultural differences from historical, social, and philosophical perspectives cast
light on discussions of critical thinking and text ownership. Researchers have undertaken
comparative studies to investigate the differences in Confucian and Socratic ideologies that
influence contemporary thinking and writing. Tweed and Lehman (2002) compared and contrasted ideals for learning that are culturally more Chinese (Confucian) with those that are culturally more Western (Socratic) in modern postsecondary contexts. They maintained that “Socrates tended to question his own and others’ beliefs, evaluated others’ knowledge, esteemed self-generated knowledge, began teaching by implanting doubt, and sought knowledge for which he had good reasons” (p.90); whereas “Confucius was humanistic and sought to achieve societal harmony by encouraging virtuous activity” (p.89). Tweed and Lehman stressed the division of the two cultures, yet they used soft terms such as “culturally more Western” and “culturally more Eastern.” Ballard and Clanchy (1991), however, demonstrated a more dichotomous view by their terminologies. They characterized East Asian education as “reproductive,” which is memory- and imitation-based; and Western education as “analytical,” which encourages critical thinking and questioning. As a result, Eastern teachers strive to impart “correct” answers to students while most Western educators endeavor to initiate the “originality” of students. These culturally preferred approaches to learning are often most evident when written assignments are involved. Ballard and Clanchy attributed the stereotype of the “plagiarizing overseas students” to “the Asian duty to follow the words of past authorities and to reproduce the learning of acclaimed scholars” (p.31).

Relevant views regarding writing will be presented in a later section on identity in second/additional language writing. What I want to point out here is that such research on the dichotomous characteristics of cultures, insightful as it is in promoting cross-cultural understanding, is limited in conceptualizing the nature of second language learning, which expands worldviews and empowers individuals through learning the language. Labeling different cultures’ approaches by using singular qualities such as “analytical” or “reproductive” only partially explains the phenomenon. A non-stereotypical, non-binary point of view needs to be
introduced in understanding the language-culture relationship and the sense of the self in the second language context and text.

**Cultural Integration in Second Language Context**

Another strand in the study of language and culture is more concerned with the interaction rather than the causality between the two. These researchers set off from the additive effect of language learning, asserting that learning a second language involves learning and being assimilated into a second culture and acquiring a second or new identity (e.g., Brown, 1986; Byram, 1989; Shen, 1989). They pass through the enriched land of language learning and arrive at the negotiated common ground called *the third place*, where learners not only integrate their first and second cultures, but also incorporate into their newly-created identities their multiple cultures, their peers’ multiple cultures, as well as the multiple cultures of the new learning context (Kramsch, 1993; Ilieva, 2001; Li & Girvan, 2004). This is a less dichotomous and stereotyping conceptualization of second language learning.

Awareness of language learners as cultural beings with cultural identities is an important concept in second language classrooms. Learners need to “recognize themselves as the product of their own cultures in order to be willing to accept other cultures non-judgmentally” (Valdes, 1986, p. vii). However, it is also misleading to think that learners carry “cultural baggage” that they can leave outside the classroom; they are rather “an embodiment of the culture they share with others” (Byram, 1989, p. 111).

To aid learners in turning the trauma of learning a second language into a rewarding experience, teachers are therefore faced with a demanding task of 1) being the “knower” of the target language and culture (Archer, 1986); 2) familiarizing themselves with the specific traits of other cultures; and 3) gaining insights on pedagogical implications of such knowledge (Valdes,
1986). They are encouraged to “talk about cultural relativism as well as the universality of certain components shared by different cultures,” and “guide cultural discussions so that they do not become judgmental and lead to conclusions that some cultures are superior or inferior” (Dunnett, Dubin, & Lezberg, 1986, p. 158).

Byram (1989) cautioned about the possibility of cultural assimilation in teaching culture. He noted that the study of culture has two interdependent purposes in second language learning: “to facilitate learners’ use of language and to help learners apprehend the concept of cultural ‘otherness’” (p. 57). To achieve such purposes, it is suggested that teachers do not attempt to assimilate or replace learners’ old way of representation, but rather, help them develop new schemata, which would represent “an alternative” to old schemata (p. 114).

Such treatment of the target culture as an addition to the old culture taught by expert teachers is seen as problematic by some researchers, for it implies that 1) culture can be taught by “presenting certainties, fixed knowable items, and concrete answers to questions” (Ilieva, 2001, p. 5); 2) teachers are reliable in transmitting the cultural information to the students; and 3) the two cultures are two different, if not dichotomous, entities of knowledge.

In the first place, the way of approaching culture as static, teachable knowledge may result in stereotyping cultures and lead students to some problematically generalized features of cultures (Ilieva, 2001; Kramsch, 1993). Secondly, with regard to the notion of culture teaching, it is difficult to not doubt the reliability and authoritativeness of the “expert” teachers and the cultural knowledge they provide, considering the fact that teachers are also cultural beings, “culturally constrained and motivated” (Poole, 1992, p. 611), carrying their perceptions of the world as a result of their previous education and life experiences (Johnson, 1995). Instead of teachers imposing their constrained worldviews on learners, Ilieva (2001) calls for the conceptualization of cultural exploration as an effective approach to understanding and
interpreting learners’ cultures and the target culture, so that learners are able to “develop their own voice” in the new environment (p. 8). This approach may aid learners, and maybe even teachers, to avoid the limitations of the third problem, that is, viewing cultures as dichotomous, unrelated entities.

Kramsch (1993) noted that for culturally displaced individuals who have grown up in one culture but have emigrated to another, their sense of belonging is a complex feeling of forever “betwixt and between” (p. 234). In other words, they no longer feel at home in their first culture, nor do they feel belonging to the host culture. She pointed out the deceptive nature of the saying “being on the fence” (p. 234), which seems to suggest only two dichotomous cultures with a boundary in the middle to separate them. She argued:

But experiencing the boundary means discovering that each of these cultures is much less monolithic than was originally perceived; each includes a myriad of potential changes… Thus we have to view the boundaries not as an actual event but, rather, as a state of mind, as a positioning of the learner at the intersection of multiple social roles and individual choices. (p. 234)

Kramsch called this intersection the space “between and beyond the social order of their native culture and that of the target culture” (p. 238), it is a culture “of a third kind” (p. 235). Language learners get to this place through a dialectical process, rather than an additive process. In the light of Kramsch’s conceptualization of interculturality, Li and Girvan (2004) undertook an empirical study within an ESL class at a Canadian university to explore the influence of first culture and the formation of interculture in the ESL context. Through observations of the class dynamics and interviews with the teacher and students, they showed the existence, creation, and fluidity of the sphere of interculturality (Kramsch, 1993) in the ESL classroom. They argued that
the nature of interculture is fluid and flexible, defying unified methodological approaches to
teaching, because

truly learning an additional language necessitates not only learning culture, but also
creating culture: a far more dynamic and rich process. Such a pedagogical shift may
require the widening of attitudes on the part of learners, teachers, and so-called target
communities. The whole concept of target could be re-imagined as the third place-- the
sphere of interculturality -- rather than referring to the constraints of the so-called native
group. This conception of the goal of language-teaching and learning would not only take
away the impossible and irrelevant burden of becoming “native”, but it would
acknowledge the language learner as a multicompetent (Cook, 1992) individual who has
the potential to be more than simply the sum of two cultures. (Li & Girvan, 2004, p. 13)

Li and Girvan’s conceptualization of creating culture in the language classroom not only
reinforces Kramsch and Ilieva’s arguments of exploring the multiplicities of culture, but also
suggests a new way of viewing culture as fluid and evolving as learners and the teacher negotiate
a common ground in each of these cross-cultural encounters.

**Identity in Second/Additional Language Writing**

The issue of identity started to draw the attention of researchers in the field of second
language writing about two decades ago. One of the first articles that brought up the issue was
written by an ESL writer, Shen (1989), who reflected on the ideological and logical changes he
had experienced in presenting the self in writing when he learned to write academic texts in an
American university in which the requirements for the authorial presence in the text are
significantly different than in his native Chinese culture. A few years later, more discussions of
ESL writer identity emerged. Similar to Shen’s personal account, Gale (1994) recounted her
experiences of “moving between two cultures, two languages, and two peoples”, in search for “a larger space and a better chance for ‘self’ to develop” (p. 461). The difference between them lies in that Shen focused on the theoretical exploration of cultural differences whereas Gale focused on the political statements behind personal experiences, which reduced the academic value of her article to this research.

Beyond the above-mentioned personal reflections, empirical studies on the identity of ESL writers blossomed. For example, Casanave (1992) told the story of a mature Hispanic student who experienced painful disciplinary acculturation but had to leave her doctoral program in sociology at an American university because she was not able to live with the identity represented by her English academic writing. Fox (1994) offered narratives of some ESL graduate students who experienced puzzles and struggles in an American university when they were confronted with different writing conventions in English than in their first language. Ivanič (1994) discussed the discoursal construction of writer identity of a (black) student writer at a British university. She contended that the writer identity emerging from the text is the responsibility of three parties: the writer, the reader, and the socio-cultural context that supports a certain discourse.

Following these articles, interest in language and identity has been growing quickly in the field of applied linguistics. This trend can be reflected by the number of journals with special issues on the topic, such as two special issues of Linguistics and Education on discourse, identity, and power in 1996; a special issue of Language and Education on the construction of educational identity in 1996; a special issue of TESOL Quarterly on language and identity in 1997; and a special issue of Journal of Second Language Writing on voice in second language writing in 2001.

Among this body of research are two strands that I will elaborate below: one focuses on cultural differences and how they affect the exhibition of self in second language writing; the
other stresses the multiple factors complicating second language writing and the multiple components of writer identity in second language contexts.

Identity in ESL Writing: Focusing on Differences

In the domain of ESL writing, the strand discussing the author’s voice and authorial presence in the text was initially dominated by investigations of cultural and ideological differences and the specific manifestations of these differences, such as text borrowing, the use of the first person pronoun “I,” and the author’s voice in texts.

Ballard and Clanchy’s (1991) point of view regarding text borrowing, as I mentioned in a previous section, is shared by other researchers who have recognized that the use of authority and sources may carry different meanings across cultures. Wang (1991, as cited in González, et al., 2001) explained that Chinese education stresses the preservation of the oral culture by requiring students to memorize terms and set phrases from classical sources such as poetry, novels, and fables. These are highly valued “gems” of Chinese culture, and people capable of using them are considered well-educated and enjoy high social prestige. Pennycook (1994a), in response to a research article on plagiarism by Deckert (1993), argued that the issue of plagiarism needs to be understood relative to a number of contexts, among which are the context of Western academic concepts of authorship and ownership, and the context of students’ cultural and educational backgrounds. He objected to the dismissive attitude toward Chinese practices of learning and advocated alternative scholarly communication. In line with Pennycook, Scollon (1995) contended that “the traditional view of plagiarism constitutes … an ideological position which privileges a concept of the person established within the European Enlightenment and, … as such obscures our understanding of the construction of identity in intercultural discourse” (p. 3). Pennycook (1996) further analyzed the complexities of text, ownership, memory, and plagiarism,
as well as the cultural and historical development of the Western and Eastern understanding of ownership and creativity, which differ in significant ways. He suggested that the ways Western educators approach the supposed plagiarism in their ESL students’ writing are “pedagogically unsound and intellectually arrogant” (p. 227). Currie’s (1998) empirical study of an ESL writer provided an example for this position. She appealed for awareness of varying cultural conceptions of authorship, authority, and plagiarism among university colleagues so that “when confronted with ‘apparent plagiarism,’ they will be better equipped to address it from a perspective of intercultural understanding” (p. 15).

First person pronouns are considered the most visible manifestation of a writer’s presence in a text, particularly the singular form “I” to indicate singular authorship. The author’s comfort level of using it indexes the kind of identity s/he intends to create in the text. However, this seems problematic to ESL writers from divergent cultures. Shen (1989) explained that in Chinese culture, “I” is always subordinated to “we” because the former presents too obvious and boastful a self, and is often associated with “individualism,” which is almost a synonym for selfishness in his home country. For Shen to be truly himself in writing did not mean that he could be his Chinese self, but involved a process of redefining himself, a process of putting aside “an ideology of collectivism” and adopting “the values of individualism” (p. 461). He distinguished his two selves in writing—in English, he wrote through and with a new identity that complied with the rules of English composition; in Chinese, he resumed his old identity. He concluded that his process of learning to write in English is a process of struggles, confusions, and reconciliation, a process of “creating and defining a new identity and balancing it with the old identity” (p. 466).

Hyland (2002a) endorsed Shen’s (1989) position through a large scale mixed method study. He examined the use of first person pronouns in 64 Hong Kong undergraduate theses in eight disciplines: Information Systems, Economics, Business Studies, Public and Social
Administration, Social Sciences, TESL, Mechanical Engineering, and Biology. The result showed a significant underuse of authorial reference and avoidance of first person pronouns in making arguments. He also compared these students’ theses with 240 published articles in the eight fields, finding that professional writers were four times more likely to use first person pronouns than student writers, with soft disciplines having a higher figure than hard ones. While expert writers were more willing to claim a solid authorial presence by using singular forms of the pronoun, many of these students chose “we” and “our” instead of “I” and “my” when they had to use first person pronoun, to “seek the rhetorical distance that the plural meaning allows” (p. 1108). He lamented that ESL writers’ underuse of first person pronouns in their academic writing was the result of the uncomfortable feelings caused by the connotations of authority these pronouns imply, “a product of a culturally and socially constructed view of the self which makes assertion difficult” (p. 1111).

Because of different modes of critical thinking and different views of text ownership, authorial presence in the text becomes another contested issue. Researchers began to examine the reasons for different ways of presenting the author’s voice and demonstrating the author’s presence and authority in texts. Two culturally based beliefs about writing are particularly spotlighted: individualism and voice in texts. Harris (1997) offered that “our culture speaks to us through many competing voices” (p. 34), such as those of home, school, nation, individualism and community. A writer’s voice comes out of the stances the writer takes towards these social codes and voices. Prior (2001) also argued that a writer’s voice is personal and social simultaneously, reflecting the situated production of the writer and the social formations of the society with which the writer affiliates. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) attributed the fundamental differences between Eastern and Western culture in voice, critical thinking, and textual ownership to the diverse perceptions of individualism, which is highly valued in Western
culture but not in Eastern culture. In East Asian countries, a writer’s “written voice that centrally assumes the expression of a ‘unique inner self’ may be problematic” for students from these cultures (p.51). In an academic setting where independent study and questioning are encouraged, L2 writers from more “interdependent orientated cultural backgrounds” are often accused of being uncritical in their thinking and writing. As far as textual ownership is concerned, Western educators who see instances of plagiarism as “violations of honor and morals” find it hard to tolerate writings produced by students from these cultures, in which the task of writing is not so much to “present an original, strong, individual self, but to show how much they have internalized of the transmittable traditions of their cultures” (p.63).

Their discussion speaks of a significant part of the truth though it still has a tendency to stereotype cultural norms. In my point of view, all the transmittable traditions of a culture were based on original, individual thoughts, and new traditions are formed through the strategic expression of original, individual thoughts. Therefore, it is the issue of different approaches to presenting an original, individual self by using and learning to use the strategies that conform to the conventions in the culture. Critical thinking and individualism are not non-existent in China; they are exhibited in different forms. In this sense, Carson’s (1992) brief comment is helpful that individualism in Chinese society is possible “if it doesn’t threaten shared acceptance of order and responsibility, and if it is directed to serve the public good and follow socially-approved channels” (p. 44), although her analysis was based on pre-1990s context and was overall deterministic. In today’s China, with cultural integration and educational reforms, the meaning of individualism and critical thinking can be substantially different from decades ago.

The above-mentioned studies point to the fact that the author’s cultural beliefs pertaining to writing and education and the author’s cultural identity exert an influence on the self-presentation in the writing, and that the process by which an ESL student learns to write academic
texts in an English-speaking university involves creating a new identity which meets the expectations of the professors or teachers representing the discipline in which the student is becoming a new member. Creating such an identity, however, presents a demanding situation for ESL writers. The reason, in part, lies in the fact that this identity can differ considerably from what the writer is familiar with based on his/her previous life and learning experiences. Hyland (2002a) pointed out that “academic literacy is a ‘foreign culture’ to students of all backgrounds, where they find their previous understandings of the world challenged, their old confidences questioned, and their ways of talking modified” (p. 1108). Cadman (1997) suggested that a significant cause of the challenges the international graduate students face in academic writing lies in the different epistemologies in which these students have been trained in their previous education, and in which their identities as learners are rooted. Apart from the influence of the prior cultural writing conventions, another evident reason is educational in Hyland’s (2002b) study; that is, student writers are rarely taught that disciplinary conventions differ.

While the focus on cultural factors prevails in the study of text borrowing and first person pronouns, it does not dominate the study on voice for long. One sees an evolution from looking at culturally diverse voices to plural voices that entail multiple attributions. This is the point to which I now turn.

**Identity in ESL Writing: Focusing on Multiplicity**

Within the literature on writer identity is another strand looking at the complexity and multiplicity of the voice, self, and identity in writing. The ground-breaking works of Ivanič and Clark on the multiple components of writer identity have had significant influence on research along this line. They unpacked the notion of writer identity into four components, “autobiographical self,” “discoursal self,” “self as author,” and “socially available possibilities for
self-hood” (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič 1997). Their analyses of writer identity align with the postmodern interpretation of pluralistic identities that go beyond earlier stereotypes. Their model of Writer Identity is elaborated in more detail in the next chapter.

Ivanič and Camps (2001) suggested that there are different types of voices and positioning in the text. Voice can mean “self-representation” or “having something to say” (p. 7). Positioning can be ideational positioning, showing the writer’s different interests, methodologies, values, beliefs, and views of knowledge-making; or interpersonal positioning, demonstrating different degrees of self-assurance and certainty, different power relations between the writer and the reader; or textual positioning, reflecting the writer’s views on how to construct a written text. Through exemplifications of self-representation in the L2 writing of six Mexican graduate students at a British university, they argued that texts are many-voiced, writers juxtapose one voice with another in their articles; and that positioning is simultaneous and heterogeneous, as a consequence of the author’s ambivalence about the self and deliberation of the language. These voices and positioning are not stable but changing over time as the writer’s sense of self and awareness of authorship develops.

Critiquing the over-emphasis of voice in association with the ideology of individualism, Matsuda (2001) argued that the notion of voice in texts is not exclusively tied to Western individualism; Japanese students are capable of conveying voice in their English texts. The difficulties for them lie in the different ways of constructing voice in their first and second languages, and their unfamiliarity with the discursive features and strategies in the target language.

Similar to Ivanič’s (1994) research, Hirvela and Belcher (2001) addressed the multiple voices and identities in academic texts through a study of three mature international graduate students who had established successful professional writer identity in their first language and
culture, but who were not free of the struggles in negotiating a voice in English writing. These multilingual writers, excellent as they were in manipulating their first language, were also faced with a special challenge in creating a new identity and a way of self-representing in a second language. The voice heard from their writing was not an “either-or”, but exhibited influences of both first and second languages as well as discipline-specific expectations. This result aligns with Ivanič’s (1994) contention that the writer identity emerging from the text is the responsibility of three parties: the writer, the reader, and the socio-cultural context that supports a certain discourse. Hirvela and Belcher (2001) were concerned about treating these non-native speaker students as a homogeneous group and imposing the culturally biased notion of voice on them. They called for a better understanding of the already existing voices and identities of these writers and their voicing process in the second language.

Similar studies raised noteworthy pedagogical implications for teaching writing. Ivanič and Camps (2001) recommended that raising critical awareness about voice as self-representation can help L2 learners “maintain control over personal and cultural identity they are projecting in their writing” (p. 31). For L2 learners, it is a double task. They need to first recognize how familiar or alien the voice types in their second language are to them, and then recognize the differences between these voice types when they appear in different genres and discourses in the target culture. Matsuda (2001) suggested that L2 writers learn the discursive practices of the target discourse community and negotiate a proper voice that is unique to the writer but reduces the risk of being misunderstood by the target readers. Hyland (2002b) argued that teachers might better assist students by raising their awareness of the different conventions of impersonality across disciplines that are available to student writers. Fox (1994) also contended that the difficulties for ESL writers did not lie only in the language itself, but in the special language in academic disciplines, the language called “academese” by Tierney (1995, p. 386). Tang and John
(1999) believed that university writing instructional programs should include issues of writer identity in order to draw students’ attention to the language choices available for them.

Identity in Additional Language Academic Writing

As shown in the literature, studies in second language writing explored what information was conveyed in the texts, how the texts were constructed, and why they were constructed in such ways (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Hinkel, 1999; Kaplan, 1966; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Shen, 1989). The trend of current research demonstrates a postmodern take in its notion of plurality in the components of the self in texts, looking at multiple instances that shape the writer’s identity and how these are manifested in texts (e.g., Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1997; Fox, 1994; Kramsch, 1998). This has been influenced by identity theories in sociology and cultural studies. Such an interdisciplinary inquiry is encouraging for further investigations in the area of ESL academic writing and the writer identity reconstructed through negotiation. My research interest in this topic was partly inspired by this new trend. In the following discussions, I will replace the term ESL with EAL (English-as-an-additional-language) to incorporate the positive meaning the latter implies.

Earlier theories that have influenced current inquiry on the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self in writing include, but are not limited to, those of Bakhtin and Goffman. Bakhtin (1983) stated that language “lies on the borderline between oneself and the other” (p. 293); it is overpopulated with the intentions of others. The intention of the speaker and the intentions of others interplay to make language choice a deliberation full of explicit expressions and implicit connotations. Taking these issues into account, it is not difficult to see that language exerts a much greater influence on the construction of identity when an individual is using an additional language in communication with people speaking their first language.
Goffman’s (1959) notion of performative self in everyday life sheds much light on later explorations of identity from different perspectives. In a pluralistic and fast developing society, individuals are able to choose from and change into multiple options of identity; they can even shop for different identities in the “cultural supermarket” (Harris, 1996, p. 207). The need to perform different selves in different contexts with different intentions leads to the idea of multi-faceted identity.

In an AL context, the writer has to consider multiple intentions of satisfying the reader, the academic requirements of the discipline, the sense of personal voice, together with multiple realities of balancing the first culture, target culture, personal cultures and community cultures. The complexity of the situation is coupled with the inadequacy in expressiveness. As a result, the writer is likely to be pushed into mingling all available or possible identities into the texts. The writer identities exhibited in these texts can be viewed as a pastiche; its appropriateness is not determined by the writer, but rather, by the social context with which the writer has to cope.

Harris (1996) stated that attending university can constitute “a major form of secondary socialisation” (p. 193) that may contradict the previous ones. This experience of secondary socialization is exacerbated for additional language students, who enter areas of social life where they experience dramatic change, contradiction and discontinuity. These changes have both positive and negative sides. On the one hand, they have the opportunity to achieve identities in new areas and not be saddled with the old ones; on the other hand, they may be haunted by the feeling of loss, stronger each day, as their previous experience and culture get further away (Harris 1996). They always have to seek to “reconcile the universal and culturally specific aspects of self” (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 23).

What makes the situation more complicated are the complexities in specific disciplines. When AL students enter their disciplines, they may be confronted with conventions and
requirements different from what they have known in the past. Professors and course instructors may have different expectations for them but may not share a keen interest in knowing the diversities of their students’ cultures. In such cases, trying to establish an identity to fit into a canonic discipline is a very challenging process. Sometimes, the way AL writers understand the concrete rules set in course outlines may not be always concrete because of confusions in their mind about how to fit their ideas into the required framework and different understandings of the course content. When writing academic texts in an additional language, writers are confronted with many variables and obstacles. Once they shift to another area, they have to adjust themselves accordingly. Any newly created hybrid product is different from the ones they have created before; any self-representation in the text is through struggles for recognition.

The migrant status of AL writers and their shifting experiences in education and culture urge them to alter and modify their cultural beliefs in order to get access to the host culture in which they are becoming or trying to become a member. Their first cultural beliefs are the heritage they may or may not be willing to leave behind. However, in order to access the new culture, they need to embrace or at least endeavor to accept the norms and beliefs in this culture. Unfortunately, a fact that lies under the surface is that while AL students studying at foreign universities make a great effort to fit into a new language and cultural regime, there are many subtle things implying that they are outside it. The experience of border-crossing leads them to a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) or “third place” (Kramsch, 1993) -- a place in-between, where hybridity is the nature of their identities along with “mobility, uncertainty and multiplicity” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 91) -- all words that can be used to describe their self-image. This state of hybridity may also cause uneasiness when these students compose written texts in an additional language. Some, worrying that many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction (Goffman, 1959), have to act in the assumed conventional or natural ways so that they
intentionally or unintentionally express themselves in order to properly impress their readers, namely, professors and instructors who evaluate their texts.

Edward Said (1991) envisaged a “model of academic freedom,” which allows us to be the migrant or traveler voyaging in the academy.

A single over-mastering identity at the core of the academic enterprise, whether that identity be Western, African, or Asian, is a confinement, a deprivation. The world we live in is made up of numerous identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically. … We cannot make our claim as seekers after justice that we advocate knowledge only of and about ourselves. Our model for academic freedom should therefore be the migrant or traveller; … inside the academy we should be able to discover and travel among other selves, other identities, other varieties of the human adventure (emphasis added). But, most essentially, in this joint discovery of self and other, it is the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contest, or assertion into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, creative interaction. … But rather than viewing the search for knowledge in the academy as the search for coercion and control over others, we should regard knowledge as something for which to risk identity, and we should think of academic freedom as an invitation to give up one identity in the hope of understanding and perhaps even assuming more than one (emphasis added). We must always view the academy as a place to voyage in, owning none of it but at home everywhere in it. (pp. 17-18)

Although Said was talking about the situation in the academic enterprise generally, I wish to take advantage of his insight and appeal for attention to the peculiar situation of second language writing in Western academic contexts. His conception of being an academic migrant to risk identities, discover identities, and to venture in the academy for the pursuit of academic
freedom, is very insightful for my understanding of an academic traveler traversing borders and cultures but finding the university is no shelter from “the political intercourse of a given society and culture” (Said, 1991, p. 15). In my view, AL writers are, without any doubt, travelers in search for knowledge, new worldviews and new identities. It is the academy and the people who hold power in the academy that need to develop a new attitude of openness to these academic migrants, and to roam freely and appreciatively with them in the multiple possibilities in knowledge advancement and identity reconstruction.

Theories in sociology and cultural studies such as Goffman’s performative self in society, Foucault’s power relation in institutions, Bhabha’s third space in a culturally changing world, and Said’s academic freedom in universities all lend a critical stance to my inquiry. In addition to these, in the field of sociolinguistics, a number of theories that I have reviewed in this chapter are equally insightful. Lado’s cultural influence on language learning, Bakhtin’s intentionality in texts, and Clark and Ivanič’s identity construction in writing, among others, provide a theoretical platform for this study, as described in detail in the next chapter.

Researchers in second language writing have addressed many issues around writer identity, including the writer’s voice and authorial presence in text, the writer’s ideologies reflected in text, the writing conventions featuring the writer’s first culture, and multiple components of the writer identity. More attention needs to be paid to the dynamics and evolution of the identity formation, and factors complicating the re/construction of writer identity across cultures. These are the focus of this dissertation.

Current studies of AL writer identity predominantly concern the EAL writers who come to English speaking countries from other parts of the world, particularly from East Asian countries. A big gap exists in examining the reverse side, that is, English-speaking students studying at a non-English speaking university in different countries. I have been interested in
looking at the EAL writer identity, but I have been even more intrigued by the phenomenon of a growing number of students learning in China, a developing country of diverse cultures. My research, therefore, is designed to examine both sides of the coin in hope of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the re/construction of AL writer identity in a foreign land. Since there is a lack of theory and literature in the construction of CAL (Chinese-as-an-additional-language) writer identity, I will mainly draw on what has been done in EAL research and aim at generating an innovative theory that also applies to the CAL situation.
Chapter 3

Theories of Identity and a New Model of Writer Identity

In this chapter, I introduce identity theories from several different perspectives. Toward this end, I elaborate on the concept of self, which is a key element in individual identity. When we discuss identity, we also presume a self; when we discuss self, we are already in the space of identity. I treat them as concepts that often run together without trying to separate the elements that constitute them. I start with a historical review of the self from a sociological perspective because there can be no self apart from society (Mead, 1934/1967). Then, I discuss theories regarding “stigmatized” identities (Goffman, 1963) in the fields of sociology, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics. These theories have all contributed to my understanding of the concept of identity. Following this, I focus on discussions on identity and discourse, and then more specifically, on identity and writing. In the end, I present my formulations of identity as well as the model of additional language writer identity that I have developed based on the literature and theories I have discussed.

Self and Society

Individuals make society, and society makes individuals; “each conditions and constitutes the other” (Moore, 1999, p. 621). With this understanding, I begin the chapter with western theories of the self in relation to society. I focus on three individuals: William James (1842-1910), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), and Erving Goffman (1922-1982). Their theories of the social self have profoundly influenced my conceptualization of the self-formation in relation to the social context with which individuals have to cope.
William James (1890), a distinguished American psychologist and pragmatist, theorized that the self has two components: the empirical and the pure. The empirical self is also called the “Me.” He further explored the three dimensions of the “Me” as the material (the body and the clothes), social (the recognition that the individual gets from his mates) and spiritual (a man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions) constituents in relation to the pure ego, the “I,” the subjective self, the active source of behavior.

In elaborating the concept of social self, James asserted “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind” (p. 295, emphasis in original). In other words, he recognized the multiple selves in social life—an individual can have many different social selves when they are among distinct groups of persons about whose opinions he cares. In addition, he posited that an individual might show a different side of himself to different groups, which has a performative nature. He also articulated the complexity of the self, saying that an external review of the self is incomplete without considering “the rivalry and conflict of the different selves” (p. 310); and one needs to choose, among the limited choices, one of the empirical selves while relinquishing the rest. These ideas find consonance in Goffman’s (1959) concepts of performative self and impression management, and the postmodern notion of multiple selves that is a prevailing concept in sociology and cultural studies in discussion of multiplicity and manipulation of identities in the cultural world (e.g., During, 1993; Grossberg, 1996; Harris, 1996).

In terms of the spiritual self, James (1890) elaborated that it is a reflective process; it is “the result of our abandoning the outward-looking point of view, and of our having become able to think of subjectivity as such, to think ourselves as thinkers” (p. 297, emphasis in original). Again, he acknowledged the plurality of the spiritual self, asserting that we may consider it in
different ways and divide it into different faculties. When we insist on a concrete view, the
spiritual self “will be either the entire stream of our personal consciousness, or the present
‘segment’ or ‘section’ of that stream,” (p. 297) depending on what view we take at that particular
time. This idea, from my point of view, sounds like a farsighted prelude to the postmodern
concept of fluidity in identity although James’ notion of the self did not in fact indicate any social
construction of the hybrid identity.

As one of the founders of “the Chicago school of pragmatism” and a key contributor to
the development of symbolic interactionism, George Herbert Mead posited that the self is created
through communication of symbols in social acts. Pragmatism sees the social world as an on-
going creation. Meaning exists only within the social situation, and objects are given meaning
based on the socially constructed definition arising out of contact with objects.

Mead (1934/1967) saw the self as an acting organism instead of a passive receptacle that
merely receives and responds to stimuli. He described two stages in the development of the self.
At the first stage, “the individual’s self is constituted simply by an organization of the particular
attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward one another in the specific social acts in
which he participates with them” (p. 158). At the second stage, in order to achieve the full
development of the individual’s self, apart from an organization of these particular individual
attitudes, the self is also constituted “by an organization of the social attitudes of the generalized
other or the social group as a whole to which he belongs” (p. 158). In my opinion, these stages in
fact elaborate two phases of the same process of subject positioning in social life, as described
later by Ivanič (1997) that subjects act according to what they perceive as proper and recognized
behaviors in a particular context. They also contribute to Goffman’s (1959) idea of performative
self that individuals tailor their performances to meet the different social expectations based on
their own understanding of the situation.
Mead approached the concept of the self in a similar manner as James; however, he further developed the relationship of the “I” and the “Me” into a more fluid, interactive nature. Mead (1934/1967) posited that the self is a social process with two phases -- the “I” and the “Me.” The “I” is the creative aspect of the self; it is the part of the self that responds spontaneously and directly to outside events. As such, it is impulsive and not subject to control. The “Me” represents the internalized adoption of the generalized other (that is, the collective attitude of the entire community or society); it is the self-reflective, conventional aspect of the self that incorporates society’s values, norms, ideals, and expectations. These concepts were key in developing Mead’s theory of social control. According to Mead, the “I” and the “Me” are alternating elements of a constant process of thought and action; they influence our subconscious and conscious responses to a stimulus and allow us to be aware of our responses.

A notable difference between James and Mead is that James considered the material self, that is, the body together with the clothes, as one of the constituents of an individual’s self. Mead, however, distinguished the self and the body: the body as such is not a self; it can operate without there being a self involved in the experience and it becomes a part of the self only when it has developed a mind within the context of social experience. Both theorizing on the plurality of the self, James’ analysis seemed to focus on the synchronous constituents of the self, while Mead developed the idea into a progressive spiral through interactions of the “I” and the “Me” and through ongoing reflections of the “Me.” Mead’s conception of the self, therefore, captures the essence of the continuous construction and reconstruction of what would eventually be termed identity in a frequently changing contemporary world. Based on such an understanding, I agree with Moore’s (1999) comment on Mead that he was “perpetually pondering the process of reconstruction. He had mastered its unceasing give and take” (p. 621).
Erving Goffman received his Master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Chicago in 1949 and 1953 respectively, where he studied both sociology and social anthropology. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), he used the metaphors of the stage (“dramaturgy”) to describe how ordinary people give performances and control their speech in social settings that make up their lives. His discussion of the active processes by which people manage and manipulate their social roles demonstrates a strong influence of symbolic interactionism, and he is often grouped with the symbolist interactionist school of Mead.

According to Goffman (1959), “Many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction or lie concealed within it” (p. 2). In other words, the construction of meaning through communication and interaction involves much more than the moment when the interaction takes place. Employing a “dramaturgical approach” (p. 240), Goffman viewed interaction as “performance” (p. 15), which is shaped by the social setting and the audience. Individuals as actors present others, the audience, with the “impression” (p. 17) that is consonant with their desired goals.

To elaborate further the process of establishing social identity, Goffman introduced the concept of “front”—“that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (p. 22). The front can be items of expressive equipment such as clothing and speech patterns; it can act as a vehicle of standardization that enables observers to understand the performer based on projected character traits containing normative meanings. The front establishes proper setting, appearance, and manner for the social role the performer desires to take, then connects the interactive behavior with the personal front. In such a way, the front functions as a “collective
representation” (p. 27). The performer has to fulfill the duties of the social role and demonstrate the characteristics of the role in a consistent manner to other people in order to present a compelling front (Barnhart, 1994).

However, there are occasions when individuals find themselves making “unmeant gestures” and inappropriate intrusions that are sources of embarrassment and dissonance. These are occasions when people need to carry out the acts of “impression management” (Goffman, 1959, p. 208) to control the performance and to avoid unwanted “scenes” and dissonance (p. 210). Performers need to take defensive measures to save the show, the audience needs to take protective measures to assist the performers to save the show. As a result, in constructing a front, a variety of communicative sources are employed to convince the audience of the appropriateness of the performer’s behavior and consonance with the role the performer assumed.

By employing an ethnographic methodology, Goffman (1959) explored in detail the individual identity, group relations, the impact of social settings, and interactive meaning exchange. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life provides penetrating insight into the nature of interpersonal interactions and the institutional conventions that individuals have to play within the micro-social context. However, it deals weakly with the macro-social dimension, failing to foreground the question of social conventions and norms (Ivanič, 1997). It does not provide a comprehensive description of interactive processes; neither does it fully explore “the nature of marginalized individuals, the importance of ritual or ceremony in the dramaturgy, or the construction of character” (Barnhart, 1994). Therefore, a reading of Goffman’s later work, such as Stigma (1963), Interaction Ritual (1967), and Gender Advertisements (1979) provides a means for “expanding the analysis of the interaction of everyday life into the broader experiences of human interaction” (Barnhart, 1994). For example, in Stigma, he investigated the “discredited” and “discreditable” individuals. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
Goffman is considered a precursor of postmodern sensibility. He has bridged modern to postmodern theory with his metaphor of life as theatre and with his distinction of the roles individuals play in “front stage” and “back stage” moments. Tseëlon (1992) saw Goffman as offering an early picture of the postmodern transition with his idea of the real self being replaced by a collage of social constructs. Ward (2003) also claimed that Goffman’s work “seems to have caught the postmodern-imagination because of his insistence on the centrality of what he called ‘image management’ to our lives” (p. 137).

Goffman’s work is a major influence on contemporary social analysis. His ideas have been widely used in contemporary work on conversation analysis, semiotics, consumer culture, and postmodernism. “After him, the study of social encounters, behavior in public, the construction and deconstruction of the self, stigma and forms of everyday communication, were never the same again” (Fine & Smith, 2000).

Goffman’s conceptions of the performative self and impression management prove to be very useful in analyzing the situation that I am investigating, in which instructors and students within the institution both have to perform appropriate roles in everyday encounters and carefully manage the impressions they give off to maintain harmony, even though the performances sometimes simply stay at the superficial level.

**Stigmatized Identity**

As I have mentioned in a previous section on Goffman, *Stigma* (1963) complemented his query into the self of the discredited individuals in social life. The concept “stigma” may serve as an umbrella term for certain characteristics of the groups to be discussed in this section: the Black and the postcolonial people bearing stigmata of skin color and culture; the immigrants bearing stigmata of their language, culture, and social status.
Stigma is not an unfamiliar topic in the literature of social psychology, especially regarding individuals who are disqualified from full social acceptance. Goffman’s work *Stigma* (1963) examines the way we classify people and are classified and the way we interact with others based on these classifications. According to Goffman, there are “prestige symbols,” “stigma symbols,” and “disidentifiers” (p. 43-44). We use these different types of signs to identify people and determine our evaluation of them. Goffman’s idea of locating people in the interactive process affirms Mead’s argument that identity is partially constructed through the positioning of the self by others (Barnhart, 1994).

By the concept of “normalization,” a word Goffman used to refer to the process of classification, marginalized people are forced into “discredited” or “discreditable” groups based on the nature of their stigma (Goffman, 1963, p. 42). Impression management is most important for these people because the discredited have to assuage the tension their stigma causes in order to interact with others successfully, while the discreditable have to limit the access of others to information about their stigma. The emphasis on the normative identity deprives the discredited from being fully accepted by the group they have to join. The discreditable, who attempt to “pass” and use “disidentifiers” to create a “normal” identity (p. 44), are constantly bothered by the feelings of ambivalence and alienation that emerge as a result of limited social intercourse. In one word, the nature of impression management and interaction changes with the existence of a stigma of any type.

Goffman (1963) elaborated the concept of identity in relation to stigma as such:

The concept of social identity allowed us to consider stigmatization. The concept of personal identity allowed us to consider the role of information control in stigma management. The idea of ego identity allows us to consider what the individual may feel
about stigma and its management, and leads us to give special attention to the advice he is given regarding these matters. (p. 106)

Goffman’s notion of ego identity as a “subjective, reflective matter” (p. 106) seems to echo James’ concept of the ego self, and also has parallels with Mead’s “I.”

Goffman noted the dialectical relationship between the normal and the stigmatized. The normal and the stigmatized are part of each other; they are not persons but rather perspectives that “are generated in social situations during mixed contacts by virtue of the unrealized norms that are likely to play upon the encounter” (p. 138). Stigma management, therefore, should be seen as a general feature of society; it occurs wherever there are identity norms.

According to Goffman, in-group deviants, social deviants, ethnic and racial minority members, and lower class persons usually bear the mark of their status in their speech, appearance, and manner, and are likely to find themselves functioning as stigmatized individuals, who are uncertain of “the reception awaiting them in face-to-face interaction and [are] deeply involved in the various responses to this plight” (p. 146). Since visibility is a crucial factor in determining an individual’s social identity, we can easily see that “congenital” signs (p. 46) such as non-white skin color may put a person into a stereotyped category that is apt to be judged differently from the majority in a white western society. Other signs such as non-standard language and different cultural background from the majority may also put a person into a more vulnerable position. These ideas are elaborated in detail in the up-coming sections.

For my particular research interest, I find Goffman very helpful in my exploration of identity construction among people who come from East Asian cultures, bearing congenital signs of skin color and using imperfect English in their academic pursuit, and apparently belonging to a discredited group from the first day of their academic life in a western university, in which they are faced with more challenges in positioning themselves and managing their images.
Black Identity and the Issue of Ethnicity: Fanon

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was a French psychiatrist and philosopher born in a family of descendants of black African slaves in Martinique. His writings had profound influence on the radical movements in the 1960s in the United States and Europe. He has established his position as a leading theoretician of black consciousness and identity, nationalism, colonial rule and decolonization, language as power, and the objectification of the performative black body (Graves, 1998).

Fanon’s work Black Skin White Masks (1967), first published in 1952, analyzes the impact of racism on both colonized and colonizer, and of colonialism and its deforming effects. Fanon argued that white colonialism imposed an existentially false and degrading existence upon its black victims to the extent that it demanded their conformity to its distorted values. Fanon saw the colonizer-colonized relationship not only in terms of racism, but also in terms of desire--the black man’s desire for wearing a white mask, and the white man’s desire to possess the black man.

Fanon (1967) situated language and the body at the center of the black predicament of marginalization and servitude. He argued, “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power” (p. 18). His argument of language as an index of cultural difference and power imbalance, in some way, foreshadowed Foucault’s coupling of knowledge and power.

The significance of Fanon’s contribution to the postcolonial critics lies in the fact that his theory of decolonization emerged during the pressure of colonial rule, not after it (Graves, 1998). His pioneering work Black Skin White Masks began to undo Eurocentrism by using the critical binary of Self and Other. This formulation influenced profoundly other fields in cultural studies.
such as postcolonial, feminist and queer theories (Powell, 1999). The capitalized “Other” became a term favored by theorists like Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall in cultural studies in discussion of issues such as identity and representation.

**Postcolonial Identity and the Issue of Culture: Bhabha**

Bhabha is a leading figure in postcolonial studies. Born and raised in Bombay, India, he obtained his graduate degrees and his work experiences in England and the United States, which provided him with a peculiar angle to examine culture and identity in postcolonial India as well as in the postmodern world. His ideas are most fully explored in the essays in *The Location of Culture* (1994), which covers a range of literary and historical subject matter from the early 19th century to the present. Bhabha used concepts such as liminality, hybridity, interstice, and mimicry to argue that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent, such as at the site of colonial dominance.

Bhabha found Foucault’s conception of power relations useful in contrasting polarized and binary notions of constructing subjects within the play of power; however, he critiqued Foucault for his inability to look outside certain paradigms of Western modernity, for example, the colonial space (Mitchell, 1995). According to Bhabha (1994), “the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its presence as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference” (p. 107). In discussing the exhibit of an African-American artist [Renee Green], he saw the museum stairwell connecting the exhibit’s upper and lower halves as analogous to a “liminal space, in-between the designations of identity [that] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white” (p. 4), he envisaged a “third space,” a cultural space that emerges as the result of the non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures, a place “where the
negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences” (p. 218).

For Bhabha, post-colonial studies imply a two-way exchange. On the one hand, an outside culture is imposed upon a colonial culture; on the other hand, the colonies, “despite their disempowerment and disadvantage, respond to that outside culture, and translate its imposition into acts of social insurgency and forms of cultural innovation” (Makos, 1995). Bhabha (1994) brought in the question of cultural translation, and looked at how various cultures coexist with the modes of accommodation they use to articulate their differences and at the same time are engaged in communal negotiations. He posited that we should not homogenize cultures; instead, we need to respect difference and think about ways people within cultures can communicate with each other.

Bhabha’s conceptions of the third space and hybridity are not only insightful in cultural studies; they have also shed much light on inquiries in other fields such as sociolinguistics within which cultural identity and linguistic identity are issues of concern. In my research on identities of people who use English as their additional language in their academic endeavor, I find these notions very helpful in elaborating a particular third space in which they create a particular hybrid identity in their writing. However, when I use the term hybridity later in my study in discussion of personal identity and writer identity, I mean a mixture and/or blend of different components of identity.

**Immigrant Identity and the Issue of Language: Norton**

Bonny Norton’s doctoral research in the early 1990s highlighted another group of marginalized, discredited/discreditable people—five adult female immigrants in Canada from diverse language and cultural backgrounds (Norton Peirce, 1993). Her work was later developed
into a book entitled *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Educational Changes* (2000). Part of the data for this study was also reported in Norton Peirce (1995). The women in Norton’s study were from Poland (2), Vietnam (1), Czechoslovakia (1), and Peru (1), each with different social status and educational background. Their experiences elicited insightful discussions on how second language learning influenced and intersected with their changing identities.

Norton takes the position of Giroux (1988, 1992) and Simon (1987, 1992) that language teaching is a highly political practice. She is also strongly influenced by Foucault’s (1980) conception that power is a relation that implies social exchange on a particular set of terms. In conceptualizing the relationship between power, identity, and language learning, she follows West’s (1992) position that “identity references desire—the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety” (Norton, 2000, p. 8). These theories are all integrated in Norton’s analyses.

Norton put one of the central paradoxes in second language learning in the spotlight: extensive interaction in the target language is a requirement for mastering the language; however, the premise of interaction is a minimal or basic level of communicative ability on the learner’s side. What is more crucial in Norton’s accounts is not the issue of language level or the amount of interaction; it is the power relations reflected in these interactions or lack of interactions. In other words, the possibility of having any interactions, the decision of participating in such interactions, and the topics and amount of interactions are all under the control of the privileged group—the native speakers of the target language. The learners are more often than not in a relatively powerless position to have any significant influence on these interactions.

Norton not only brought the issue of access to the target language into focus, she illustrated the unevenly distributed opportunities for such access that are in part determined by
individuals’ socioeconomic status, including gender. According to Norton, these women’s anxiety and lack of confidence in everyday communication were not their inherent characteristics; instead, such feelings were a consequence of “the power relations that the women had to negotiate in their social interactions in the wider community and their marginalized positions as immigrants” (p. 123).

Despite the critique of her outdated discussion on second language acquisition theories and lack of linguistics analysis (Bayley, 2003), Norton’s work is widely recognized as an important contribution to the growing body of research on identity construction in second language learning. Her focus on the multiple identities of the learner and the socially constructed nature of second language learning is of great significance in the fields of social and critical linguistics.

Identity and Discourse

Before I move on to linguistic theories on identities in writing, I need to elaborate on a few concepts that provide the backdrop to this topic. In order to understand the construction of the self, we need to understand first the relationship between identity, self, and language. Mead (1934/1967) asserted, “the language process is essential for the development of the self” (p. 135) because mind and the self are social emergents and “language is the mechanism for their emergence” (Moore, 1999, p. 621). Therefore, this section is dedicated to the interplay of language and identity.

A major concept in the study of language is signs. One theory of signs was developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who is known as the “father of modern linguistics” (Hall, 1997b, p. 30). He and his followers developed the science of semiology (part of the ancient discipline of the study or science of signs) in order to establish the basic features of
linguistic signs and explain the way they work in social life. In the semiological approach, *representation* is a key concept that gives abstract and ideological ideas their concrete forms.

Both Michel Foucault (1972, 1980) and Stuart Hall (1996, 1997b) use the word “representation,” but they do not use it in the same sense: one is more concerned with the production of knowledge through discourse, the other is more concerned with the construction of identity through discourse. These theories are elaborated in the following subsections.

### Signs and Language: Saussure

The increasing interest in exploring identity in relation to language is mainly based on the poststructuralist theories of language. These theories evolved but are distinct from the structuralist theories of language which are predominantly associated with Saussure and his seminal work *Course in General Linguistics*, a book based on the lecture notes taken by his students and published posthumously in French in 1916, with multiple subsequent (translated) editions including the one in 1960. For Saussure, language is a system of *signs* that serve to express or communicate ideas. He distinguished the sign into two elements: the *signifier* (the sound) and the *signified* (the idea or concept with which the sound was associated). According to Saussure, signs are arbitrary; meaning is defined in relation to its opposite as in black/white, or its relevance as father/mother/child. Some of his revolutionary propositions are of great importance to later researchers interested in the analysis of signs. These propositions include that the signifiers have to be organized into a system of differences in order to produce meaning, and “it is the differences between signifiers that signify” (Hall, 1997b, p. 32).

Saussure (1960) divided language into two parts: the *langue* (the language system with its rules and structures) and the *parole* (the actual speech or writing by using the rules and structures). He proposed that the *langue* was the part that could be studied with the law-like precision of a
science. This preference for studying language at the level of its deep structure made people call him and his structure of language, structuralist (Hall, 1997b).

Saussure’s structuralism has had its share of criticism. One problem was that his exclusive attention to the formal aspects of language diverted attention away from the interactive and dialogic features of language and ignored the questions of power in language (Hall, 1997b). Another criticism was that structuralism could not account for struggles over meanings of the signs within the same linguistic community that may have different meanings for its members (Norton & Toohey, 2002). Later cultural theorists and linguists abandoned the scientific premise of Saussure’s structuralism and recognized the changing and open-ended nature of language and the heterogeneous character of linguistic communities with their conflicting claims to truth and power.

Turning to language in use, I introduce a prominent Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in a later section discussing identity and writing. Focusing on the theories of discourse and representation, I now proceed with the discussion of two poststructuralists in cultural studies—Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall.

**Discourse and Power: Foucault**


Foucault (1977) examined power in relationship to both knowledge and the physical body, stressing the coercive technologies of control over the body. He connected the birth of the modern prison in the 19th century with the history of institutions, arguing that the function of
institutions is to discipline bodies through surveillance techniques. These surveillance techniques, either real or assumed, constrain individuals' activities and disempower them in their lives.

Foucault had an interest in discourse. The term discourse is normally a linguistic concept to refer to passages of connected speech or writing. Foucault, however, studied discourse as a system of representation. For him, “discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” (Hall, 1997b, p. 44). According to Foucault (1972), the production of discourse in every society is immediately controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures. Discourse is “bound by regulations enforced through social practices of appropriation, control and ‘policing’. Discourse is a political commodity” (Gordon, 1980, p. 245). In his later work, Foucault (1980) became more concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power. He focused on how knowledge is put to work through discursive practices within the institutional apparatus and its technologies, whose function is to regulate the conduct of others. He maintained that all knowledge operates as a historically situated social practice, thus all knowledge is power/knowledge.

Foucault always stressed the importance of discourse. Discourse circulates in our world and has a significant consequence on our lives and struggles; it also affects and shapes our policies in all walks of society (Casella, 1999). Discourse is also a key word in talking about identity. According to Foucault, a real identity is non-existent; we talk about the self through discourse, but it was his emphasis on discourse that incurred criticism. A major critique was that he tended to absorb too much into discourse and, as a result, encouraged his followers to ignore the influence of “material, economic and structural factors in the operation of power/knowledge” (Hall, 1997b, p. 51) as well as making power too amorphous to identify.
Identity and Representation: Hall

Stuart Hall is a distinguished sociologist, and one of the founding fathers of British cultural studies. Hall (1997a, 1997b) examined two versions of constructionism (the theory that meaning is constructed in and through language): the semiological or semiotic approach greatly influenced by Saussure and the discursive approach associated with Foucault. He concluded that a major difference between them lies in that the former is more concerned with the how of representation—its poetics, while the latter is more focused on the effect and consequences of representation—its politics. Some of Hall’s specific comments are already incorporated in the previous subsections regarding these two theorists. What Hall also stressed is the fact that these approaches have had a profound influence on later constructionist researchers and inspired more creative, explorative questions regarding representation and meaning, such as Lidchi (1997) and Nixon (1997), among others.

Hall and Foucault are similar in that they both talked about discourse and representation; however, they are different in that Foucault was focused on the power relation imbedded in the discursive practices whereas Hall discussed these concepts in relation to identity construction, which is a central issue in cultural studies.

Hall and his colleagues theorized a “circuit of culture” (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997; Hall, 1997a), which describes the intertwining, multilateral connections of such notions as representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. According to Hall (1997a), culture is about “shared meanings”; language is the “privileged medium” in which meaning is produced and exchanged; language operates as “a representational system”; therefore, representation through language is “central to the processes by which meaning is produced” (p. 1). The “circuit of culture” (see Appendix A) suggests that meaning is produced at different sites and circulated through different processes; it gives people a sense of their own identity, a sense of
belonging. Language works through representation; it is a signifying practice by means of symbols and signs. In another volume on cultural identity, Hall (1996) maintained that identities are constructed through difference. Identities can only be constructed through the relation to the Other, to what they are, to what they are not and what they lack. Therefore, identities do not represent a stable unified self, but are increasingly fragmented and fractured, constructed across differences “in the process of change and transformation” (p. 4).

Hall’s conceptions of the interconnection between meaning, language, discourse, representation, and identity provide us with an effective tool to understand how we convey meaning through language on different occasions, and how we construct identity within discourse and representation from the place of the Other.

Identity and Writing

In my discussion of Saussure in a previous section, I mentioned the criticism of the notion that signs have idealized meanings and linguistic communities, and that these are relatively homogeneous. Poststructuralists abandoned such positions, maintaining that “the signifying practices of societies are sites of struggles and that linguistic communities are heterogeneous arenas characterized by conflicting claims to truth and power” (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 117). One of the most influential theorists to influence poststructuralism is Mikhail Bakhtin, whose conceptions of identity and language are very relevant to my research on writer identity.

Intentionality and Hybridization in Writing: Bakhtin

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian linguist and literary critic. He focused on the social nature of language, literature, and meaning. A collection of his most important essays on the novel, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, was published in 1975,
and its English version was published in 1981. His work spread in the Western academy in the 1980s and his theories on the social nature of language, literature, and meaning have been widely accepted in certain academic circles. Among the four essays, “Discourse in the Novel” represents the most comprehensive statement of his philosophy of language and discourse; my discussion is mainly centered on this essay. What I need to restate is that Bakhtin’s notion of discourse is a linguistic term, distinct from Foucault’s concept of discourse as representation.

According to Bakhtin (1981), “verbal discourse is a social phenomenon” (p. 259); language needs to be studied as situated utterances through which speakers struggle to create meaning in dialogue with others. For him, “language is not a neutral medium” (p. 294); intentionality is central in verbal communication. Language lies on the borderline between the speaker and the other. The word in language becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker appropriates and adapts it “to his own semantic and expressive intention” (p. 293). However, all words and forms are not only populated by intentions of the speaker, they are also “populated, overpopulated – with the intentions of others” (p. 294) because they have to be directed toward the active understanding of others. As a result, all speakers construct their utterances jointly on the basis of their interaction with others and within the actual and assumed communities (Norton & Toohey, 2002).

Bakhtin (1981) suggested the possibility of a dialogized or dialogic rhetoric that views all human activities and discourses as a complex unity of differences. This dialogized or dialogic rhetoric is not only heteroglossia, that is, a multiplicity and diversity of voices; but a dialogized heteroglossia, an act of listening to the voice of others from their perspectives. The characteristic forms of a dialogized heteroglossia are “the expression, juxtaposition, or negotiation of our individual and our cultural differences” (Zappen, 2000, p. 3) in order to determine what we should think and how we should live in the larger context of society.
Bakhtin’s (1981) emphasis on intentionality and dialogized heteroglossia leads to another important concept—linguistic hybridization: “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, … between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (p. 358). Such hybridization can be intentional or unintentional. For example, the artistic image of a language is an intentional (and conscious) hybrid, while the primary means of change in a language is unintentional, such as a mixing of various languages co-existing in a dialect, or in a national language or a branch of a language over time in history.

Bakhtin’s work offers us a way to view verbal communication as construction of utterances, and language learning as situated within particular discourses, with particular interlocutors, and for particular purposes. Since the customary discourse of any particular community may privilege or debase certain speakers, finding a proper way to join the chain of communication is as much a social struggle as a linguistic one. His theories are, without any doubt, a useful tool in interpreting the identity struggles among people who are newly immersed in a linguistic and social community with which they are not familiar but to which they wish to belong. The concepts of intentionality and hybridization are appropriate words describing not only their language but also their identity.

**Positioning and Identity in Writing: Clark and Ivanič**

In the particular field of research on writing, I will introduce two social linguists, Romy Clark and Roz Ivanič, whose theoretical frameworks of the politics of writing and the writer identity prove to be very innovative and insightful. In their co-authored book *The Politics of Writing* (1997), they drew on critical linguistics, cultural studies and literacy studies in their exploration and analysis of the social context in which writing is embedded, the processes and
practices of writing, the purposes for writing, and the issues of writer identity, while appealing for a more democratic pedagogy as part of the answer to the inequitable distribution of the right to write. They argued that written texts are inherently political, be they produced in the classroom, home, or media. Writing becomes political through the decoding and encoding of meaning of the written word for the reason that language itself is a social construct, and therefore cannot be detached from its political implications. Language and literacy, then, describe and define the social world in which we live.

According to Clark and Ivanič (1997), “writing includes both the physical, mental and interpersonal literary practices that constitute and surround the act of writing, and ‘discourse conventions’: ways of using language in the writing” (p. 138). Discourse conventions may differ from one type of writing context to another. They asserted that “both literary practices and discourse conventions have subject positions inscribed in them, and writers are positioned by both of these simultaneously” (p. 138); therefore, writing is inseparable from the writer’s identity. In a higher educational context, writers often find themselves swinging between their “former selves” and “becoming-selves” (p. 134), caught up in the conflicting social pressures while trying to find some compromise between idiosyncrasy and the conventions of their discipline.

With a different focus, Ivanič (1997) investigated different approaches to writing and identity, and the discoursal construction of identity in academic writing. The overarching argument in her book is that “writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody” (p. 32). Ivanič built on theories of Fairclough (1989) that language is shaped and a shaper of social context, Bakhtin (1981) that language is populated with the intentions of the speaker and others, and Goffman (1959) that the self is constructed performatively in social life, among many others.
She developed a theoretical framework for writer identity that is composed of four aspects: 
autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author, and socially available possibilities for self-
hood (Ivanič, 1997, pp. 23-29). The first three aspects are regarding “the identity of an actual 
writer writing a particular text”; the fourth one refers to the “abstract, prototypical identities 
available in the socio-cultural context of writing” (p. 23).

The term autobiographical self emphasizes the writer’s life history and the sense of the 
person’s roots. This self is not a fixed or “real self,” but changing because of the author’s 
developing life history. The term autobiographical self captures the idea that writers’ ways of 
representing their changing experiences to themselves constitute their current way of being. A 
writer’s discoursal self is the voice a writer consciously or unconsciously conveys in a particular 
written text. This voice may not be the stance the writer is taking, but rather, the way the writer 
wants to sound. The self as author represents the “writer’s sense of authority and authorial 
presence in the text.” “This aspect of writer identity concerns the writer’s ‘voice’ in the sense of 
the writer’s position, opinions and beliefs,” which are particularly significant in the discussion of 
academic writing because writers differ in how far they claim authority and how far they 
“establish an authorial presence in their writing” (Ivanič, 1997, pp.25-26). This authoritativeness 
can also be seen as an aspect of the discoursal self. The above-mentioned aspects of writer 
identity are all concerned with “actual people writing actual texts” (p. 27). The fourth meaning of 
writer identity is concerned with socially available possibilities for self-hood. It is the most 
abstract aspect of writer identity for the reason that “subject positions are not characteristics of 
any specific individual” (Clark & Ivanič, p.136). In any institutional context, Ivanič argues, there 
are several socially available possibilities for self-hood: several ways of doing the same thing; 
some being privileged over others. However, these possibilities for self-hood are also “shaped by
individual acts of writing in which people take on particular discoursal identity” (Ivanič, 1997, p.27).

This framework further evolves into a cloverleaf shaped figure in Clark and Ivanič (1997, p. 137) as shown in Appendix B. The three aspects of the identity of actual writers are thought of as three inseparable parts of the leaf while they are all affected by the “socio-culturally available subject-positions and patterns of privileging among them” existing in a particular context (p. 136). Ivanič (1997) stressed that the four aspects of writer identity are not static; the first three aspects are changing radically from one act of writing to another. For example, a writer’s autobiographic self is evolving constantly over time; s/he may construct a very different discoursal self from one text to another depending on the changes in life and on the different requirements for each writing; and s/he may establish a stronger or weaker authorial presence from one text to another. However, Ivanič asserted that the fourth aspect, the socially available possibilities for selfhood, changes much more slowly. This point may be true for general writers composing in their native language. From my point of view, this assertion is not adequate in discussing the situation of AL writers who traverse linguistic, cultural, disciplinary, as well as geographic borders. The socially available possibilities of selfhood are more limited for them in the new context, and the changes to the available selves they are able to claim are dramatic and pressing.

My Theoretical Framework

In the following, I present my own formulations of the concept of identity that build on the theories I have discussed as well as my conceptions of the AL writer identity that highlight the characteristics of AL graduate writers.
My Formulations of Identity

Based on the theories I have reviewed in the fields of sociology, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics, I have formulated my understandings of the concept of identity. However, I must note that what I am talking about is the umbrella term identity in general, not cultural, social or linguistic identities in specific because all these different terms in fact overlap and incorporate each other to some degree. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish them without ambiguity and confusion. For example, an individual’s personal identity is formed in the culture in which the person is raised, so personal identity may bear some features of the person’s cultural conventions; a person’s social identity may overlap in part with the person’s cultural identity, ethnic identity, linguistic identity, and even occupational identity. For this consideration, I will only outline my formulation of the concept “identity.” In addition, since I have already integrated some of my own understandings of the concept in my review of the literature and discussion of the theories, I may not identify from which source each of my ideas comes. In fact, as some theorists build their own theories on others, it is a complicated process to list all the sources of information and clarify their interrelations.

My formulations of the concept of identity incorporate the following:

• Identity is a person’s sense of self, including the idiosyncratic and autobiographic features of the person, which make the person distinct from others. This self is broadly analogous to Mead’s (1934/1967) characterization of self as “I.”

• Identity is a person’s sense of belonging to a group; this affiliation offers a feeling of security and comfort, which are particularly important at times of hardship.

• Identity is a social construct, reflecting social values of a society. Lack of shared knowledge may exclude the person from the society in which s/he physically resides; it causes a feeling of being an outsider while being inside. Performativity is important in
the process of positioning. The performance of stigmatized individuals is likely to be undervalued.

- Identity is a cultural construct, showing elements of national, ethnic, regional, institutional, occupational cultures the individual is exposed to, immersed in, or attempts to fit into. Acquisition of the culture through the medium of language may be facilitated or constrained by the individual’s language competency.

- Identity is a political mechanism, reflecting social changes and conflicts among different groups, and the inequality to accessing the material and symbolic resources of a society due to different power relations. Changes in the ideology and power relation may result in changes of the identity.

- Identity is hybrid, as the individual may bear different personal beliefs, cultural norms and social values, and constantly attempt to mingle them with one another that results in a multifaceted self that cannot be exactly described as one stereotype.

- Identity is of a dynamic nature, constantly evolving as the person’s experiences and attitudes change, as the person migrates either physically or metaphorically from one place to another, for various reasons. Here, I would like to give credit to Edward Said (1991), whose conception of the academic migrant is particularly insightful.

- Identity is expressed though verbal and nonverbal signs. Nonverbal signs such as clothes, hairstyle, and expressions can signify a person’s identity. Verbal signs such as spoken and written language, more accurately, spoken and written discourses are indicators of a person’s identity. Identity is constructed within discourse. However, because representation through language is intentional and political, identity represented through discourse is also intentional and political.
**Relationships of Different Identities to Writer Identity**

Identity theories in terms of social life, ethnicity, and language have directed current research in specific areas in which specific groups of people are concerned. The connection between language and identity construction has been widely recognized in many theories. For example, Mead (1934/1967) posited that “the language process is essential for the development of the self” (p. 135), Bakhtin (1981) addressed the intentionality of verbal communication in subject positioning, and Norton (2000) found that access to the target language is essential for identity construction for immigrants, to mention just a few.

A person’s social status, ethnicity, cultural affiliation, linguistic repertoire, and personal characteristics all have influence on the person’s writer identity. In the following, I highlight the relationship between various identities (e.g., social identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity, linguistic identity) and writer identity.

An individual’s social identity is not determined by the individual alone; it is bound up with how others perceive the individual (Thornborrow, 1999). Ochs (1993) considered social identity as “a cover term for a range of social personae, including social status, roles, positions, relationships, and institutional and other relevant community identities one may attempt to claim or assign in the course of social life” (p. 188). According to Ochs, individuals attempt to establish social identities for themselves and others through performing certain social acts and displaying certain stances verbally; thus language becomes a central issue in identity formation.

Ethnic identity seems to be a very sensitive concept because of the political implications involved in it. According to De Vos (1995), “the ethnic identity of a group consists of its subjective, symbolic, or emblematic use of any aspect of a culture, or a perceived separate origin and continuity in order to differentiate themselves from other groups” (p. 24, emphasis in original). Ethnic features such as clothing, food and language can become emblems because they
show others to what group a person’s loyalty belongs. “Ethnicity is a past sense of allegiance”, it is not static or immutable, but changes with time and political or social urgencies. De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1995) contended, “on its deepest level, ethnicity provides a quasi-religious sense of group belonging affording continuity and purpose” (p. 350). Ethnicity can be a source of conflict because ethnic groups may not remain in a fixed position within a stratified system (De Vos, 1995). Heller (1987) argued that ethnicity is a product of opposition, in relation to otherness. Language is an important means of accessing the ethnic social networks. “If you do not speak the right language, you do not have access to forming relationships with certain people, or to participating in certain activities” (p. 181). The connection between a person’s ethnic identity and linguistic identity is self-evident.

As it is the case that culture profoundly shapes a person’s identity, according to Holland et al. (1998), “different cultural conceptions of the self are … indicators of underlying cultural themes that affect not only conceptions of the self but also conceptions of emotion…as well as individuals’ patterns of cognition and affect” (p. 22). In applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, the discussion of cultural identity and linguistic identity lends a fresh perspective in the exploration of cultural influence on language leaning. These notions of identity are based on those developed in cultural studies, but are adjusted to meet the needs in the field of language studies. For example, Kramsch (1998) stated that an individual’s cultural identity might not carry the same meaning for this individual as for other people who would position him or her from their perspective. In “modern, historically complex, open societies,” it becomes more difficult to identify the cultural identity of any particular social group and its members because “the racial, ethnic, national identity imposed on an individual by the state’s bureaucratic system” and “that individuals’ self-ascription” may not equate (p. 67). Therefore, it seems unrealistic to maintain
the rigidity of any stereotype of cultural identity because the individual being positioned and the people who position this individual are all subject to potential changes.

Kramsch (1998) discussed two aspects of the cultural identity of a group. One is that the group identity pertains to how members in the group perceive what they are or what they should be. The other is that group identity is “a cultural perception”; it is how others perceive and determine what this identity should be. “What we perceive about a person’s culture and language is what we have been conditioned by our own culture to see, and the stereotypical models already built around our own. Group identity is a question of focusing and diffusion of ethnic, racial, national concepts or stereotypes” (pp. 67-68). Therefore, a person’s cultural identity is not solely determined by this person; it is also bound up with how others perceive this person (Thornborrow, 1999).

Language symbolizes cultural reality in the sense that speakers identify themselves and others as members of a social community through their use of the language (Kramsch, 1998). The natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and that group’s identity determines the inter-relationship between linguistic identity and cultural identity.

Thornborrow (1999) argued that language is a powerful means of exercising social control. Identifying oneself as belonging to a particular group often means adopting the linguistic conventions of that group. The words said and the way they are said often signify a person’s linguistic identity, through which the person constructs her/his individual, cultural, social and ethnic identities. He understood linguistic identity as determined by various factors such as a person’s accent and the variety of the language the person speaks. A person’s linguistic identity is based on his or her cultural identity, but goes beyond it. Kramsch (1998) articulated the multi-identity of individuals in connection with language, “Despite the entrenched belief in one language = one culture equation, individuals assume several collective identities that are likely
not only to change over time in dialogue with others, but are liable to conflict with one another” (p. 67).

It seems convenient to think that writer identity is the reflection of the writer’s cultural identity because the way a writer sees the world and the way he or she chooses to express him or herself are much constrained by the culture to which this writer belongs. However, writing as careful, thoughtful, and relatively permanent records of a person’s mind, may not always portray the author’s thoughts honestly. In some cases, the “consistency or ambivalence” in individuals’ identification manifests itself in language (Ivanič, 1997, p. 38). However, in many cases, it is not uncommon that writers’ “allegiances and therefore language choices” (p. 38) alter as they change and as the contexts of writing change. The identity created in the text may distort, exaggerate, or disguise the author’s real intent in producing the writing. In other words, there is intentionality in the identity portrayed, just as in other social, cultural contexts in which individuals can choose from a variety of identities. Therefore, the notion of writer identity is equally complicated or may become more complicated in the absence of face-to-face interaction and the thoughtful process of production.

The identity a writer adopts in writing encompasses multiple sources of influence. This identity may bear the writer’s cultural and individual characteristics, and his or her perceptions of writing. In addition, it also reflects the stances s/he assumes to be appropriate as a result of reader awareness (Ivanič, 1997). In other words, the notion of writer identity takes on a strategic characteristic of choice.

In higher learning institutions, the writer’s voice in academic writing is equally complicated despite its rigid genre. Hyland (2002b) stated that academic writing is “a variety of subject-specific literacies” through which members of the disciplines communicate with each
other (p. 352). The writer must adopt a particular identity by choosing the words in the way that interests and informs the reader within the established framework of the discipline.

The notion of writer identity is reduced to different components by Clark and Ivanič (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1997). I have introduced their model of writer identity in the previous section on *Identity and Writing*. In the following, I elaborate the significance of their model to my understanding of the AL writer identity, and present my model of AL writer identity.

**My Model of AL Writer Identity**

Clark and Ivanič’s (1997) conception of writer identity, that emphasizes the multiple components of the self in the text and the multiple possibilities of selfhood available in a socio-cultural context, has shed much light on my understanding of the identity constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed in a pluralistic world. However, their theory seems inadequate to explain the much more complicated writer identities of graduate students writing in their additional language in a foreign higher learning institution. There are more variables involved and more factors to be considered. Questions such as the writers’ language competency, first cultural influence, confusion about different academic conventions, feeling of not belonging as well as desire to belong, all mingle with other elements of writer identity as in the Clark and Ivanič model. What is more, their assertion that “the socially available possibilities for selfhood change much more slowly over time” (Ivanič, p. 29) does not apply for AL writers who move into unfamiliar social contexts with different possibilities for selfhood. Based on the theories and studies I have reviewed in the fields of sociology, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics, I have formulated a conceptual framework for the writer identity of AL graduate students (see Figure 1) to illustrate the complexity, fluidity, uncertainty, and hybridity of the self constructed in AL academic writing.
My framework has drawn on the writer identity model of Clark and Ivanič (1997) and Ivanič (1997), but incorporates other elements that are more characteristic of AL graduate student writers. My model of AL writer identity consists of eight elements grouped by fours. They overlap and intertwine with one another within and across groups. The first group or layer includes elements that are common for all graduate student writers: self as writer, self as student, self as scholar, and self as being. The second group or layer includes elements that are more congenial to AL graduate writers: self as non-native speaker, self as outsider, self as observer, and self as migrant. These four elements may or may not be shared by general first language academic writers; however, they capture the characteristic of AL graduate writing and the identity constructed in the text. The writer identity exhibited in the text may have extracts from all eight elements, or some of them, depending on many variables relevant to the writing of the text. These are the aspects that are investigated in this research.
The model incorporates the following points:

*Self as Writer:* This element highlights the importance of language competency and writing skills in representing self; it is based on Ivanič’s (1997) four aspects of writer identity, but the focus is on “discoursal self” and “self as author”.

*Self as Student:* This represents one of the “socially available possibilities for self-hood” (Ivanič, 1997). It includes the required or perceived roles and responsibilities of the student, such as observing disciplinary conventions; showing respect to the authorities in the discipline;

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Figure 1. Writer Identity of AL Graduate Students

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showing progress in knowledge building in writing; and being creative and critical within the boundaries set by the authorities.

_Self as Scholar:_ This represents another of the “socially available possibilities for selfhood” (Ivanič, 1997). It incorporates the writer’s sense of self as a scholar by displaying academic/professional knowledge and initiative/critical ideas in written texts and by promoting academic vitality and freedom in the field.

_Self as Being:_ This element is a combination of “autobiographical self” (Ivanič, 1997) and idiosyncratic self, incorporating the writer’s personal history, as well as personal characteristics and personal writing styles.

_Self as NNS:_ This is a very important element of AL students’ writer identity. It highlights the fact that as non-native speakers (NNS) of English or Chinese, the writers have to balance the influence of first language, first cultural thought patterns and rhetorical traditions, and different beliefs pertaining to writing and education; the writers also have to live with the uncertainty and constraints of using an additional language (cf. Li & Wang, 2004). In addition, this element also includes the writers’ understanding of different ways of critical thinking and text ownership and different ways of presenting self in text (authorial presence).

_Self as Outsider:_ This element represents the reality of being newcomers to the host culture: they have less “socially available possibilities for self-hood” (Ivanič, 1997). It includes such points as different cultural identities and biased social positioning because they are likely to be misinterpreted and narrowly/stereotypically positioned. They are “souls in exile” (Li, 2007a)

_Self as Observer:_ This element highlights their self-positioning that may align with social positioning of them as outsiders. It incorporates their major style of learning, i.e., learning by observing, noticing, imitating, and comparing. Some observe simply for learning, others observe
to look for reconciliation of two or more cultures, “a suturing point” (Hall, 1997), a hybrid “third space” (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993; Li & Girvan, 2004).

*Self as Migrant:* This element captures one of the main characteristics of the AL writer identity. As migrating knowledge pursuers, they may absorb different worldviews along their journeys and may bring traveling, working, and learning experiences into new contexts and academic writing. They are, therefore, amenable to reconstruct a performative self and ready for claiming different identities as the situation changes; they may embrace challenges and diversity of different local/academic cultures and are open to immersion in the global culture. Some may set a goal to become a “global soul” (Iyer, 2000; Li, 2007a).

This new theoretical framework is developed on the basis of Mead’s social self and self as “I”, Goffman’s performative self and discredited self, Clark and Ivanič’s discoursal self and autobiographic self; it also incorporates Bhabha’s idea of the third space, Said’s notion of academic migrant, among others. The significance of this framework lies in its potential contribution to the study of an emerging terrain of identity inquiry among AL writers—a possibly marginalized, stigmatized, but increasingly promising group in the contemporary multicultural world.

In the following chapters, I present the methodology and data of an empirical study on additional language writers in higher learning institutions in an additional culture. After the descriptive and interpretive analyses of data, I revisit this AL writer identity model for further justification or modification, as appropriate.
Chapter 4

Research Methods

This chapter consists of the conceptualization of the methodology--interpretive qualitative research, and the detailed information of the methods used in the study, including selection of participants and contexts of the study, as well as methods of data collection and data analysis.

Interpretive Research Methodology

Interpretive research is a branch of qualitative research. Qualitative research is “a commitment to some version of naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter and an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of postpositivism” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). Schram (2003) maintained that “qualitative inquiry is fundamentally interpretive” (p. 9).

Interpretive research focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Myers, 1997). According to Klein and Myers (1999), the basic assumption for interpretive research is that knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings.

In addition to the emphasis on the socially constructed nature of reality, interpretive research also focuses on the lived experiences of both researcher and research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rowlands (2005) asserted, “interpretive research acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints shaping this process” (p. 81).

In terms of methodology, interpretive research aims at producing an understanding of the social context of the phenomenon, as well as the process through which the phenomenon influences and is influenced by the social context (Rowlands, 2005; Walsham, 1995). Interpretive
approaches share a set of “subjectivist assumptions about the nature of lived experience and social order” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1998, p. 138). Interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them.

Interpretive theorists put an emphasis on claims about the impossibility of capturing an essential meaning to human social behaviour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, interpretive theorists note the profound effect of the researcher’s already developed understandings and categories on the (interpreted) situation. They also note the need for introspection in regards to analysis of data. Finally, these theorists stress that knowledge emerges as the result of communication, dialogue, and social interaction and practice (inclusive of the interaction of the researcher) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is these claims, and in particular, the final claim that I maintain in my research project as well.

Educational researchers using interpretive theory as methodology follow the above precepts. Some representative texts in interpretive educational research include Lincoln and Guba’s Naturalistic Inquiry (1985), van Manen’s Researching Lived Experience (1997), and the chapters on interpretive inquiry in Denzin and Lincoln’s Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (2005). From Lincoln and Guba, I take the conclusion that educational research is irreducibly value-laden; normative claims are always built into descriptive claims; from van Manen, I take the conclusion that the proper locus of description is the experience, event, and situation of the research participant. From all, I take the conclusion that multiple senses of self are often at work in the construction of identity.

In this research project, I engaged eleven participants, six Chinese students studying at a Canadian university and five international students studying at a Chinese university. The lived experience of the participants are interpreted and made meaningful through analysis of their spoken and written data. In analyzing data, I was aware that it may not be possible to draw clear-
cut distinctions between the different selves, and between the past, present and future because in any story told, multiple selves speak, and that these selves are temporal productions residing in both the present and a re-constructed past (Quinlan, 1996). Nevertheless, in many cases, one sense of self was highlighted by the participant and in these cases, categorization of a distinct self was possible.

**Participants and Contexts**

My original plan was to find approximately ten international graduate students as participants; half of them being Chinese students studying at an English-speaking university in Canada, and the other half being native English speakers from North America studying at a university in China. Both groups would be students enrolled full-time in Master’s or doctoral programs in humanities and social sciences, which require a considerable amount of academic writing and advanced writing skills in their additional language in order to complete the programs successfully. They should have had the majority of their education in their home country.

I chose QN University\(^1\) and FN University\(^2\) because both are considered among the top-three universities in their respective countries and it is likely that they correspond in terms of academic merits, social status, and international reputation. In addition, both universities have a large population of international students.

I sent recruitment emails to the Chinese Students’ Association at QN University to solicit participants. I contacted the Graduate School of FN University and a friend who was a graduate student of the university to help with recruiting the participants in China. I attached the Letter of Information (see Appendix C) and Questionnaire (see Appendix D) to the participant recruitment

\(^1\) QN University is the code name for the Canadian university, sometimes shortened as QN in this and the following chapters.
email, informing them that their answering the questions would serve as consent for participating in the first phase of the study. They were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. They could request removal of all or part of their data. They were not obliged to answer any questions that they found objectionable, and they were assured that no information collected would be reported to anyone.

The recruitment of participants was successful. Eventually more than eleven students volunteered to be the participants. I chose the ones who met these criteria: 1) they were full-time registered students; 2) they were in a graduate program; 3) their academic work involved written assignments; 4) they were able to participate in all three stages of data collection and were able to respond to my follow-up emails. I felt it important that these participants be able to commit the time to respond to my emails and were at a location where I would be able to interview them in person during the period of time that I was conducting the interviews. Pseudonyms were used for the participants to protect their identity except for the ones who preferred that I use their real name.

My original plan of finding four to six North American English-speaking students in the Master’s or doctoral programs at FN turned out to be a challenge. In the first place, there was an absence of Canadian students who were registered full-time in a graduate program, and who were ideal for comparison with the Chinese students in Canada. Secondly, the number of American students was also comparatively fewer while the majority of international students at FN University were from Japan and Korea. Furthermore, there was a scarcity of students from Australia and the UK. Students of a variety of other nationalities added to the diversity in student population on FN’s campus. Eventually, I had five graduate-level students who agreed to

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2 FN University is the code name for the Chinese university, sometimes shortened as FN in this and the following chapters.
participate in all three stages of data collection: email questionnaire, writing sample collection, and interview. They were Jameson and Jenny from the United States, Cesar from Colombia, Ilhane from Cape Verde Island, and Mariola from Spain. Except for Mariola who was a PhD student in Chinese History, these students were all registered in a Master’s program at the Department of International Politics and Relations, majoring in Chinese Politics and Diplomacy, one of the programs FN offered to international students with English being the language of instruction.

Interestingly, all the international student participants registered in the Graduate School of FN University used their Chinese name, while in daily communication they chose to use their different names, that is, either the Chinese name or the name in their own language, on different occasions. For example, Mariola consistently used her Spanish name in all our email correspondence in English. However, when I called and interviewed her in Chinese, she automatically switched to her Chinese name so naturally, that I had a feeling that she really liked her Chinese name.

I categorize these five students into two groups because the two American students in fact were using their first language in their academic program in China while the other three students had to use their additional language—either English or Chinese to complete their assignments. It appeared that the challenges with which they were confronted were different in this respect.

On the other side of the globe in Canada, thanks to the large number of Chinese students overseas, I was able to be in touch with students in a variety of programs across disciplines. I collected data from six students of Chinese origin who came to study in Canada at the graduate level. They had all received their prior education in Mainland China before they entered their respective programs in Canada. They were Yuchen, a PhD student in Sociology; Xitong, a PhD student in History; Wei, a PhD student in Geography; Hanyu, a Master’s student in Education;
Zhong, a PhD student in Economics; and Jian, a Master’s student in Geological Science. The reason why Jian was included in this study was that his academic work involved a considerable amount of writing and he seemed to have big concerns about writing academic texts and about constructing an appropriate self, in spite of his discipline not falling into the category of humanities and social sciences.

Data Collection

I employed multiple data collection methods to secure a more comprehensive picture of the issues in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Data collection was completed in three phases: 1) collecting email questionnaires; 2) collecting writing samples; and 3) conducting one-on-one interviews (see Appendix E for guideline questions). I also sent follow-up emails to participants for further elaboration on some of the points after these three phases. The questionnaire was designed in English, the only language that all the participants understood. The essays of both groups were collected in the language in which they were written. The interviews and email follow-ups were administered in English and/or Chinese, depending on the participant’s preference. All the email responses were transferred into word document for the convenience of data analysis.

The majority of the data was collected over a period of six months consecutively whereas responses to my follow-up email questions lasted for another six months. The whole data collection process was over a year. At the first stage, the participants’ answers to the email questionnaire provided basic personal and demographic information. The questionnaire took about 20-30 minutes to complete. At the second stage, I collected roughly two pieces of essays from each participant (some offered more than two). Initial analysis of their writing provided me with more insights into the author’s voice in texts. However, the writing samples were not
analyzed in depth due to the limitations regarding space and focus in this thesis. They were occasionally used as illustrations of what the participants said about their writing. Questions raised in these two stages, which lasted for approximately three months of time, were clarified and elaborated in the third stage, face-to-face interviews. I also asked questions regarding the participants’ social and academic life as well as their academic work in the interview.

The interview was conducted at a time that was convenient to the participant. The location was a neutral and private place, such as an office, a classroom, or the student’s dormitory or living room, so that confidentiality and security could be guaranteed. I asked the participant to sign a formal consent form before the interview. The interview was audio-recorded, and lasted for approximately one hour, with the exception that a few participants were very interested in the study and volunteered to offer more information, which resulted in some two-hour interviews.

I used a digital-recorder in the interview and transferred the recording to my personal computer for transcribing. I cleaned up the transcripts by removing “umms”, “ahs”, etc., so that the language read more smoothly and more comprehensibly but the original meaning remained. Grammar errors are not corrected and are not particularly identified as sic in the text. By doing so, I try to keep the characteristics of each participant in their use of the language, be it first language or additional, oral or written. Any remaining or newly emergent questions and unresolved issues that needed to be clarified with the participants were communicated in follow-up emails that I sent to them during the following six months after the interview. The participants’ email responses were all transferred into word documents for the convenience of data analysis. I will delete all the data three years after this research draws to a close.

Most participants preferred English as the major language of interview except for one student in Canada and one student in China who preferred Chinese. The difference was that for the Chinese student in Canada, he was using his first language, whereas for the international
student in China, she was using her additional language. In most cases, Chinese language was occasionally used, only when necessary. I translated all the Chinese conversations into English because I am fluent in both languages. I asked a peer graduate student who was fluent in both English and Chinese to go through the data for translation verification. All the transcripts and translations were verified by the participants to ensure that they reflected their thoughts and what they intended to say in the language they preferred. By doing so, I hoped that the participants were able to express their thoughts more accurately in the language with which they felt comfortable. The way they used a certain language to express certain meanings has shed light on my inquiry.

Data Analysis

I employed a combination of descriptive and interpretive approaches in analyzing data, endeavoring to identify emerging themes through cyclical analyses. My research questions served as a guideline for my inquiry; however, I tried to avoid being constrained by these questions. I left my mind open to new questions and themes emerging and proceeded with the inquiry into them more in-depth. Data analysis was an ongoing “self-corrective process” (Schram, 2003, p. 75); I drew upon earlier descriptive analysis to guide analysis of later data and make interpretive sense of the diverse patterning in the data. However, in the ongoing process, all the data collected went through three stages of analysis.

In the first stage, I read through the data collected from each participant to get a broad sense of their contributions. Because I asked them the same questions in the questionnaire and similar questions in interviews, I could locate the important points without much difficulty. For example, all of the participants experienced difficulties in language and communication at an early stage of their migrating experience, most of them articulated a strong sense of self
belonging to their home culture, their macro-writing (learning-to-write) process in the additional language all involved translation, imitation, and conformation.

In the second stage, I analyzed data in detail to look for themes and supporting details for these themes. I created tables for all data to do explicit coding and sorting. There were three columns in the table—on the left were the data, in the middle were the key concepts or themes that came out of the data, and on the right were my notes and brief analysis. The first step in identifying the themes was to read a segment of the transcript carefully and look for main ideas articulated by the participant. Then, I treated other segments of the transcript in the same way for other themes and analysis (see Appendix F for an example). After I finished analyzing the data for one participant, I moved on to the next until I finished this level of analysis for all the eleven participants. The themes identified in this step include ones regarding life in the additional culture and sense of belonging, such as sports, music, friends, religion, home culture, prior education, additional culture, work/study, identity, Chinese, English, Canadians; as well as ones regarding academic life and writing, such as writing, thinking, reading, AL writing strategy, teacher/professor, advisor/supervisor, classmates, question, respect, student, language, imitation, translation, criticism, etc. The second step was to identify larger themes by collapsing the first layer themes I had identified. I grouped the representative quotes in the data for one participant regarding similar themes so that larger themes could be identified (See Appendix G for an example). For example, I put all the data regarding writing and writer identity together to see how they articulated their senses of self in writing and what were the factors affecting their writer identity. The third step was to merge the larger themes into several major themes for further interpretative analysis. This stage of the analysis was based on the descriptive analysis but it compared the themes synchronically among the data from all the participants (See Appendix H for an example). In other words, the themes in the descriptive analysis were synthesized into
major themes worthy of more in-depth analysis. Finally, the interpretive analysis is followed with the discussion that was based on data but went beyond data. Concepts, themes, and theories relevant to data were unpacked to elaborate on my critical stances towards them.

In the third stage, I went back to data and my analyses, and undertook a detailed, specific analysis to make sure that important points were not missed and data were not misinterpreted. Language reflects and constructs the situation or context in which it is used (Gee, 1999); I looked for not only the language of the texts but also the meaning between and beyond the lines—the significant meaning that revealed the condition that I investigated.

The data gathered from the questionnaire was first analyzed in order to provide an overall outlook that might assist in categorizing the data generated from other sources. The coding and categorizing of the participants’ discourse obtained through written work, interviews, and email follow-ups were more focused on information relevant to the research questions. However, options were open for any unexpected themes. The purpose of the data analysis was to present a narrative that seeks to understand the characteristics of identity construction in student writing, and to provide a description of the norms and values that underlie linguistic and cultural behaviors, as well as to interpret the deeper meaning that such narratives and descriptions reveal to us in either an implicit or explicit manner.

With regard to quoting the participants, I was consistent in using their original words even though there were grammar errors, punctuation misuses and other minor language problems, as I mentioned earlier. Most of the data were in the participants’ additional language; only three interviews were conducted in the participants’ first language: two of them in English with the American students and one in Chinese with a Chinese student. Their use of the language bore features of their linguistic identity and personal identity.
Codes were used to refer to the source of the quote or information. For the names of the participants, I used the first two letters of their name (mostly pseudonyms) to indicate the person. Therefore, JA was Jameson; JE was Jenny; IL was Ilhane; CE was Cesar; MA was Mariola; ZH was Zhong; YU was Yuchen; XI was Xitong; WE was Wei; HA was Hanyu; and JI was Jian. These participants are reported in this order in the next two data presentation chapters. For different types of data, T represented transcript; Q represented questionnaire; E referred to Email; and W referred to writing. W1 means writing sample 1; likewise, W2 and W3 for samples 2 and 3. The code letter representing types of data was added to the code letter representing each participant. Please see the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jameson</td>
<td>JAQ</td>
<td>JAT</td>
<td>JAE</td>
<td>JAW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>JEQ</td>
<td>JET</td>
<td>JEE</td>
<td>JEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilhane</td>
<td>ILQ</td>
<td>I LT</td>
<td>I LE</td>
<td>ILW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar</td>
<td>CEQ</td>
<td>CET</td>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>CEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariola</td>
<td>MAQ</td>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>MAE</td>
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<td>Zhong</td>
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<td>Yuchen</td>
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<td>Xitong</td>
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<td>Wei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanyu</td>
<td>HAQ</td>
<td>HAT</td>
<td>HAE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jian</td>
<td>JIQ</td>
<td>JIT</td>
<td>JIE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other codes are used referring to the names of universities that the participants mentioned frequently to keep confidentiality. The two major universities being investigated in this research use only two letters as codes (FN for the Chinese university and QN for the Canadian university) for brevity and convenience of pronunciation. They appear in the text many times and I want to
distinguish them from other universities by using fewer letters in their code names. Other universities are coded as follow. The first two letters represent the country—CH for China and CA for Canada; the last letter is the code for the specific university. These universities were mentioned by the participants a number of times and are better represented with code names instead of a general term like “a Chinese university” or “a Canadian university”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese universities (CH)</th>
<th>CHR University</th>
<th>Mentioned by Ilhane</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHI University</td>
<td>In data about Mariola</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CHB University</td>
<td>Mentioned by Yuchen and Jian</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian universities (CA)</th>
<th>CAM University</th>
<th>Mentioned by Xitong</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAG University</td>
<td>Mentioned by Wei</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT University</td>
<td>Mentioned by Jian</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I present the descriptive analysis of data by groups; within each group, the participants are presented individually. Group 1 were the two American students studying in their first language in the Chinese university and had moderate use of the Chinese language in daily communication; group 2 were the three international students studying in China using their additional language—English or Chinese for academic or communication purposes; group 3 were the Chinese students studying at the Canadian university using English as an additional language. Groups 1 and 2 are reported in Chapter 5; group 3 in Chapter 6. When presenting each participant, I first provide background information concerning the person’s country of origin, personality, interests, social life, career goals and sense of the self in general in the additional cultural context. Then, I provide information on academic issues, such as educational background, language learning experiences, views on current program, sense of self in writing and in additional academic culture.
I relied heavily on interview data to hear what the participants said about their educational experiences, personal identities, and writer identities, as well as the inner connections among them. Questionnaire data were thoroughly consulted; email data were cited occasionally when relevant. I used the textual data only as examples of the claims they made or points I wanted to make regarding their writing. The focus is on what the participants said about themselves and how they felt about their experiences.

I present the interpretive analysis of data by the major themes I identified through the descriptive analysis. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The results of interpretive analysis are presented in Chapters 7 and 8. I also revisited my additional language writer identity model and modified it based on what I have obtained from the data analyses.
Chapter 5

Additional Language Students in China

The results of this study are presented in this chapter and Chapter 6. This chapter deals with the data from the five international students at the Chinese university. I categorize the participants into two groups. The first group includes the two American students studying in their first language in the Chinese university and who had moderate use of the Chinese language in daily communication. The second group includes the three students studying in China using their additional language—English or Chinese for academic and/or other communication purposes. I must note that except for Mariola in the second group, who was in a doctoral program in Chinese History, the other four students were all registered in the same Master’s program in Chinese Politics and Diplomacy. Therefore, I will be making some connections among their responses when required.

I first provide information on the educational and ethnic background of the participants, their language proficiencies, their social lives and their senses of belonging in the host culture in general. Then I focus on their academic life and the sense of self in academic contexts. The quotes in the subtitles are some of the major points in these subsections. It is obvious that language issues are a perpetual theme in all the data I collected, particularly the language of the host culture in which they were living.

American AL Students in China

Jameson and Jenny have been placed in this group for a few reasons. First, they both came from the U.S., one of the major English-speaking countries. Second, they both learned
Chinese before they went to China. Third, for both of them, the language of instruction in this Master’s program in China was their first language, English. The major difference between them is that Jameson is of Jewish origin and felt a strong affiliation to the Jewish culture whereas Jenny is of Chinese origin but explicitly distanced herself from the Chinese culture.

*Jameson: “I feel [I’m] more a Jewish people”*

Jameson arrived in Shanghai a little later than the majority of international students at FN University; as a result he was not able to live in the International Student Residence on campus. He rented a place off campus, which was not common in Chinese universities because most full-time, on-site students live in university residences where food and accommodation are less expensive. He had a very typical Chinese name, which he received while studying Chinese in the US.

Locating Jameson was an interesting process. My preliminary contact with him was successful; he was happy to be a participant in the study. His emails were always brief but gave exactly the information that I requested. Nevertheless, he seemed to have disappeared afterward. When I almost felt that I should leave him alone, he responded to my email saying that he was not sure if he would be able to participate in the rest of the study because he was going to quit the program, which was a surprise to me. I will go back to the reasons for his quitting the program more specifically later when I present the research data regarding academic work.

Jameson lived an active life in China. He always made sure he spent time on exercise and with friends even when he was busy with his academic work. He belonged to a gym and exercised regularly. He made friends by playing sports, and this circle of friends mainly consisted of Americans with whom he played squash and Chinese with whom he played basketball.
For Jameson, arguing with people was fun; arguing with authorities and proving them wrong in public was even more fun. This argumentative aspect of his personality brought him good times when with friends. He had some strategies for arguing with people when it was just “for fun.” He was considerate of other people’s feelings about him, therefore, “at the end of it [the argument], you want to find some common grounds because some people take things personally” (JAT, p. 8).

Jameson struck me as a person who always had a goal to pursue and a reason for his decisions. He chose this MA program due to his “interest regarding China’s growing role in international affairs” (JAQ, p. 1). He chose to study at FN because of its great reputation and location in Shanghai. He left the program because it was not good for his “personal growth and intellectual growth” (JAT, p. 3). He enjoyed arguing with people so much that not having a fair venue for argument in his class really bothered him. However, his career goal was in fact in International Corporate Law. He planned to go to a law school after serving in the Israeli army, which was what he was going to do after he left this program. With a touch of humor, he said that he could practice his argument skills in the law school in future. Born to a family of Jewish origin, he had a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish culture —“I feel more a Jewish people” (p. 9). Fighting in the Israeli army was a way of demonstrating his cultural affiliation and his political ideology about the contemporary world, although he claimed that, “I don’t have any political inclinations” (p. 1).

Jameson repeatedly articulated his disinterest in politics, “I hate politics” (JAT, p. 1). However, a few facts did not seem to support his claim. For example, the program he chose to study was about politics. In addition, his way of communicating with friends was usually argumentative on sensitive topics; politics was involved inevitably. Furthermore, his reason for
leaving the program was also associated with different political views on issues under discussion and on the ways such views were presented and treated in class.

*Jameson’s Academic Life: “I just follow what I did at home”*

Jameson spoke three languages. His language learning experiences indicated that he was a motivated language learner. Without doubt, growing up in the United States meant his first language was English, but he learned Hebrew all the way through elementary and secondary school. He also stayed in Israel for two years (1999-2000) and attended a high school there. His language competence in Hebrew was further strengthened by frequent visits to friends and family who are Hebrew speakers. He started to learn Chinese during his undergraduate program in an American university. His major was History with a concentration in Chinese History. His Chinese learning experience also included studying at a university in Beijing for two months in the summer of 2004 and studying in the Faculty of Business and Economics at a Hong Kong University for five months in 2005. Therefore, when he entered his Master’s program in Chinese Politics and Diplomacy at FN University, he already had a good command of Chinese as well as the subject knowledge. Unfortunately, this program was offered in English--his first language; his chance to further improve the Chinese language was greatly reduced as a result.

Nevertheless, Jameson’s distaste for this academic program had little to do with language. This is how he commented on it:

I thoroughly dislike the program for a variety of reasons. For one, there is a lack of real intellectual debate. Whether spoken or unspoken, there is much resistance to criticism of China or its policies. Though I understand this is the norm in China, it’s abnormal and rather constricting for a graduate of a western university.
Many of my classmates arrived in China, and in this program in particular, on scholarship from the Chinese government. A great percentage of my classmates are African scholarship students. And unfortunately, it appears that my classmates have not had the level of education one receives in the west (content, critical thinking, presentation, etc.). Thus for me, the level of my classmates are further restrictive. (JAQ, p. 2)

Apparently, he was aware of the different norms in education between China and the west, and the different skills one learns through education between the west and African countries. From his point of view, the Chinese norm of lack of intellectual debate in class was constricting and the level of his “African” classmates was restrictive to a western graduate student like himself who possessed the range of knowledge, critical thinking skills and presentation skills necessary for a Master’s program. However, from the interview data, when he repeatedly articulated that he enjoyed the “fun” of arguing with people and embarrassing authorities in public (see below), I found his understanding of “real intellectual debate” in fact referred to something that is not called critical thinking in Chinese culture but rather is considered as rude and impolite behavior in academic settings.

Jameson must have been a highly competitive student in his class given the academic training he had received and the knowledge he had acquired in the field he studied. He had learned more about the subject than other students because his undergraduate program and his study at Hong Kong were all related to this Master’s program. In addition, he had read lots of materials on the subject before he came to China. He was very well prepared for this academic program. Apparently, this explains why he thought the level of his classmates restrictive because the majority of the class “may not know as much about the Chinese history as expected in a Master’s program” (JAT, p. 5). He was the only participant in China who had done so much in preparation for his future study. This mismatch between his expectations for a Master’s program
and the reality in the program might also account for his quitting the program though it was not the direct reason.

He realized that a big difference between the American professors and Chinese professors was their attitudes towards government policies. He was upset by the Chinese professors’ conformity to the government and he resisted conforming to this kind of academic culture himself:

In the United States, professors are very critical about the government; they hate George Bush. But here it is the opposite. Professors always agree with the government because their careers depend on their political views. So the problem is that I was raised to do it, my education was about picking things for yourself, doing things for yourself, being different, being original. I don’t think I can change that for being here; and that brought me a problem, but I wasn’t going to give up my personal beliefs and opinions. (JAT, p. 2)

He believed that a good teacher was one who was able to distance argument from opinion:

They will love it if someone can argue a point with them as long as they can back it up, forgetting the grades. Even if you say something totally absurd, with a totally absurd thesis, as long as you can prove it through facts, then sure, you can get an A. It’s more about the process than about the solution. (JAT, p. 8)

This was how he was educated in his home culture. To him, education was not about teaching what was right and what was wrong, but to give the learner a tool for learning, to train their ability to argue or reason for their own sake. However, he steered clear of cultural stereotype in this regard. He thought that western professors also had different personalities; some were opinionated and would mark based on the argument instead of the way it was argued.

He loved to argue not only on social occasions, but also in classrooms. He enjoyed challenging professors in public, “that makes it more fun to argue, because in private I have to go and see you as a professor; but in public it is exciting to prove you are wrong” (JAT, p. 9). His
personal belief of being an equal to the professor in class (despite his awareness of the cultural differences) and his aggressive personality of confronting authority led him to this event that ended his academic career in China. It was another argument:

In one of the classes I was sitting in, a girl made some critical comments, the teacher responded very harshly, and I backed her up and backed up her argument, and he got very upset and left. … but just then, I realized that it was not the environment that would be good for my growth academically and intellectually. Just because a student presents an alternative opinion, the teacher disagrees with her point and storms out of the classroom ‘cause he was so upset, that’s not the environment [where] I can learn. It’s very emotional too about political ideas. (JAT, p. 8)

He told me that what bothered him was not the political content being argued, but the way the professor handled the argument and spoke to students who disagreed. It seemed that his good argument skills of finding a common ground in the end did not help him in this classroom discussion at all. He did not even get to the point that he was able to look for common ground. When the professor stormed out of the classroom, all possibilities of negotiation terminated at that very moment.

When I asked him if it was his personality or the differences between the two cultures that played a critical role in his decision of quitting the program, he said:

Both. Personally I think I am very argumentative and aggressive. Sometimes I argue just because I think it is fun, just because I like to get people get angry with me. [laughs] But it is also cultural, and political. I think it is not Asian Chinese culture, but China Chinese culture. Maybe if you spoke to Chinese people in Singapore or Hong Kong, you get a different answer. If you speak to a professor, you ask the same type of question, you will
get different types of answers. Different education, I think, the type of environment. (JAT, p. 2)

Jameson was a well-trained academic writer with good writing strategies. Before writing, he tried to read publications from different perspectives, looking for primary new sources. Then, he would begin to locate the theoretical framework that he could apply in support of his argument. For example, if I was going to write on China-Iran relation and how does that influence nuclear crises, I would read American sources, Israeli sources, Iranian sources, Chinese sources, and getting all perspectives, try to understand from their level, how they are thinking, how do they make judgments. After that, I can begin to find theory on internationalization, how they interact with each other, etc. and after that, I want to tell my own opinions about that. First I need to understand everyone else’s positions in order to argue my own point. So writing a paper and arguing my point, I need to understand why people say the things they say, why they think they are right, why they think they are wrong. (JAT, p. 6)

He transferred the writing conventions he had learned in the United States to China.

I just follow what I did at home, which is basically for making arguments and arguing with evidence to prove I was correct. History work is pretty much all that arguments, you can say whatever you want as long as you have the facts and you make an argument and put all the doubts together to prove it. The logical reasoning I learned at high school and college, I did it for papers here and I tried it everywhere. (p. 6)

He seemed to have no problem traversing borders and cultures, but he didn’t change his identity as a writer at all. He had no interest in knowing the writing conventions in the additional culture and making some adjustments to the way he presented his ideas.
He had a strong sense of self in writing. Since he wrote in English in China, language was not an issue for him. As far as content is concerned, he had no problem presenting his strong arguments and demonstrating an effective authorial presence in the texts. “Even if I write something they [the professors] don’t want to hear, I’m going to write it anyway” because he thought that as a foreigner in China, nothing would happen to him if he defied the authorities (JAT, p. 4). To be more specific, he could not get into trouble and could not get censored for what he wrote. He seemed worry-free in this respect.

Jameson was also aware of his audience and the genre as he wrote. He would not write academic papers in the same way he wrote to his friends. For academic papers, the audience was the professor, so the text would include less general information, the language would be more formal and sophisticated, and the content would be more in-depth. However, this did not mean that he would change his arguments or his explicit authorial presence in the text: “I’m not going to change my perspectives, my opinions based on who my audience is. My opinion is still mine, whether they agree with it or not, I am not going to alter my arguments for that” (JAT, p. 7). He seemed to have much concern of having his voice heard by his audience regardless of who they were. The formality of the language could be easily changed, but not the argument, the most critical part of the writing.

Although Jameson mainly wrote in English for academic purposes, he had had some experiences writing in Hebrew. He would follow the same style as he did in English writing, but writing itself became more difficult and translation from English was necessary and inevitable in the process.

I have trouble grasping all the nuances in a language when it is not my first language. I would miss those subtleties, those double meanings. I know English in a second. But [in another language], I can’t figure out meaning when it is sarcastic, and when the tone is
different. That’s when I know that I have missed things; I would miss the whole meaning of it; so it’s harder. (JAT, p. 7)

His concern about grasping the subtleties and nuances in a language was shared by other additional language writers I interviewed for this study. It is apparent that he was lucky for not having to write in an additional language. However, he missed the chance to experience the struggles in additional language writing and therefore missed the chance to grow in the additional language and additional culture.

**Jenny: “I don’t like to announce my nationality”**

Jenny gave me the impression of being inconsistent in what she said and did, and being rather dependent on her mother even though she lived in China and her mother lived in the United States. She talked to her mother frequently through MSN Messenger; “my mother said…” was often the reason for her actions. In our initial contact, Jenny appeared very supportive. When she received my package containing all the information I needed to provide to participants, she disappeared for a while and then sent me a couple of notes saying that she would reply soon. Her notion of “soon” proved to mean a few months as I later found out. She was rarely able to respond to me in a timely fashion. Every time she said politely that she would respond soon, I realized that my patience would be tried. She was the first participant I contacted, but her data were the last to be in place. It took me over a year to get what she promised to deliver.

Jenny was Chinese American. She was born and grew up in the United States, so to her, the association with China was mainly through connections with her parents. She had a beautiful Chinese name, but that does not imply anything about her affiliation to the Chinese culture. Her
Chinese language skills reached the ³HSK Intermediate level 8, which meant she should be quite fluent in Chinese. However, she said that she had to consult the dictionary or her mother frequently when she had difficulties in written or spoken communication in Chinese. She preferred English in all our communications in emails, phone calls and interview. With a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from an American university, she came to FN in order to gain some first-hand “China experiences” (JEQ, p. 1). Without a clear career goal, she was simply exploring this new cultural context.

There seemed to be many contradictions in Jenny’s Chinese experience. She made a conscious effort to learn Chinese but chose to study in a program instructed in English. She was disappointed to find that the content was not challenging and the cultures of teaching and learning were distant to her American educational experience. She had intended to get immersed in this additional culture, but ended up hanging out only with her American friends who had similar agendas to hers in China. She tried to watch Chinese news at least twice a week, but she said “I have to be completely honest, it’s a bit too political correct for me. I miss CNN” (JEQ, p. 2). She seemed in no hurry to improve her Chinese while she was in China, and she was not very keen on reaching out to understand this new culture. These are just a couple of examples; more can be found below.

Jenny had a wide range of interests. She had learned watercolor painting and loved various genres of music. She enjoyed sports and outdoor activities such as swimming, yoga, hiking and jogging. She claimed “a particular interest in Chinese art history, especially the Tang Dynasty cave temples and paintings from the Song Dynasty” (JET, p. 1). This was rare even among young people in China, and this made Jenny a unique girl in terms of artistic taste. It

³ HSK (hànyǔ shuǐpíng kǎoshì 汉语水平考试) is the standard Chinese Proficiency Test that measures the Chinese language proficiency of people whose first language is not Chinese Mandarin. HSK is comprised of HSK Basic, HSK Elementary-Intermediate, and HSK Advanced.
seemed convenient to generalize that she would feel more at ease in getting immersed in this additional culture. However, things did not happen in a way that could be easily generalized. The Jenny in real life felt like a fish being removed from a comfortable tank to a different and complicated pond. She said:

I haven’t been feeling much connected or immersed as I would like to. There aren’t much to do for young people in Shanghai besides the usual nightlife. Culturally speaking, there aren’t a lot of exhibitions on arts and music. The few ones I’ve been to were all directed or influenced by foreigners (Western influences, so to speak). In other words, not a whole lot of Chinese flavors in the art industry. The city itself lacks its own color and flavor…I see array of foreign influences, but none expresses the true colors of China. (JET, p. 1)

Apparently, she was not impressed by contemporary Chinese arts. She seemed to have come to China looking for the exoticism of the eastern culture but was disappointed by the modernization in China.

Jenny was aware of the cultural differences, but found it very difficult for her to adjust herself to “this fast-changing and different environment” (JET, p. 1) in Shanghai. Her criticism of China, and Shanghai in particular, was mainly “the reaction to the clashes in cultural differences” (p.1). She and her friends usually complained about the lack of courtesy among people and crowdedness on buses and trains. She found that “the social atmosphere oozes indifferences and nonchalant attitudes” (p. 1). In the data I collected from her, including the questionnaire, the interview, and the emails, Jenny was consistent in her dislike of the city, with the exception of a follow-up email a year later, which I will present below.

She didn’t have a set schedule for her study, social activities and personal interests. She felt that the university provided few extracurricular activities, and the ones provided were not interesting to her; so she frequented the museums and various art galleries, practiced yoga and
exercised in the gym several times a week, and chatted with friends about their lives often. She felt uncomfortable with “the hustle and the bustle” of the city, thinking that it was “too rowdy and disorganized” for her (JET, p. 2). She understood that she had to learn to adjust, but this “fast-paced and fast-developing” city seemed not to have much for her to appreciate (p. 2).

Jenny’s original plan was to make many local friends and immerse herself within the Chinese society, wishing to “learn about a society that I’ve never stepped foot in” (JET, p. 2). Unfortunately, it proved very difficult for her, and the difficulty was again caused by differences. According to her,

The students here, the ones my age that is, operate a very different lifestyle and mentalities on life. Our conversation levels proved very awkward. I don’t mean they should be flared up about partying and such, I mean their reactions to their own futures seem a bit unadventurous. They want to find a stable job and settle down after college. I mean, whatever happen to traveling? Seeing more of the world? Or maybe just learning a new language? I suppose all the adventurous ones are all abroad. (JET, p. 2)

Apart from the cultural differences, she also refrained from communicating with Chinese students because she felt that “many of the local students only wanted to befriend us (foreign students) in order to polish up their English speaking skills” (JET, p. 2). She was very disheartened by this realization and confined herself within the circle of friends of “all foreigners,” meaning all Americans, who shared similar agendas and were in similar situations in China (p. 3). They gathered in “the foreign districts” (p. 3) that were frequented by international population but were comparatively isolated from the broader Chinese communities, and they went on trips to different parts of China together.

Jenny firmly identified herself as an American, and took offense when she got a comment saying, “How can you be an American? You look like a Chinese person, just like us” (JET, p. 3).
She said she usually got “tensed up” when introducing herself to a Chinese because she was not sure how they looked at her. “So because of comments like these, I don’t like to announce my nationality. People just don’t understand the United States is composed of more ethnicities than just Caucasians” (p. 3). In Jenny’s discourse, she tended to use the terms “all foreigners” as referring to “Americans” and “all different areas” as referring to “different areas in the United States” as if the world was composed of only two countries, China and the United States. For example, she said, “Since we all come from different areas, we tend to associate people according to their hometowns. So it is Jenny from Seattle, Alice from New York, etc” (p. 3).

Interestingly, about a year later, when I followed up with her, I saw some changes in her attitude toward Chinese people and life in China as she gained some work experience:

I do feel comfortable living in China, but only after I began working. The school, to be honest, has not helped me learn more about China. It’s, of course, helped me to learn more about the Chinese academic institution, administrative support, campus, etc, but has not improved my knowledge of China. Work on the other hand is an exciting adventure - I realized there are so many young professionals here in Shanghai (locals, not just the expatriate communities) and they are so mature and so exposed to Western culture (by this I don't mean TV series and fashion, but work ethics and etiquette per se).

It seems that life confined within the university hindered her from knowing the wider society, and the hands-on experience at a workplace allowed her the opportunity to know different aspects of China. However, Western influence here was no longer a problem; instead, she praised people who were exposed to Western culture.
Jenny’s Academic Life: “I am less aggressive and more subdued in class”

Adjusting herself to the academic culture in China was another challenge to Jenny, on top of the challenges in life. She was so comfortable with her American academic culture that when there is a visiting professor from the United States. That makes me feel almost like home and comfortable to be myself in the class. Other than that I have extreme difficulties focusing and learning the class material, the lectures, and the professors. (JET, p. 3)

She had no problem approaching her Chinese professors by email or during their office hours when she had questions. They were “all very nice and approachable” (p. 4) from her point of view. However, the problem between them was with the language—“they often get confused with my Chinese and I get confused with their English and Chinese” (p. 4).

Other than oral communication, she had no problem meeting the language requirements for written assignments because the language of instruction was English. Moreover, the course content was not challenging to her at all. In fact, some assignments puzzled her because they reminded her of her undergraduate assignments. Similar to Jameson in the attitude towards the current program, she commented that:

I find my current program to be lack of organization and resources. No, it has not met my expectation because the system and the plan for my program proved to be very basic, meaning no detailed and in-depth research opportunities. My classes resembled my undergraduate, basic-level political science classes. (JEQ, p. 1)

She studied Chinese politics and history for her undergraduate degree and had learned all the courses offered in this program in her previous university already. In other words, Jenny chose to study in a program that was not challenging to her in terms of either language or content,
whereas these two areas might present big challenges to other international students whose first language was not English and who had not obtained prior knowledge in the subject matter.

Jenny’s participation in class discussions in China also formed a sharp contrast to her experience in the United States.

In the US I have no problem disagreeing or even arguing (constructively) with the professors (of course on a purely sane and rational level). So in other words I received well-constructed feedback and was never scared to express myself. Here, however, although all professors encouraged us to share our views from “abroad,” I still feel quite timid sometimes to do so. Like I said before, I am less aggressive and more subdued in class. (JET, p. 5)

She identified herself as a non-Chinese, and being a foreigner in a foreign country was the reason for her being inactive in class:

I tend to be more passive in class discussions. I don’t want to appear too radical or too upfront. In terms of my ideas I also toned it down a bit. It is not for any particular reason, I just don’t want to offend anyone in a country that is not my own. (JET, p. 5)

Her emphasis on China being not her own country implies her consistent distance to the Chinese society. Her passive involvement in classroom learning seems to suggest her inadaptability to this additional academic culture at FN.

In terms of writing in different languages, Jenny realized that writing in English, her mind processed the information automatically; it was not difficult to put her thoughts on paper. It was “a natural process” without struggle at all (JET, p. 5). However, writing in Chinese involved lots of translation back and forth; she had to repeatedly check the dictionary or use MSN with her mother. “It is just a painstaking process which I do not enjoy too much” (p. 5). It was obvious that she didn’t enjoy writing in Chinese. She didn’t have a Chinese writing sample to show me
and she used English throughout our communication. In a sense, she was lucky that she did not have to complete her program in Chinese. However, it is hard to tell if it is good for her learning in the long run.

**International (Non-American) AL Students in China**

Students in this group also have Chinese names, but they are somewhat the sound translation from their own names plus a moderate adjustment in word choice to indicate gender. While both Chinese and English were the additional languages for the three of them, Cesar and Ilhane preferred to be interviewed in English because their English was better than Chinese whereas Mariola happily chose Chinese as the language of communication and interview. Mariola appeared more motivated to learn Chinese as her doctoral program had to be completed in Chinese and she was keen on being immersed in the Chinese community while living in China with her husband.

*Cesar: “I feel I am more Chinese”*

Cesar came from a Latin American country, Colombia. He came to China in September 2000 when he prepared to enter his Master’s program in International Politics at FN. He was in his third and final year of thesis writing at the time of my data collection. He had completed his previous secondary and undergraduate education in his home country, and held a Bachelor’s degree in journalism.

He had the sensitivity of a journalist to the goings-on in the world, particularly anything to do with his country; however, personally he didn’t have much interest in politics. His major was politics and diplomacy, so he worked his way out by focusing more on diplomacy instead of politics. Cesar’s goal of study was to get “a richer resume” so that he could pursue his profession in journalism in China or Colombia (CEQ, p. 2).
Having married a Chinese wife and with a newborn baby, he felt settled in China. I think I feel comfortable here. I feel I am more Chinese. From the religious point of view, I’m convinced I’m Chinese. We Catholic believe in resurrection. I don’t feel I left my country, my neighborhood.

I left home for six years. There are things I don’t like, but I think people are the same everywhere in the world. I miss my country a lot, I miss my people a lot, but I am particularly used to living here. I think it is easier for me to get used to life here. So I kind of living a Colombian life in China. Generally I feel very comfortable here. (CET, p. 8)

It might be the case that his Colombian self, a closed-up, family-bound self, resembled his Chinese self in certain ways, but it is obvious that he was happy with his Chinese self.

Cesar gave me the impression of a reliable and responsible family man apart from his role as a graduate student. Words such as family, wife and baby occurred in his discourse from time to time. His personal interest, current academic work and jobs in China were all related to his family in many ways. The following are several examples.

Sports had been very important in Cesar’s life. He enjoyed the refreshed feeling after exercise. However, his current life with a wife and a baby deprived him of the opportunities of participating in as many sports activities as he wished. Being considerate to his wife’s interests, he did not even watch sports games on TV often.

Brought up in a big family of close relationships, he felt he was “very closed” by nature (CET, p. 1). He had lived with his family until he was 28 years old and “didn’t try to look out” of the family (p. 1). His notion of friendship was also a closed concept. He had very few close friends although he hung out with other foreign and Chinese students as well as colleagues of different nationalities for fun, for food, or for sports. These were just “normal friendship” but “not
very close like friends” (p. 2). Whether the person had his home phone number or not was an indicator of how close they were in their relationships. Most of them didn’t have his home phone number because he did not feel the closeness yet.

Cesar’s life is mainly composed of work and family. He allocated two days a week to his job as an online language tutor of Spanish, four days to his thesis, and reserved Sunday for his family. As a result, he had little time for other things. He paid attention to his baby daughter’s language learning. His wife taught the baby Chinese and he taught her a little Spanish, but he chose not to teach her English at the moment. He planned to send her to an English school when she grew bigger so that she would speak better English (probably with a less strong accent) than he did.

Cesar met his wife shortly after he came to China when he was hired by her to teach some English classes. In other words, she was his boss at the time. Then they fell in love with each other and boss became wife. His wife stayed at home taking care of the baby at the time of our interview, so the family financial pressure was all on him. He was extremely busy juggling the three roles he had to play at school, work and home. At the time of our interview, his mother-in-law lived with them to help with housework and baby-care. This was quite typical of a Chinese family for three generations to live together, enjoying the company of and support from each other.

Coming from a humble family background, he had more financial concerns than other students being interviewed. His current life of working and studying simultaneously, his attitude toward people from developed countries such as America and France, and his circle of friends all have to do with these concerns. He had to study hard before he got his first job because in that way, he would not have many opportunities to spend money on other things. He didn’t like the United States and France because he was told that people from these countries were arrogant and
he didn’t feel he belonged to them. He had no intention of making friends with the “rich” Chinese students who played sports with him (p. 2). His circles of friends were limited to his wife’s family and people with similar financial status as his.

_Cesar’s Academic Life: “I generally go to the classroom as a student”_

In Cesar’s concept, “teacher” seemed equivalent to “university professor.” I will thus use both terms interchangeably, especially when I quote him in this subsection.

Cesar spoke Spanish, English and Chinese. Spanish was his first language. He had learned English in Colombia and continued to use it while he was in China. Chinese was the language he started to learn in fall 2000. He was in a language class for one year before he was able to sit in the regular classroom for his degree in politics at a Master’s level. However, his Chinese was only good in terms of speaking and very limited in reading. He did not write Chinese, as there was not a need to do so—his program was offered in English and he completed his assignments in English.

Cesar had a hard time when he first arrived. He was first registered in a language program to learn Chinese before he was allowed to enter the degree program. He found the first Chinese teacher in his language class not well prepared for teaching “foreigners” (CET, p. 3). The teacher was impatient with them and was not aware that the Chinese language was not as easy for them as for a Chinese person. However, he said that the situation improved later when the teachers became more conscious of their special learning needs.

He was acutely aware of the differences in terms of the way of teaching and the difficulty level between his language classes and subject classes. In his first subject course taken with some undergraduate students, he was quite lost when the teacher spoke in a strong Shanghai accent and wrote the characters in cursive on the board. It was a difficult time for him during the first two
semesters. “He write in a way you will never understand,” he said, “to me, it was very difficult to read” (CET, p. 4).

He felt much more comfortable in his Master’s level classes, when the class size was smaller and the teachers spoke English in class. When it was necessary to use Chinese to make a point, the handwriting and accent were not a problem because the teachers recognized that they were teaching international students.

Cesar had a concern about asking questions. In his first subject class when he could not understand the teacher’s accent and handwriting, he chose not to “bother” his classmates and tried to work on his own (CET, p. 4). He only asked for help when he felt the content was significantly important. Even in his Master’s classes with English being the language of instruction, he still didn’t feel comfortable enough to ask questions.

Sometimes I would think “Hm, they are holding the class for me.” Sometimes, I will try to get an overall idea and I told the teacher “yes, I understand.” Then later, I will go to the library and try to figure things out on my own. If I have a question in class, I will just let it pass. I don’t want to hold the class. If it is not so important, I will let it go. (CET, p. 4)

Cesar consciously conformed to the cultural norms in China, such as the way to respect professors and authorities.

I was told before I came here that it was important to respect the teachers, to very important people. So I was very careful with that. Generally, in Colombia, the relationship between university students and teachers are very nice, very close. For young teachers, we call them by their first names and we would even go drinking together on Friday or we would go hiking with the teacher. We invite them to our party, to our home. There was a teacher, she was very very strict with our work, but she was a very nice person. She knows how to separate work from life.
But here, I respect the teacher because he knows more than me, and that is the way it is. When I went to the teachers, I would be very respectful, “Tu Laoshi, ninhao [hello, Professor Tu].” If there is something very important and I don’t want to ask in class, then after class I will go and talk about this, in a very respectful way. Generally they are very nice, understanding that it is more difficult for us. (CET, p. 4)

He understood that the exchange between the professor and students was respect for knowledge and/or kindness. However, he didn’t feel the closeness between friends with any of his professors. “They understood that we were international students, so they try to be softer” (CET, p. 5). In other words, friendship between the professor and students was not the norm; the kindness of the professor came from the awareness and understanding of them being international students.

Cesar was explicit about his identity in the classroom, “I generally go to the classroom as a student. I don’t think I’m more or less” (CET, p. 7). By saying so, he meant that he maintained a humble and respectful attitude toward his professors and classmates, especially ones who were more knowledgeable than he was in the subject areas. He seemed to demonstrate some qualities that were very important in Chinese academic culture.

He was one of the scholarship students funded by the Chinese government as Jameson mentioned. He admitted that he knew little about the subject he was studying although he claimed that the program was not too difficult for him.

It wasn’t difficult. People told me you should read something before you start but I wasn’t prepared at all. I wasn’t competent in language. At the beginning we did a lot of reading, that’s the way we get the knowledge we need for this program. (CET, p. 6)
However, he did acknowledge that his weakness in Chinese was a challenge. “I always feel sorry that I didn’t have enough Chinese for being in my class” (CET, p. 5), he said. Contrary to Jameson and Jenny, he was rather satisfied with his program in China:

I think the program is really good, and even though I did not have any previous deep knowledge about politics, I became very interested in it while in this program. Most of the teachers are really good, the texts suggested are good too, and I found the level of most of my classmates very high. (CEQ, p. 1)

Cesar’s comment on his classmates’ level is, in a way, relevant to Jameson’s. However, related to his comment was the notion of respect that he raised a few times, and he mentioned it again when talking about the classmates whose academic level was higher than his:

I respect them a lot. I understand that by being the level they were, they deserve the respect. I knew they were young but knew more than me, so in class I have to listen to them carefully and learn from them, even in Chinese. But they are also students, they think I am older than them so they respect me too. I get along with them very well. I like them a lot. (CET, p. 9)

While seniority is important in Chinese society, it is interesting that he considered age as a factor for getting respect in a university classroom. This is something I have not heard of from other participants in my study.

Writing was not difficult for Cesar. Being a journalist, he was confident of his ability to write. When writing academic papers, he found extensive reading facilitated thinking and writing. Reading in English helps me a lot to improve vocabulary, grammar in English. I think I do the same thing when I was in Colombia writing in Spanish. I think in English, I write in that way. Generally when there is a difficult part that I don’t know how to say, I will
write the Spanish words, then find out the key words in English, and write them again in English. (CET, p. 6)

However, what he referred to here was writing in English. Writing in Chinese, to him, meant translating from English to Chinese. It was not a process of writing, but rather, a process of translation. At times when he had to fall back on his first language Spanish, the writing process was then double translations from Spanish to English and then from English to Chinese.

Fortunately, he didn’t have to write most of his assignments in Chinese, and that saved him lots of time and effort in translation.

Due to the language difficulty, he found that in additional language writing, content was easier to deal with than language though the former was more important:

Of course the important thing is the content. In that respect, I can write a paper in one night. I just cannot go over the mistakes; it is difficult to make my writing understandable to people. I change it again and again. It says what I want to say but it is in another language. (CET, p. 5)

He followed the English writing conventions in the way of presenting ideas and the structure of the article. He was aware of the different styles between English writing and Chinese writing, such as how to present an argument and supporting points. However, he insisted on not following the Chinese writing conventions. He seemed to have taken advantage of his professors’ accommodation by saying that “If the teacher allows me to write in English, he has to be able to read it when I do it that way” (CET, p. 10). This was contradictory to his awareness of readers:

As a journalist, when we write, we don’t think of one person who will read it, but all the people who will read it. So I proofread a paper for hours. If it makes sense to me, then it will probably make sense to others. (CET, p. 10)
It also looked contradictory to his following the Chinese courtesy of addressing professors by their last name and not asking too many questions in class. It seemed that it was easier for him to behave like a Chinese in oral communication, but it was difficult to convert his writing styles into Chinese.

**Ilhane: “We are very open to the outside world”**

Ilhane came to China in 1999 from Cape Verde Island. Being versatile in personal interests, she enjoyed an active social life. She loved music and dancing as well as swimming; she practiced gymnastics for four years in her home country. While studying in Beijing, she played basketball and volleyball and was in the department team in CHR University. In her spare time, she played sports games within and across universities and was actively involved in organizing sightseeing trips, conversations with local people, and discussions on hot issues with classmates. This was the way she made friends: “I’m always open to foreign friendship” (ILT, p. 3), she said, and she always had time for her friends. She seemed to be so naturally and happily immersed in this host culture and was making the best out of it.

Being well immersed did not mean that she accepted everything without careful thought. On the contrary, she was very observant about the many differences that characterized her experiences. She was aware that ways of communication may be culture-specific; “something in my culture is not offensive but are offensive in other cultures” (ILT, p. 3). She learned that the Chinese chitchatted in different ways in daily life; some apparently meaningless questions or even intrusive questions, such as asking about if one had eaten yet or where one was going, were just the normal ways that people show care, interest or friendliness in this culture.

Her sensitivity in communicating with people was also reflected in the way she joked with people. She had a fun-loving nature but she was also careful with jokes. “If I’m with friends,
I play a lot. If I’m with professors, I play but not same as I play with my friends, I kind of more serious” (ILT, p. 11). However, all her professors were “fun” and she felt very comfortable in their classes. Except for the limited occasions when she had to be more serious, “most of the time, I am just me, like now” (ILT, p. 11). This statement flattered me because she considered me as a friend with whom she could talk freely. Indeed, our conversations were lighthearted and enjoyable. I could not help noticing how easy it was for a happy-natured person like her to make new friends.

Although she had been in China for over six years, she admitted that she still had difficulties understanding certain words in Chinese. However, she consistently used Chinese media every day including watching TV and updating information on the Internet. In her view, the best way to learn the language was to talk to people in real situations. She definitely practiced what she believed effectively. In fact, she was flexible in the language of communication given her multilingual capacity. She spoke Chinese with her Chinese friends unless they preferred to practice English with her. Nevertheless, she was frank that her preference was her first language Portuguese, especially when “you get a little bit tired, you work too much, you feel lazy speaking foreign languages. And you try, but it doesn’t go out” (ILT, p. 7).

Her flexibility on social occasions did not in any way undermine her strong sense of self in interaction with people. “I know what I am, I know at least what I try to be” (p. 11). This strong sense of the self made her resent being forced to accept anything. “You don’t suppose to tell me what I should behave, I don’t like that” (p. 11). However, it did not mean that she refused to listen to people. She cared about what people think of her and would like to know their opinion “because there are some things I may have to change for people to accept me” (p. 11). She appreciated honest and helpful friendship, not pretension and superficial politeness. According to her, friendship was based on respect and understanding.
Don’t hide; I don’t like hiding. If my friends do something that I don’t like, if I don’t tell them, then I would close. And if I close, I won’t be me when I’m with them. I will be very polite, ‘hi, how are you doing’, but it doesn’t feel good, I don’t like the feeling. …Don’t think that we have different opinions, we argue now, so we are not friends. If we argue now and we get along, that’s friendship for me. I respect you, you respect me, you tell me what you think, I tell you what I think, and we solve our problems, differences. (ILT, p. 11)

Being a non-religious person, she believed in the strength within oneself, “I believe that we have to have strength, and for me, that’s God” (ILT, p. 1). This belief seemed to have close connections with her success in living an enriched life in China both socially and academically.

Not surprisingly, Ilhane was an open-minded young woman. She told me that Cape Verde was a small country so people there felt an urge to go out to see the bigger world; and the education system in the country supported this need:

*Cape Verde is a small place, you have to go out. Everyone knows one day you’ll go out. It’s almost a must; so we are very open to the outside world. At school, we have disciplines talking about histories all over the world, and we focus a lot on the western world.* (ILT, p. 1)

She felt quite at home in China with lots of friends of different ethnic background around her and with lots of activities in which to get involved. She sometimes joked with people that she came from Xinjiang Province in China, a minority province that is mostly populated with Islamic Uygur people whose facial features are distinct from East Asian people. She had a Portuguese citizenship as well; however, for her, her motherland was still where she belonged. She was proud of being Cape Verdian. It seems that despite her deep connection to her home country, she was rather flexible and happy in the new cultural environments in which she had lived.
**Ilhane’s Academic Life: “I am still myself but limited”**

Ilhane was a multilingual person. Her language learning experiences were mingled with her educational experiences. Apart from the Cape Verde dialect and its official language Portuguese, she spoke French and Spanish which she had learned at high school, English which she had picked up while she studied in the U.S., and Chinese that she had started to learn when she had come to China six years before in 1999.

She came to study Chinese language at a well-known language university in Beijing. After a year, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts program in International Politics in CHR University in Beijing. Upon graduation, she headed down south to FN University in Shanghai to pursue her Master’s degree in the English program in Chinese Politics and Diplomacy.

Her choice of the program was well thought-out: “I like diplomacy, inter-state relations and the opportunity to help my country in the international arena” (ILQ, p. 1). Her career goals were also related to her patriotic emotions for her home country and her appreciation of China’s role in international politics. She wanted to

Improve Sino-Cape Verde relations promoting investments and cooperation; understand this huge country with a fast economic growth, its major role in the area; and its diplomacy (which I consider one of the best in the world) toward other countries to achieve a steady and peaceful rise. (ILQ, p. 1)

Ilhane was also a scholarship student like those Jameson previously mentioned. Her comments on this program were very positive:

It is very interesting. It doesn’t only focus in China, but also in all the region surrounding. Until now I’m satisfied with the program because it give us a very clear background what is going on in these area of East Asia, about the important events like East Asia Summit, APEC, and also some China’s sensitive issues like Taiwan and Japan relations. (ILQ, p. 1)
However, she was also outspoken about the problems with this program. She identified one of them being lack of information before they started on-campus study, which made her not well prepared for her courses. Moreover, she found a lack of resources in the program as well. She was thinking of collecting data and literature in the United States for her thesis because there were a comparatively larger number of Cape Verdian communities there. The irony lies in the fact that she was trying to focus on Sino-Cape Verde relations in her thesis but was not able to find sufficient materials to finish her work in China and had to count on the resources in the United States.

“Difference” was the key word when she talked about many aspects of her academic life. She also observed the differences between “Chinese teach Chinese in Chinese and in English” (ILT, p. 3). When teaching in Chinese, “the teacher had much time to give to each student” (p. 3) whereas teaching in English, the teacher was often too busy with his or her own language. She was also aware of the differences in teaching methods. In her home country, learning was understanding-based while in China it was memory-based. Teachers evaluated students’ academic progress based on these criteria respectively. She noticed the differences in grammar in her other languages and Chinese language. The different accents and handwritings of individual professors also made learning more difficult for her.

Her serious and respectful attitude toward her professors in daily communication did not affect her perception of everybody being equal in class. She did not consider the professors higher than her in status. In the same way, she felt equal to other students in her class. “It doesn’t matter if your school level is higher or lower. It’s the same thing, just different experiences” (ILT, p. 11). By indicating the school level she seemed to refer to her American classmates whose education level was higher than hers. According to her, levels of education prior to this program were simply different experiences and therefore did not imply anything about a person’s status.
Neither did her respect for the professors blind her from seeing the problems in teaching. She was outspoken with American professors—“free of attacking” in her own words; however, with Chinese professors, she did not “go too straight” (ILT, p. 12). She sometimes felt intimidated by the way the professors imposed their opinions on students. She recounted the event that had caused Jameson to leave the program—an argument between a professor and a female student:

I had an experience in my class … she’s [the student] married, she kind of attack everything. …It’s just her way, she’s a little personalistic, but it is good to have someone in our class like this. Sometimes her ideas were good even though she sometimes is so mean. So the teacher didn’t like it, actually it was a high level teacher, from the department. And the way he addressed it like “I don’t agree with about what you said about China, because all the efforts made by Chinese does like this…” After, he got kind of upset. But what can you expect from a student with a language background? Come on, how can the head of the department tell you that? And we were having a lecture with a foreigner, the class finished, and everybody was feeling bad because nobody expected that he attacked her. Because for me, if you are a high level professor, you have to know how to be a little diplomatic. You can convince the student that she’s wrong, but not attacking. You don’t attack; just tell her, there is a view you should consider before you say that kind of thing. (ILT, pp. 12-13)

Apparently, she shared the same view as Jameson, and probably many other students in the class, on the conflicts caused by different ways of teaching and the professor’s failure in separating academic debate from personal attack.

Being capable of speaking six languages could be valuable qualifications with other regards, but not in her program in FN. Language problems were the reason for her difficulty in
classroom learning. Fortunately, her intellectual capacity was not undervalued by her limited language capacity. She was happy that students in the program were evaluated by their ideas and contributions to the classroom discussion, not by the language they had to use.

The teachers usually evaluate us for the ideas not the language because it is the language we are learning, and people speak different languages. If they take us for English, it’s complicated. We use the words in English, but they take you for the ideas and participation you have in class. If you feel comfortable, you have a lot of questions. (ILT, p. 5)

Both English and Chinese were the additional languages for these international students; it was a challenge for them to use either. While English posed only a moderate challenge, Chinese was much more difficult for Ilhane. Her learning strategy was to understand the language in context and through reading: “If you keep reading, you know how to use that word” (ILT, p. 6).

Writing in Chinese was particularly difficult; her best friend, a Chinese classmate, was the one who helped with error correction. For her, the biggest challenge in writing lay in not getting lost in translation. Bilingual dictionaries did not always help in finding the equivalent words in English or Chinese based on the Portuguese in her mind; synonyms were more confusing and Chinese was more complicated than English.

She said that she played more with words in English, however, she felt quite constrained by the Chinese language: “When I talk in Chinese, I am still myself but limited. That doesn’t make you feel 100%. Still the issue of the language. International thing” (ILT, p. 10). She attributed this to the distance between languages and cultures. Just as it is easier for an Asian person to learn another Asian language, so it is easier for a western person to learn another western language:
For me, when you speak an Asian language, like Chinese, Korean, Japanese, you understand each other better because you have something cultural that is similar. That is totally different from the west. In the west, we have this way of expressing that is also similar. When you want to jump from one to the other one, it’s not hard. (ILT, p. 10)

She seemed to have a linguistic mind and offered a linguistic analysis of the languages she had learned. Since Portuguese and French are more complicated than English in grammar, it was easier for her to learn English. However, “in Chinese, it is totally different in the way you have to think. Even though you stay a long time here, sometimes you know how to construct a sentence, but there are still something missing” (ILT, p. 9). The reasons for the missing meaning were twofold: the language limitation and different ways of expressing ideas.

Mariola: “I feel I am a part of the [Chinese] society”

Mariola came from Spain. She had been in China for three years and was enrolled in the PhD program in Contemporary Chinese History in FN University. She impressed me as a very understanding, kind-hearted and flexible woman as evident from her attitudes toward China, her friends from other countries, and her life style in China. Influenced by her “traditional Catholic family” background, she emphasized her own family in China instead of her personal interests.

In daily life, Mariola had different circles of friends, including Chinese, Spanish, and people from other countries. Communications with friends were also opportunities for her to practice her multiple language skills. She took advantage of the macro language classroom of the whole society in China by speaking in Chinese with people whenever she got a chance-- be they friends, classmates, professors, or peddlers at the marketplace, salespersons at the store, or the superintendent of the building. At times, she was frustrated by the many accents and colloquial expressions in spoken Chinese, but “I don’t give up, I think it is quite normal” (MAT, p. 3). With
non-Chinese friends, she either used Spanish or English in communication. Since she had come to China to accompany her husband who was posted in Shanghai for business purposes, she made sure to center her social life on her husband’s. Because her husband didn’t speak Chinese well, they communicated mostly in Spanish at home. For this reason, her chance of making Chinese friends was reduced. However, “I want to have more connections with Chinese” (MAT, p. 11). She was very motivated to spend time with her Chinese friends so that she was able to adapt herself to the Chinese society successfully.

Despite all the differences that characterized her life, she was willingly attracted to the magnetic field of Chinese communities. On the one hand, she felt she was different when she was with her Chinese friends. “They have a different way of thinking and different way of expressing feelings” (MAT, p. 4). She was also aware that Chinese people treated her in slightly different ways, “They are more careful with me, more attentive, more helpful, or maybe in a more respectful way, maybe because I am a foreigner… Maybe they feel I need more help” (p. 4). On the other hand, she had a strong sense of belonging to the Chinese society despite the language problems and differences she felt. “I have already developed some feelings for China,” she said, “I feel I am a part of the [Chinese] society; I belong to it” (p. 5).

She also had a sense of belonging when with her Spanish friends, as well as friends from other European countries such as France, Italy, and Portugal. For her, these countries shared more similarities in art, religion, and cultural background than differences. However, she felt the American culture distant to her culture. “When I am with Americans, I don’t have the feeling of belonging because our cultural backgrounds are different” (MAT, p. 4). The feeling was somewhat implicit; “The Americans are very American” was her comment (p. 4). I wondered if she implied that Chinese culture was closer than American culture to that of Europe.
Mariola was very contented in China; and her contentment apparently originated from her happy marriage, happy learning, and happy feelings for this country. “I am grateful for this work opportunity for my husband, and the opportunity for me to study. This is a really happy time for me” (p. 5). What I saw from all our communications was a fulfilled woman enthusiastically embracing this new culture, attempting to get the most out of it and eager to become a member.

 Mariola’s Academic Life: “the issue is how to express myself [in Chinese]”

Before Mariola came to China, she had already obtained a Bachelor’s degree in history from a university in Spain and an MBA degree from a program run jointly by three European universities in Spain, France and the UK. The second day after her arrival in China, she went to inquire about the Chinese language programs in CHI University and studied there for two years in order to master the language. Her Chinese was amazingly good considering the time she had been in China. She preferred to be interviewed in Chinese and the fluency and complexity of her spoken language truly impressed me. Apart from Spanish and Chinese, she also had high proficiency in English, her second language, and limited proficiency in French, the language she had picked up during her joint MBA program.

Mariola was happy with her current program, but she did not ignore the difficulties she had inevitably encountered:

I am quite satisfied with the program so far; although it’s been really hard for me to achieve academic requirements, such as writing papers. I also came up with some difficulties since the academic system is different from Europe and communication between teachers and students is also different, so it took me a while to get used to it. Anyway, learning this kind of different life styles is also one of my personal goals.

(MAQ, p. 1)
She recognized all the differences and was making an effort to get used to them.

She had two main goals to be achieved in the three years of her doctoral program:

First, a good proficiency on Chinese. Second, through the study of recent China’s History, arrive to understand what Contemporary China is, the structural changes that this country has undergone from the eighties, and what are the trends of China’s future. All this with the aim of working in any kind of organization dealing with relations Europe/west-China.

(MAQ, pp. 1-2)

A very motivated learner, she watched TV and listened to the radio regularly in Chinese, and subscribed to one Chinese newspaper and one English newspaper to ensure she had enough input of both languages on a daily basis. She was the only participant in China who subscribed to newspapers and considered it a tool for both learning and information. She was confused by website Chinese, though, the language and the structure, so she fell back on Spanish or English when she needed to use the Internet. She also read a lot of articles related to her major in contemporary Chinese history such as politics, sociology, and philosophy.

No matter how proficient her Chinese was, language was unmistakably an issue to her as well. “I didn’t dare to ask questions at the beginning because my Chinese was too poor to express what I intended to ask” (MAT, p. 6). She became more active in classroom discussions when her language skills improved later on. However, it took much longer for her to summon up the courage to approach her supervisor; “I didn’t talk to him much because my language was not fluent enough.” She was hoping to have a chance to discuss her current study and research directions with him. Apart from the language issue, her insufficient subject knowledge also hindered her from asking questions in class: “My knowledge in my subject area Contemporary Chinese History was almost zero, so I dare not to ask any questions” (p. 7). As a result, she was mostly a keen observer in her class until she was confident enough to ask intelligent questions.
using the language and knowledge she had mastered. This was different from her experience in her home country, where she asked questions whenever she had one.

Being a good observer, she also noticed that her Chinese classmates did not have many questions either. There was a lack of discussion and question in class, therefore, she just followed her peers. Another thing she learned through observation was that the student-teacher relationship in China was different from that in Spain.

Overall, I feel that we have much less contact with teachers here than we did in my university [in Spain]. We usually approached the teacher when we had questions, and the teacher had office hours to meet students. But it is different here; it is not so convenient to communicate with teachers, and sometimes I feel guilty for bothering the teacher with my questions. (MAT, p. 8)

She no longer felt it was the teacher’s duty to answer her questions but took it as a favor.

Because all my Chinese classmates feel this way. I came here to study, so I can’t demand the teacher to treat me the same way as my Spanish teachers did. I first observed how they treated the Chinese students, and pondered how I would be treated. That’s why I feel this way. When I ask the teacher to explain something to me, I don’t feel that it is what the teacher should do, but feel it is a favor. (MAT, p. 8).

Her adaptability to the new academic environment was impressive to me.

As the only foreign student in her class and new to the subject area, she admitted that she was no match for her Chinese peers in terms of knowledge and language, but intellectually, she felt equal to them. Her learning strategy was, not surprisingly, imitation. “I mainly listen to how other people articulate their reasons, and see if there is anything I can use and then take notes. When I encounter a similar situation, I will imitate to use it” (MAT, p. 11).
Although she adapted her perceptions of teachers’ responsibilities, she did not change her argumentation; she had no problem arguing her points in class. However, the challenge was with expressing her ideas in the Chinese language:

Every time I argued with Chinese, I encountered the same problem—my expressiveness was not good enough in Chinese. I would insist to articulate my ideas, but sometimes I was not able to express clearly, then I would feel a little frustrated. (MAT, p. 11)

Being restricted by language in argument was but one of her frustrations. The biggest challenge came when she had to write academic papers in Chinese. Again, her strategies were noticing, observing, comparing, and imitating. She noticed that Spanish and English were similar in writing in that both follow a rigid style, with high standard for structure, language, content and references. However, writing in Spanish or English is different from writing in Chinese. She learned to write in Chinese by observing differences between the two languages and the way Chinese write. “If your mother tongue is English or Spanish and you learn to write in Chinese, you start from zero. I observe how Chinese write, I learn to do the same way. There is no other way around” (MAT, p. 10).

To her, writing in Chinese is “the most difficult” thing to do (MAT, p. 9). She made an effort to write in Chinese directly, “but it’s inevitable to use my mother tongue to construct the writing first, and translate it into Chinese” (p. 8). Her thinking process, above all, was a process of translation: “I think in Spanish, and then translate” (p. 10). She claimed that she had to spend ten times the effort and time than her Chinese peers in writing an essay. It was not only the question of writing but also the question of reading prior to writing. “I read Chinese very slowly, and there are a lot of things to read, it takes a lot of time,” plus some contents “are very difficult to understand” (p. 9). Therefore, both language and content were difficult to her. Comparatively, her major concern was more in language than in content,
I think language is more difficult than content because I know the content after reading the material and understand it. However, it is very difficult to write. The process of accumulating knowledge is faster than writing up the ideas. Knowledge accumulation is easy, thinking is not a problem, but the issue is how to express myself [in Chinese]. (MAT, pp. 9-10)

The subject classes were more challenging than language classes; however, the subject teachers were less sensitive in helping and accommodating international students. They failed to consider her language difficulties in teaching because she was the only foreign student in class. However, they were somewhat lenient in evaluating her writing: “Generally, the teacher knows I am a foreigner, if I don’t do well, they understand” (p. 9). To produce a better piece of writing, she had to count on her classmates to polish the language; “usually I ask classmates to proofread and edit for me, like the two essays I gave you. They are all helpful” (p. 8). Among the three essays she gave me, two of them were revised by her Chinese peers and one was not. The differences in language and style between the revised and the unrevised were obvious. The unrevised one was difficult for me to understand as a native-speaker of Chinese. Some of the sentences did not sound like Chinese, but rather, they were Chinese characters crammed into the structure of another language.

FN University is one of the top universities in China and one of those that attracts a considerable number of international students. However, from the data I collected, there was no program helping international students with their language, writing, and other issues in academic work once they entered their degree program. All the five students identified a lack of guidance and support programs at FN. Ilhane, for example, commented on the insufficient support in academic writing for international students: “They didn’t give us anything here, we have to find out our own way about the writing” (ILT, p. 9). While students from the United States could
follow their conventions, Ilhane had to rely on the Internet for information on writing as the other international students did. She missed her learning experience at CHR University in Beijing where instruction on how to write in Chinese helped the international students in their academic study.

However, Ilhane showed her consideration as well. She said that this new Master’s program at FN was still “under construction” (p. 9), so the lack of support in writing seemed understandable. In a similar way, Mariola expressed her understanding of the professors’ lack of support to her because she was the only international student; therefore, any effort of accommodation seemed unnecessary. Interestingly, Cesar also had a comment on his first Chinese teacher who was impatient with him when he asked the same question more than once: “He was a good teacher, but for me Chinese was so difficult” (CET, p. 3). They all seemed capable of seeing two sides of the same coin and trying to give a relatively objective opinion on the strengths and drawbacks of their academic program. Their attitude formed a sharp contrast to the two American students who were extremely critical of their program at FN. They were unanimously nostalgic of their American educational experience which, according to them, seemed to be the best experience.

Having presented the findings in China, I now turn to the situation in Canada in the next chapter. The amount of support to international students at FN University varies to that in the Canadian context for international students. Let us see how the Chinese students articulated their life and learning experiences in Canada in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Chinese Additional Language Students in Canada

In the previous chapter, I presented the data regarding the five international students studying at FN University in China. In this chapter, I present the data from six Chinese students in graduate programs at QN University in Canada. They are: Zhong, a PhD student in Economics; Yuchen, a PhD student in Sociology; Xitong, a PhD student in History; Wei, a PhD student in Geography; Hanyu, a Master’s student in Education; and Jian, a Master’s student in Geological Science. They all came to Canada to enter a graduate program. Zhong and Yuchen were in the fourth year of their doctoral program. Xitong and Wei first entered a Master’s program, and then proceeded with their respective PhD program. Hanyu and Jian were second year Master’s students.

The fact that they all entered graduate programs in Canada means that they had all taken high-stakes English exams such as TOEFL and/or GRE\(^4\) and obtained high marks before they came to Canada. However, the English language was still a big issue for all of them. In Canada, English was their language of instruction and communication in all settings except for the occasions when they were with their family or Chinese native-speaker friends.

Similar to the previous chapter, I first present each participant with their educational background, social life, and general sense of belonging in Canada. Then I focus on their academic life and self-identification in academic settings. The quote I chose for each subtitle reflects one of the core points of each subsection.

\(^4\) TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, measures the ability of non-native speakers of English to use and understand North American English as it is spoken, written and heard in higher learning settings; and GRE, Graduate Record Examination, measures verbal reasoning, quantitative and verbal reasoning and analytical writing skills required for graduate school admission.
Zhong: “I more and more clearly feel my Chinese identity”

Zhong had been in Canada for four years. He was a kind and polite person and supportive all through the data collection process. He agreed to collaborate as soon as he received my recruitment email and responded to me promptly each time I contacted him. He tended to be formal; every time he addressed me in full name, treating the whole thing as a scientific research in a matter-of-fact way. His language was carefully chosen and very precise. Before I interviewed him in person, he gave me the impression of being a conscientious and studious scholar. And he was, when I finally was able to confirm it through phone calls and face-to-face communication.

Zhong believed in Buddhism due to family influence and because “it teaches people to do nice things” (ZHT, p. 1). Probably his religious belief partly explained many aspects of him such as his interest in volunteer work, his feelings for his family, his attitude toward other people, and his reluctance to argue on all occasions. I will elaborate on these points below.

His social life was mainly composed of volunteer work and gathering with friends. He enjoyed volunteering in a so-called “π group,” a mathematics group helping high school students with their math. Hanging out with classmates and officemates was another major activity in which he was involved. Like most PhD students, his major focus was on work. He spent six or seven hours per day on average on study. He was so busy with his teaching, courses and dissertation that he had to sacrifice his interest in watching basketball games.

He wished to graduate sooner so that he could reunite with his wife and son in China, who visited him once every year. His wife taught at a Chinese university while taking care of all the family responsibilities. “The most burdens are on my wife,” he said, and felt that she sacrificed for him and that he owed her (ZHT, p. 1). The way he talked about his wife and child gave me the impression that he was a loving, responsible family man.

Zhong did not like arguing. He said:
I don’t remember any occasions where I argue with people and defend my opinions. I guess overall I am agreeable with many people and can tolerate with many different opinions. I will let it go if I don’t agree. I guess my personality and my religious belief all play a role. (ZHT, p. 2)

Zhong had a mixed group of friends. Apart from his Chinese friends with whom he felt most relaxed to communicate, he had “several pretty good Caucasian friends” who were his officemates (ZHT, p. 2). He was also close to a former Master’s student of Indian origin. Among these friends, he found himself “more at home talking to English-speaking friends who are not Caucasians, who are not even Canadian” (p. 2). By explaining “It depends on how familiar I am with the person” (p. 3), he seemed to suggest that he felt less familiar with his Caucasian Canadian friends than with people from other cultures even though he had been living in Canada for four years.

His interaction with the students he taught was very cautious. He felt uneasy talking with some of his students because he was “not particularly familiar with them” (p. 3). He kept a proper distance from them and tended to use formal language. He never attempted to befriend his students. He did not mention language and culture issues in particular, but I felt that the formal language he used and the distance he created served as a mask over his lack of confidence in using oral English (especially slang) and understanding youth culture to which he was not sufficiently exposed.

He had mixed feelings for his supervisor and professors. He was nervous when talking to his supervisor because “he is my supervisor and I have this psychological distance. I have a lot of respect to him. I feel I am a student, I am talking to someone who is my professor, who I should respect” (ZHT, p. 3). His identity as a student (particularly one from China, probably) refrained him from feeling relaxed with his supervisor. Despite this psychological distance, he found the professors all approachable; his supervisor, in particular, “gives a lot of time to his students” (ZHT,
p. 5). His concern was that “I don’t want to take too much of their time, and I don’t want to take their time on the wrong day” (p. 5). From this, I see a very thoughtful graduate student who did not take other people’s time for granted.

He was thankful to the professors and supporting staff in the department who offered help to him. He said “People are nicer here, more polite, more considerate” (ZHT, p. 5). However, to give a more objective view, he added, “But my comparison might be a biased one because I’m comparing a university department with a government agency in which I worked in China” (p. 5).

The multi-facets of his identity can be seen from his own words. “Maybe mainly because I am a student from China, I never feel I’m talking to someone with equal status when I talk to my professors” (ZHT, p. 5). However, in the classroom with peer students, he felt equal to them. “I never feel I am a foreigner, I feel comfortable living in this culture” (p. 5). The secret of feeling comfortable was to be friendly and reach out to help others so that people “will appreciate what you have done” (p. 5). This can be his personality, but it also mirrors a touch of religious influence, as he told me that Buddhism “teaches people to do nice things” (ZHT, p. 1).

It did not change his sense of belonging to Chinese culture after four years’ “fairly comfortable” (ZHT, p. 4) living and studying in Canada. “I consider myself as a Chinese. Especially when I stay longer in Canada, I more and more clearly feel my Chinese identity. I feel I’m still different. People may see me differently” (ZHT, p. 9).

He also had a good sense of the social positioning. He said, “my perception of my Chinese identity is mainly influenced by how I now interpret people, how people think about me, about us Chinese” (ZHT, p. 9). In other words, his perception of his Chinese identity was also based on his positioning of others and his perceived social positioning of him as Chinese.

As he stayed longer, he came to understand better “how Caucasians see Chinese, how Caucasians see the outside world” (ZHT, p. 10). A phenomenon he observed was that when people
needed help, Chinese turned to their Chinese friends, and “Caucasians usually turn to Caucasians” (p. 10). He explained that such “subtle aspects” of life might be caused by language ability and different cultural backgrounds. “If I’m Chinese but I grew up in Canada, I can’t speak Chinese but I speak English very fluently, I don’t think that will make the person very different in the eyes of the Caucasian” (p. 10).

In his opinion, he was a Chinese without a doubt, no matter how long he had lived in Canada; but his four-year-old son would be more Canadian than Chinese if he were educated in Canada (in the case that Zhong decided to stay in Canada after graduation). His son—a second generation immigrant, would be “in-between” because he would speak Chinese with parents at home but have Caucasian friends and other English-speaking friends outside home (p. 10).

**Zhong’s Academic Life: “in terms of language and attitudes, I try to be modest”**

Zhong completed his prior education in China and obtained an MA in Economics in a Chinese university. He was in his fourth year of PhD in Economics at QN when we were in contact for this research. Studying in Canada was a “pretty good experience” for him (ZHT, p. 4). His career goal was to do teaching, research or social work either in Canada or China.

English was his second language, which he learned in high school and university in China and here in Canada. He claimed that he was only good at reading and writing but weak in speaking; however, I found his speech was very fluent, very expressive and accurate in language choice. Because he was completely occupied with his dissertation writing at the time I interviewed him, he said he didn’t have much time for English newspapers and TV programs. He was only able to browse the website when he needed to. Maybe this partially explains his formal language regardless of the situation— he was not exposed to enough casual, everyday language for him to manipulate on non-academic occasions.
The language of instruction was no longer a big issue for him now, unless there were many abstract, technical terms which appeared in the course material that required double or triple reading for him in order to comprehend it. He felt so much better than his first two years in Canada when he struggled with the language most of the time. He said that in the first two years, his biggest problem was to communicate with people. He also had great difficulty understanding lectures and class discussions because he “couldn’t effectively participate in their conversations” (ZHT, p. 3). For one thing, he could not understand them; for another, he was not able to express himself. From the third year, things became better. He was able to understand people in most situations. However, even at the time of our interview, he said “I still don’t feel very comfortable; I still cannot express myself fully in English” (ZHT, p. 4). It seemed that he would be haunted by his additional language for an extended period of time.

He had gained a solid knowledge on English writing through his higher education in China and through preparing for high stakes exams like TOEFL and GRE for studying overseas. Zhong thoughtfully sent me two pieces of writing that allowed comparison. He seemed to understand what I was doing with my research project better than most other participants. In his email, he said:

I would like to send you one term paper written in 2001, my first year abroad, and one part of my thesis, which I am still working on now. The latter still needs much revision in terms of both content and language, I guess. Hopefully, they may allow you to do some comparison across time. (ZHE, p. 5)

He also offered that “writing GRE or GMAT (not just TOEFL) seemed to improve one's English in a more or less significant way,” based on his own experiences (ZHE, p. 5). He told me that by preparing for these exams, he learned how to write academic papers in English and mastered the
genre of academic writing. He adhered to the formal style of language not only in writing but also in daily communication with English speaking people.

He was very favorable about the program and the professors. He said that the academic program definitely met his expectations, and the “respectable professors and fellow students” exceeded his expectations (ZHQ, p. 1).

In terms of his writing, he expressed his gratitude to his supervisor. “My style of writing is heavily influenced by my supervisor at QN. I liked the person, eventually I liked his style of writing. He is modest, he is very nice. You can even feel it from his emails, his comments on papers” (ZHT, p. 4). It seemed that his outcome in learning, namely his writing style, was closely related to his personal feelings for his supervisor.

Apart from the influence of his supervisor, he grasped the English writing conventions in his field through reading academic publications. He understood the genre of academic writing, saying that the rule was “try to be as formal as possible” (ZHT, p. 6). In his first year, he followed what he had learned in preparing GRE, and put a lot of emphasis on grammar. He detached himself from the content in the first paper he forwarded to me, using the third person “the student” to refer to himself. For example, “This might be the single, main impression the student gets in writing this report” (ZHW1, p. 17). I have not found a single “I” in the entire paper. Later on, he “improved by reading the papers and doing all the quoting” (ZHT, p. 8). He no longer used “the student”, but he used “we” when he meant “I” in his second essay written in fall 2005. For example, “We now make an important assumption” (ZHW2, p. 4). He explained that he was “just conforming”, because “It's a convention; it's an implicit rule” in the field (p. 8). By imitating expert writing, he claimed that his “writing style is closer to the quality of published papers” (p. 8).

Unlike other additional language writers who often depend on native speakers to proofread for them, he did editing and proofreading all by himself, and claimed that “I have never
had my professors complain about my language” (p. 6). He seemed already a confident and independent writer.

However, he was also well aware of his weaknesses in writing. He thought the major problem for him was expressing himself in a logical way. This was not an additional language problem, but rather, his personal style. “I have difficulty, even when I express myself in Chinese, making a point clear” (ZHT, p. 6). He tended to provide background information before he came to the main point; in his own words, “less relevant things first” (p. 6). He provided an example that a senior professor in his Master’s program once told him that he seemed very disorganized in writing.

In fact, I doubted what he said was true about his lack of organization because all his responses to my emails, questionnaire, and interview questions were always right to the point. If it was true, he definitely had good strategies to overcome this weakness. Probably he made a very conscious effort in this respect. His responses so far were the most accurate and organized in content among all the participants. He did not chitchat and he was never off the track. I was amazed at his effectiveness in expressing himself in the formal language he was accustomed to use.

In terms of thinking processes in the first language and second language, he explicitly stated that his “thinking process is different while using Chinese and using English” (ZHT, p. 8), although he was not able to tell exactly what the differences were. However, his English was indeed good enough to allow him to avoid translation from first language to second language. He said that he did not translate consciously from Chinese to English. It might be implicitly happening at times, but “I don’t think I do a significant amount of this” (p. 8).

Although he never argued with people on other occasions, it was inevitable for him to discuss work and exchange thoughts with his professors for academic purposes. He said “I think in terms of language and attitudes, I try to be modest” (p. 9). It is easy to understand a modest attitude
toward professors, who have a higher status than he does, considering the norm in his home culture. However, being modest in language is a more interesting point for me to note. Additional language speakers were often uncertain of the appropriateness of their language, but he was confident enough to say that “My language doesn’t cause any problem. When I talked to the professors, if what I said was reasonable, they would accept” (p. 9).

His strategy this time was not to avoid arguments but to know where to stop in the conversation. “But if sometimes, we don’t find each other’s argument convincing, we just stop at the appropriate place and don’t keep going. I guess that is a good way to avoid really going into some serious argument with anyone” (p. 9). He held that people were capable of drawing their own conclusions; it made no sense to push them into accepting something when they were not convinced from within. “I believe people after going back, they will think about your opinion if they don’t agree with you. If they still can’t find it convincing, it’s not possible for you to persuade them in conversations” (p. 9).

He was very explicit about his identity as a student in his graduate classes, as he reiterated many times. In the undergraduate class he taught, he also had no intention to pretend to be a young professor. However, he felt it unnecessary to inform students of his identity because it was irrelevant to teaching. He seemed to have a good sense of what he was doing, and he acted appropriately.

**Yuchen: “I don’t feel any change since I immigrated”**

Yuchen came to Canada about four years’ ago to pursue her PhD program in Sociology. She had obtained her Bachelor’s degree in Geology and Economics and her Master’s in a joint program in Women Studies and Sociology from a highly prestigious university (CHB University) in China. She wished to teach and research in a Chinese university after graduation because “I
know I can do a better work there than doing it here” (YUQ, p. 1). The ideal place was her home institute. However, she understood that it was not an easy goal to achieve. She said, “That’s the dream. Now returning from abroad is not so popular, so we need to have lots of papers published” (YUT, p. 12). What she meant was that with more and more foreign-trained Chinese students going back, it was no longer as easy for the new returnees to land a prestigious job as before. They needed to be well-published in order to be competitive in applying for a teaching position at a top university in China.

Like most Chinese of her age, she started to learn English in middle school (Grade 7). Language was a sensitive issue to her in Canada. She consulted the English media every day to hone her language skills, but she thought there was a lot for her to improve in speaking and writing. When she introduced herself to peer TAs at the beginning of her study, she added that she might have difficulties in language although her academic knowledge was sound enough for the program, so that they would not undervalue her due to insufficient language skills. This reflected partly her ambition and her strong sense of being a competitive student in this new academic institution.

After living in Canada for about four years and being an immigrant for two years, she still identified herself as Chinese. “I don’t feel any change since I immigrated. The lifestyle, the dining style is still the same” (YUT, p. 12). Her social network was mostly among native-speakers of Chinese. Her friends consisted of roughly two groups. One group was university colleagues, mainly from China; the other was religious people in her church. Her sports activities included swimming and practicing Tai Chi at the local YMCA regularly with a Chinese friend. Other than that, she devoted lots of her spare time to the out-reach activities in her church. Both she and her husband, a PhD student in Geology, belonged to a Chinese Alliance church, so they had many Christian friends.
Although a proud graduate from the top university in China, she lost pride and confidence in herself in Canada. She said, “But here, you are nobody; you have to start from zero” (YUT, p. 3). In the first three years of her PhD program, she spent most of her time on work, about ten hours each day. The situation started to improve since the second year when she got good grades for her courses. From the third year, she felt even better, telling herself, “I just need to be myself. I don’t have to feel inferior in school or in social network” (p. 3). Now in her fourth year and working on her dissertation, she tried to write for six hours per day and spend more time with her religious friends. Work and religion were a bicycle she rode on and she was pedaling happily to keep both wheels moving.

_Yuchen’s Academic Life: “I will not criticize my professor’s standpoint”_

She liked her current program and thought it strong, creative and critical. She was grateful to people in her department who were very supportive to her in different ways—her supervisor, the department head, and the staff. She felt particularly lucky to have a good supervisor who met with her regularly and corrected her writing. The writing sample she gave me had very good organization, fluency, and coherence. She said it was because her supervisor corrected all the errors; “she corrects everything” (YUT, p. 4). In addition to her supervisor, her other professors and the tutors at the writing center were also very helpful in her writing. There was one professor she particularly mentioned, who typed all the comments and printed them out for her when she had difficulty reading the hand-written comments in the margin.

The first year was the most difficult year. She remembered a course that was “almost like a nightmare” (YUT, p. 4). It was a small class of four students; discussions and student presentations were the major activities throughout the term. She felt uncomfortable in class because she could not understand her classmates. She did not get good grades for her assignments
because she did not know how to write in the appropriate English expected by the professor. However, she did not yield, she learned to negotiate with the professor and requested to re-work the assignment and re-submit. That was her first lesson on learning to write in English.

She stressed the difficulties in the first year quite a few times. One problem was that she was not able to follow what the professor and the classmates said in discussions. “Sometimes, in three hours, you cannot say one word” (YUT, p. 5). She figured out a good strategy to cope with this:

At that time my goal was to ask one question in three hours, no matter it is good or bad. I usually ask the question in the very beginning of the discussion because in the middle I don’t know if it is appropriate; so I just ask in the very beginning. And then the professor will say this is a very good question. In the middle or in the end, I already feel so lost. (YUT, p. 5)

Yuchen seemed to think that asking people to repeat in conversations and discussions was synonymous to interrupting people. She said, “I seldom ask people to repeat because I feel it is not very polite. I think there is a special skill to interrupt people … I did not know how to interrupt the professor” (YUT, p. 5). In China, her not asking questions, that is, not interrupting the professor in class, was out of thoughtfulness:

I seldom interrupt people in CHB. I think the teachers do not like to be interrupted, so I don’t ask questions because they need to control the time and teaching content. They have their schedule; they have to follow it. (YUT, p. 6)

Reading was challenging to her. She said, “my reading is very very slow” (YUT, p. 6); she usually spent more than twice as much time as her peers, and “I sometimes have to read 3 or 4 times in order to understand it” (p. 6). The major reason accounting for this was translation.
I read in English, but I still need to translate into Chinese, and then translate back into English again. … if I want to get something from the reading, I have to translate, I have to look up words in the dictionary, so that I can understand it better. (YUT, p. 6)

The process of double translation slowed her down in reading but helped her in understanding. In addition, note taking was probably another reason for her slow reading; however, this facilitated her writing because “if I think in English and write in English, I do it faster. I like to write notes when I read, then when I write, I can follow my notes, and I can write faster in English” (p. 6).

Her TOEFL writing score of 5.5 seemed to indicate her high proficiency in English writing. She said she did not know the difference between Chinese and English writing, but she knew “how to write following the logic, from introduction, to the body and the conclusion” (YUT, p. 4). In fact, she thought Chinese and English writing similar in style. She wrote her Master’s thesis in Chinese and translated it in the same style into English for her PhD application package and for a conference presentation, and she did not find any problem with it. It seemed that she had a good sense of academic writing.

She found that familiarity with the content made writing easier. “Another reason is that the articles I read in Chinese or English are all academic articles. I seldom read novels. So what I learned about the language is academic” (YUT, p. 8). Being familiar with the subject knowledge and academic language was a crucial facilitation to writing.

Her sense of identity entailed an evolution from being a humble student to being both a student and an expert in her research area. She said:

In my first year, because I’m not familiar with the area, so most of the time I was reading. At that time, I knew I was a student, a very normal student, very quiet. But in my second year, I took some course on immigration, and on the Diaspora, and nationalism, I started to talk a lot on China and Chinese. We also had some research experience, such as on
Chinese immigrant. On some topics, I can see myself not only as a student, but also as an expert on China. In my essays, we need to have some critical arguments; I usually lead it to China, no matter what I read, like on women, on nationalism, on socialism, I always speak with respect to China. (YUT, p. 9)

From the above, it is apparent that familiarity with the research area was an important issue. It gave her not only confidence, but also voice; in her own words, “you can have a lot of voice” (p. 9).

Using the word ‘normal’ when she referred to her status in the first year, she meant that a ‘normal’ student was one who did not show off their knowledge or interrupt people, who was modest, quiet, and not over talkative. When I asked if the current more “talkative” her was still “normal” by her standard, she said, “It’s still normal, but just on some topic I can be very confident” (YUT, p. 9). Again, it was the familiarity with the topic that allowed her a louder voice. She was straightforward in her argument against her peers. Instead of toning it down, she would say, “no, I have a different argument. From the Chinese women’s experience, it should be this…” (p. 9).

This sense of a confident expert was also demonstrated in her writing. “In my paper on China’s liberation movement, and on Chinese women, I am the only one in the group who can talk about this topic” (YUT, p. 10). She felt that her professors and classmates were impressed with her insights into issues she was familiar with. This was a satisfying acknowledgement.

However, her strong arguments only occurred in discussions with classmates. In her formal writing, when she had to present critical opinions that were different from her professors, she had to use strategies to avoid conflicts. One of the strategies was to speak through the mouth of other people who held the same opinion:
Maybe they [the professors] thought I’m not that strong [in argument], but if I know my professor, and I don’t agree, I will just mention it. For example, in my comprehensive [exam], I wrote the feminist research on the methodology, there is one argument that if you are white feminist, you cannot fully understand women’s experience in the third world country. That argument is from the third world feminist, but I know all my professors, they are white, especially one professor, she is doing research on third world country. So I know if I can quote this sentence, to criticize the first world country, I can put it in a quotation, so it is not my argument. (YUT, p. 10)

One reason for doing this, that is, quoting other people instead of presenting her own argument, was “because people cannot understand, like the socialist feminist movement, they will say women are just like a package of the Party. But I will not say that, because the movement partly liberated women from their families and gave them lots of chance” (p. 10). Apparently, it was not that she lacked critical opinions, but that she was reluctant to argue explicitly against her professors. She concluded, “I’m not good at directly criticize my professors” (p. 10). That was true based on what she did and said, but she was certainly good at presenting her criticism indirectly and strategically.

There seemed a delicate line for her to draw in order to avoid disagreement and to be critical at the same time. Her strategy was to criticize the assumptions commonly agreed to be wrong among authorities or her professors. For example, she said:

If there are some arguments, I can criticize the assumption, but that assumption is kind of an agreement among feminists, like we can criticize that technology is very male dominated, I can just speak that; we all know it’s unfair in theory; but I will not criticize my professor’s standpoint. (YUT, p. 11)

She further elaborated why she did it this way:
Not that I do it deliberately. I know when I come here, I come to study not to criticize here. Sometimes, we talk about the one child policy in China. Every time we mention human rights, one child policy in China, they will … (Pause) I will just tell them that is just in the Chinese context, if the population is still so huge, for the whole society, it is not good, so it is just a temporary policy. They will argue, ‘no you are wrong, you still have lots of human rights problem.’ I will give more explaining. (YUT, p. 11)

The reasons were twofold: 1) her purpose of studying here was not to criticize the western views on eastern reality; 2) it is difficult to find a common ground with her western professors and peers, so she chose to avoid conflicts.

**Xitong: “I think my identity is a triple-identity”**

Xitong had been in Canada for six years. He liked fishing and listening to classical music in his spare time. However, the interest that affected his education and career was history studies. He developed an interest in military history as a teenager, so it is not a surprise that he joined the army after graduation from his undergraduate program. His first job was a translator, but it turned out to be an unpleasant experience. His job supervisors “knew little about foreign languages and looked down upon translators” (XIT, p. 1). He started to resent the job, “so later I swear I will never translate a single word [for them]” (p. 1).

And there was something else intriguing to him. “I’m highly interested in politics. I have a solid training in the European politics and East Asian politics” (XIT, p. 1). When combining his interest in military history with that in politics, it is easy to understand why he chose his Master’s program in War Studies and PhD program in Chinese military history.

His circle of friends is mostly composed of Chinese Christians in his church. He hardly had anyone in the academic circle to socialize with except for his supervisor, who was also his
friend, “because QN is a very Euro-centered institution, and East Asian Studies is just a small potato, so the related specialist is very limited” (XIT, p. 3).

In his point of view, Canadians are polite and implicit, causing ambiguity and uncertainty in communication with him:

The Canadians are polite, they won’t defend themselves. But the embarrassing silence, you will feel that there is a problem… But for newcomers to Canada, it’s hard for us to understand what Canadians really mean. They don’t tell you when something is wrong.

(XIT, p. 2)

This observation resulted in changes in his way of communication: “In the early days, I just go straight to the topic. But now I do it in the Canadian way, go around” (p. 2).

He introduced an interesting term to me: FOB, meaning fresh-off-the-boat. He used it a few times to refer to himself in his earlier years in Canada when he did not know much about this culture. For example, he had “the courage to criticize” when he was a FOB. But now “the more I know about the community, the academic studies, about my Canadian or North American coworkers, the more I became cautious” (XIT, p. 2).

Having a preference to the Canadian way of thinking and living, he claimed himself more Canadian than Chinese. He was also explicit and firm about his religious identity, “I’m a Christian and I go to church regularly” (XIT, p. 1). Xitong was the only Chinese student in my study who claimed triple identities and placed other identities above being Chinese:

I think my identity is a triple-identity. First, … I’m a Canadian citizen. I pay taxes here, I vote here, and also my welfare is here. This is my new country; I’m a Canadian citizen. But this is just one part, it’s separate part, the traumatized; it’s the first part, the first branch. The other one is I’m a Chinese. We chat in English, but we have a strong Chinese accent. And also the sentences we use is the Chinese version, … And also we are grown
up in China, and the Chinese culture is the entangled part of mine. ... It’s a part of our life. ... And the third branch is a Christian. Actually the first branch should be Christian, it is far beyond the condition of this world, it is out of the disparities of the ethnic gap, cultural gap, and language gap. We are all descendent of Adam and Eva, we are from the same Father and Mother, we are all the same men and women. (XIT, p. 15)

It is apparent that his religious identity was more important than his ethnic and cultural identities. It was this identity that gained him the circle of friends and gave him the sense of belonging to a friendly group.

**Xitong’s Academic Life: “I think the key is your explanation must be well grounded”**

Xitong obtained his undergraduate and Master’s degree in History at a Chinese university. He received his second Master’s degree in War Studies at a military college in Canada. He chose to pursue his PhD program in History at QN because:

History study is the only field I was professionally trained before I immigrated to Canada. I have been enthusiastic with it since childhood. Although my field in China was Allied Operations during World War II, it was nearly impossible for me to establish myself in that field in Canada. Therefore I switched from the European history to the Chinese history. (XIQ, p. 1)

He was very satisfied with the program, “I cannot expect a better program than my current one. By the time when I finished the courses of the program, I found that I had moved into a new world” (XIQ, p. 2). His supervisor tailor-made some projects for him so that he was able to use his expertise in Chinese history and intellectual development. This was in tune with his career goal, which was “to become a professor of China history in Canada” (p. 2). He was also grateful for the teaching experiences he got through TA work.
He impressed me as a serious scholar. His doctoral research was about the Communist movement during the Sino-Japanese War during 1937-1945. For the purpose of his research, he started to learn Japanese. The reasons are:

I would like to tell a full story, from the Chinese side, from internationally, and I also want to know the Japanese side of the story. There is another reason why I learn Japanese. History Studies is very close to other related fields. And the Japanese History Studies is much better than the Chinese counterparts. And besides, in the western countries, academics did not pay much attention to the East Asian studies, or China studies. But Japanese are different. Their cultures are so closely linked with China. So naturally, China Studies is one of their focuses. These are better developed, and the Japanese dedication. I have to say the Japanese historians in Chinese history did a much better job than the Chinese counterparts. (XIT, p. 4)

He criticized not only Chinese scholars’ lack of dedication to and quality in their research compared to their Japanese counterparts, but also “the Chinese arrogance” compared to their western counterparts:

There’s you know the Chinese arrogance—a foreigner how can you understand Chinese history? A professor from Washington University said that Chinese academics look down upon westerner experts in Chinese studies, but they don’t know how the western academics is like. If these works are translated into Chinese, they will be shocked. (XIT, p. 4)

His observation of the western institution seems related to his personal interest in politics. He said, “in my first month at QN, one of my discovery is there are more communists at QN than in China” (XIT, p. 4). This statement is apparently over-generalizing and exaggerating, but what he meant was that these students believed in communism and Marxism, and they “take actions
against capitalism, globalization, they take actions against Coca-Cola, they said it is killing cola” (XIT, p. 5).

He was an active language learner. He told me:

Besides English and Chinese, I tried French in Montreal and Russian in Beijing, and am studying Japanese at QN. Chinese is my native language in which I was educated and worked until I arrived in Canada in my late-30s. English is a language I began to learn as early as I was ten. Although I am fluent with the language, I am still working hard with it and not as comfortable as with Chinese. I spent four months in an intensive program of Frenchization in Montreal. By the time I left Quebec for X [name of the city, removed for confidentiality], my French was functional. But I lost the language. Russian was my required “secondary foreign language” in my MA program in China. I did not use the language for nearly twenty years and forgot nearly everything. I began studying Japanese since last September and can handle emergent situations. My strategy in language-learning is to expose the language as much as possible, to be patient and to study it daily. (XIQ, p. 2)

I think he did what he believed, at least in learning English. He watched English TV programs, surfed English websites, read English newspapers on a daily basis.

Struggling with the language is not a new topic among additional language writers. It was a critical issue for Xitong as well. The first two years were the most difficult period when he was frequently lost during random, spontaneous conversations. Different ways of teaching and learning was another source of stress. The huge amount of reading and writing was overwhelming to him. “In that 18 months, I wrote [in English] more than what I wrote in Chinese in seven years” (XIT, p. 6). It is hard to decide how true it is that he wrote more in English than in Chinese,
considering the many books he had published in China, however, it is true that “It’s a big demand for your language, a big challenge also, and big improvement” (p. 6).

He was very grateful to the writing tutor who helped him for the length of his study at his Master’s program. “I don’t think I can finish my writing without the help of the writing center. ... She helped me a lot; telling me what is good English writing. ... She changed my entire view about writing” (XIT, p. 5).

He was very self-conscious about his earlier essays, saying that “I always feel flushed when I read my first essay. I feel ashamed, it’s garbage” (XIT, p. 7). He thought the professor did not fail him because he had “double standard” for non-native-speaker students, particularly himself, because he was “a hard-working student,” he “has potential,” and he “is a FOB” (p. 8). This is a tricky issue in such situations. It is hard to decide if the professor was benign or if the student had a high standard for himself.

Mental translation was an inevitable process in his earlier writing experience in Canada. He recalled that when he wrote his first essay in English, he drafted in Chinese in his mind, and then translated his thoughts into English. Later on, he started to think in two languages; he was not sure which one he was using, but it was whichever came handy. From the second year, he was able to think mostly in English as he had more exposure to the English language and the subject content in English. He no longer did a lot of translation in thinking and writing. If he acquired the knowledge and experience in China, it’s easier for him to think and write in Chinese. If they were gained in Canada, he tended to think and write in English.

When he came to QN, he no longer used the writing service. The reasons are two-fold: he felt his English was good enough to deal with his academic work; and his supervisor was very kind and corrected all the grammar and vocabulary problems for him. He appreciated the fact that
his supervisor did not correct anything regarding the structure or content of his writing, giving him sufficient room to develop his own ideas.

Xitong was a prolific writer in China, having had ten books and a large number of magazine articles published. However, he said his Chinese writing had some negative influences on his English writing. The major reason for this was that the styles of writing in the two contexts were different. In China, he wrote non-fiction about the Second World War in non-academic language to attract and educate general readers, especially high school and university students. Such writing allowed him to be creative and flexible in style. However, in English, he had to write academic essays following the rigid format and using precise language. He had to learn to harness his vivid imagination and conform to the academic genre he was expected to master. In the early years in Canada, he could not help following the Chinese structure in his English essays before he knew the differences. Now, he was able to see the differences, and he was even able to “easily tell a scholar of sociology and [of] political science and history” by “the way they write” because their “way of thinking is different” (XIT, p. 10).

He said his writing for his Master’s program was full of vivid and metaphorical language, whereas his writing at QN no longer had much “color” (XIT, p. 12). His major concern changed from language to content. “In the early days, my sentences are not clear; I need to make them clear. But gradually I move to questions more academic, use more abstract concept. This is the big progress I’ve made at QN, to use abstract concept” (p. 12). He called this “brainwashing” (p. 13), meaning that he was assimilated to the academic culture and became more professional in his writing.

In fact, I found that figurative language featured in his writings throughout, but it is true that he was better at abstract concepts later on. As evidence, here are a few lines in his first essay on air-ground attack: “The unexpected trench warfare in the World War I was a nightmare of
every army”; “The horrifying slaughter of the trench war, therefore haunted the military leaders of major powers into the inter-war years, and apparently affected the evolution of air ground theories of Germany, Britain and the United States” (XIW1, pp. 1-2). And here is part of the opening paragraph of his third essay:

The civil-military relationship in the Third Reich—the relationship between the Nazi Party and the Reichswehr/Wehrmacht—was a bizarre marriage. Its civil partner was an amalgamation that covered almost the entire stratum of the pre-war German civil society, with the wealthy industrialists and bankers at one end, and the humble wage-earners on the other. The head of this collection was a former Austrian tramp in Vienna and a former corporal in the German imperial army—Adolf Hitler. (XIW3, p. 1)

His writing samples indicated that his language style did not change dramatically. What changed was his capability in manipulating the more complex and abstract academic concepts and in organizing the article into a recognized academic format.

He was quite upfront in expressing his views even when they were different from his supervisor’s. “I think the key is your explanation must be well grounded, and coherent” (XIT, p. 14), he said. He also had the confidence to claim, “you find in the PhD program, lots of students know more about their field than their supervisor” (p. 14). While it may not be true supervisors know less than their students in the field, it happens that supervisors may not be as familiar as their students in the specific research fields the students specialize in.

Although he focused on the other aspects of his identity, namely, national, ethnic, cultural, and religious when talking about his personal identity, he also stressed that in the academic context, he was “a student, eternal student, still a student” (XIT, p. 4).
Wei: “Definitely I'm a Chinese”

Wei was not a very extroverted person, in fact, he appeared a little shy; but he had a curious nature. He liked classic Chinese music, played basketball and soccer. He was interested in knowing the goings-on in the world, so he watched the news regularly. He was not religious but curious about religion and church-going: “I went to churches a couple of times, just to see what it is like” (WET, p. 1).

He lived in his current city for less than a year, so he often mentioned his life at another university where he had spent two years for his Master’s program. His circle of friends was quite limited; he mostly stayed within the Chinese community in Canada. He had two groups of friends: Chinese and “Canadian.” By using the latter term, he meant English-speaking Caucasians. In fact, his Chinese friends were mostly Chinese-Canadians, like himself. He identified some differences in his communication with them. First, the topics were different. With Chinese friends, they discussed anything happening in China and Canada that interested them. With “Canadian” friends, the topics were usually narrowed down to academic work; for example, “I have a Canadian friend, his major is history, we talk about history stuff” (WET, p. 3). The other issue was the degree of ease they felt in conversations. With his Chinese friends, he felt more relaxed due to shared language and culture; whereas he was more careful talking with “Canadian” friends. He had learned in China that there were things you could say but other things you could not in “the English culture” (p. 3). To his relief, he found out that his “Canadian” friends gave him different answers to such questions. He happily realized that the world and people were changing, just like the language was. He had two very close “Canadian friends” (p. 3) with whom he could talk more freely.

His social life was quite restricted. He was too busy to go to parties because he switched his research area here and everything was new and challenging to him. He used to spend most of
the day on work in CAG. Since he came to QN, he decided to spend the evenings with his wife and daughter, only occasionally working extra hours when he had to. Taking three courses plus his TA work, he was following a fairly tight schedule. He obtained an external scholarship, which was good enough for him to pay for his expenses. However, he had a family to support; he had to work as a TA to get more income, which his English-speaking peers would not do with the same amount of coursework. It was a big challenge for him to manage the heavy workload and to shoulder the family responsibilities, particularly when his wife did not speak much English and had to rely on him.

He seemed to have good time management strategies considering the amount of work he had to handle and the fact that he actually allocated some time for sports in the gym every afternoon. Sometimes, he went to have a beer with other graduate students, mostly native English speakers, on Friday afternoons to chat on topics of mutual interests. The challenge with such socials lay again in the language. In the first place, it was the speed in casual conversation. “When they have a hot topic, they speak very fast” (WET, p. 2), and he was lost. Secondly, for certain topics, “I couldn’t catch the vocabulary” which, according to him, was caused by the “cultural gap” (p. 2). Thirdly, his accent and pronunciation caused problems for other people to understand so he had to repeat. Another issue was age. He felt “less confident” because he was “too old to study”, realizing that most of the students were much younger than he was (p. 2).

He was a good observer. He found that the way people carry on conversations were different in China and in Canada. According to him, people in Chinese culture tend to interpret the speaker and interrupt them to insert their own agreement or disagreement. However, “in English, we speak like we hit the ball. Somebody throw out a point, whatever you talk, they want to hit back the ball, and then they hit the ball back. Go forth and back to debate something” (WET, p. 6). In other words, the interaction between the speaker and the listeners was turn-taking.
He was also a good listener: “Most of the time, I listen to others” (WET, p. 1). He was not of an argumentative nature: “If they listen to me, that okay, if they don’t care, that also okay” (p. 1). In Canada, he only voiced his opinion when he had something new to offer. Otherwise, “I think I’d better be a listener, not a speaker” (p. 2). He was also a patient listener, only presented his opinions when others had their chance to speak: “I seldom interrupt people. Most of the time, I listen to what they are talking. At the end, I may offer something different” (p. 2).

He treated people differently considering their age and social status:

In China, for the peer group with similar age, we were often against each other; we debate a lot. But for the elderly, I always respect them. I seldom offer any suggestions. And for the students, I gave them suggestions about their future, like where to go and study. But most of the time, I would give them examples, the evidence, to show what I said, to back up my idea. (WET, p. 1)

He was very persistent in his Chinese identity, not even considering the option of being assimilated in future. “Definitely I’m a Chinese. I don’t feel I’m a Canadian. I think there is a big wall between Canadian and I myself. … Some people live here for their life but still don’t change much” (WET, p. 12).

Wei’s Academic Life: “in English I haven’t had my own style”

Wei had received a B.Sc. in Geological Surveying at a university in China, and a Master of Science in Geography at CAG University in Canada before he came to QN for his doctoral program in Geography in fall 2005. He chose QN with a clear purpose:

I am interested in environmental geography that deals with wildlife conservation, climate changes, and water quality. I’d like to learn how to collect and process environmental
data using remote sensing and GIS, and QN program in my field seems stronger in Canada. So I came here. (WEQ, p. 1)

He was very happy with the program, praising the working environment and computer facilities, as well as his advisor’s guidance.

He lived a very well-structured life. We can see this from the way he used the English media for information: “I read English newspaper once a week (an hour at the most), watch TV half hour a day, and read English websites an hour a day. This tradition has been kept for recent two years” (WEQ, p. 2).

Wei’s language learning experiences and the ways he improved his language skills again showed that he was very structured in learning and very conscious of his goals to achieve:

Russian is the first foreign language I have learned. I learned it from high school to university. I spent lots of my university time to learn this language. I can read, write and speak in Russian. I had a native Russian to practice the language when I learned it in university.

However, for academic promotion purpose when I worked in China, I had to write paper in Chinese with English abstract. Since most references in my field are in English, I started to study English 5 years ago in China.

There are three stages for me to learn English so far. First, I read and translate academic papers in English into Chinese. I used an English-Chinese dictionary to do this. It lasted one year for doing this while I worked as a lecturer in China. I learned about 2000 English words during this time, I guess. Since I only paid attention to the Chinese meanings of the English words at that time, I did not get the correct pronunciation for
most of the words. Second, I bought some TOEFL books to prepare the TOEFL test. I spent half year for the preparation, and I got a score of 578. During this time, I learned some new vocabularies, and improved my listening skills. My reading and writing skills are very poor. Third, I improved my reading and writing skills a lot during my MSc. study at CAG. Still, I need much improvement at QN. (WEQ, p. 2)

He benefited from his teaching experience in China, which helped him overcome fear and nervousness when he had to do presentations or lead seminars. “I think this confidence probably came from my work experience. I was teaching all the time, I used to lecture in front of people. I don’t worry about that” (WET, p. 3). While his “Canadian classmates” had to use notes on such occasions, he did not need them because he trusted his good memory and his presentation skills (p. 3).

He felt generally comfortable in Canada, except for the worries about his language skills and getting published in English. He felt it hard to match his native-speaking colleagues in publications, because of his limited English proficiency. “Sometimes I think if I was born in English setting, I would be more successful in academic work. It is hard to compare to the people, to the productivity, mostly for the publications” (WET, p. 4).

As a matter of fact, he had already published five articles in Canada and had three more accepted. Compared to his over 50 publications in China, this was not a significant number. However, considering the language barriers and him being a first year PhD student, it is quite an impressive achievement. It seems that he set a high standard for himself academically and professionally.

He learned the organization of academic articles through reading published works. “When I read papers, I always paid attention to how people write”. He was such a conscious,
efficient learner that he told me the differences between Chinese and English writing in his own way:

In Chinese and in English, the writings are different, right? In China, we try to go around to say something. In the end, we come to the point. But here, we have to say the point first. Then we give the examples, the reasons, the evidence to support that point. (WET, p. 5)

He never used the writing services at CAG or QN. In CAG, he counted on his advisor to smooth up the language, namely, to correct his grammar, wording, sentence structure, and spelling. He was grateful to the support he had received, “I tried very hard to improve my writing”. At QN, he found the writing service always fully booked and therefore inconvenient to him.

He took advantage of the seminars offered to TAs to get tips for communication skills, improving pronunciation and organizing presentation. At CAG, he also took a course on university teaching offered to faculty members and PhD students, driven by his intellectual curiosity:

That’s not a required course for my program, that’s out of personal interest. University teaching and learning, theory and practice, they gave teaching theories—constructive, instructive, scholarship, all kinds of things. In that class, half of them were professors actually; I was a Master’s student, the rest of them were PhD students. (WET, p. 6)

Language was inevitably and understandably a big problem when he started his Master’s program at CAG University in Canada. “When I was in CAG at the very beginning, sometimes I couldn’t find the right word to express myself” (WET, p. 6). However, the pressure on him caused by language had been gradually eased off through a few channels. In the first place, his advisor at CAG was accessible; he could drop by his office anytime he needed to without making
an appointment. Secondly, other professors in both CAG and QN with whom he worked as a TA helped him build up his confidence in significant ways. “In fact, the instructors don’t treat TAs as students. They treat TAs as colleagues. They offer some suggestions, instructions. Some professors provide very detailed information” (p. 7). Thirdly, his status as a TA enabled him to realize that he was intellectually competent despite his language difficulties. He said, “I think my TA experience has helped me improve my language skills, my comprehension, and supported my self-confidence” (p. 7).

Accent and jokes were two challenges for him in understanding class lectures and in communication with instructors. “In fact I don’t have problem with the words they use, but I have difficulty understanding their accent, because everybody has different accent… And also professors like to make jokes. When they make jokes, I can understand the simple ones” (WET, p. 7). Needless to say, the more subtle and implicit ones led him nowhere.

Wei found out that his learning in Canada involved more thinking and analyzing than in China. However, being a good thinker and strong in research, this was not a big challenge for him.

It was quite difficult for me to understand many things, but right now, my understanding skill has improved. At that time [in China], I mainly memorized things. Now I think much more. Probably my research both in China and in Canada helped me a lot. … I think I am a little stronger in thinking when I read their writing and tried to see what is the next step, what kind of new things to do. (WET, p. 9)

He also benefited a lot from his interest and capability in doing interdisciplinary work. “I like to borrow knowledge from one field and use it in another field. … That’s one thing that helps me a lot” (WET, p. 9).
Wei was constantly translating in both writing and speaking at the beginning of his academic career in Canada. The interesting fact was that in writing, he translated from Chinese to English directly, whereas in speaking, he translated from Russian to English. He said:

I try to think of the idea in Chinese, I translate them into English. That’s in my mind, the translation. For the speaking, I know I couldn’t speak Chinese, but the Russian usually come to my mind first, then I know I could not speak Russian, so I translate into English. I struggled with that for two or three months. (WET, p. 9)

In his Master’s program, some professors accommodated international students’ writing by focusing on main ideas and organization and under-weighing grammar:

When I was in CAG, the course syllabus attached has a piece of information saying that grammar is not the central thing for international students, as long as you have the main idea, the point, the organization, those kind of things… The professor has something in mind that this is an international student’s writing. (WET, p. 7)

After two years in Canada, he learned the differences in English writing and Chinese writing by himself and figured out why his professors had difficulty understanding his writing:

Sometimes, I found it was the grammar problem; sometimes, it was the bad choice for the word. But most of the time, I found I wrote Chinese-English—I wrote English in the Chinese way. That was why they couldn’t understand. From that time, I started to pay attention to the differences between Chinese writing and English writing. English is different, they speak to the point first. They have something in mind, they say it first. (WET, p. 10)

He understood English academic writing as being very formal and following a set structure. “By formal, I mean there are several sections like introduction, methodology, results, interpretation, discussion, and conclusion, those kinds of things. I just follow that” (WET, p. 8).
Based on this understanding, he tried to follow the English way of writing and thinking, “There are different levels [in writing]. I first make an outline, the main point I want to say. Then I write the paragraphs”; and “Even my English is very poor, I think in English” (p. 10). In fact, due to the change in his major, he found it easier to write in English than in Chinese, “I changed my field, most of the knowledge I learned in here are different. In those fields, I think it is easier to say in English” (p. 10).

One problem that bothered him in writing was his habit of correcting grammar errors while writing: “When [part of] my writing is done, I always go back to check the grammar, that’s the problem because it stops my thinking” (WET, p. 8).

His sensitivity to writing and strategies for improving writing skills were reflected in his choice of sentence structures:

I changed a lot in writing, not grammar, but the sentences. I tried to use different varieties of sentence structures. I used a lot of short sentences at the beginning, but I have a feeling that I need to use different sentence structures, use long sentences. Later on, I find the long sentences very confusing, so I tried to balance them. Sometimes, I use short sentence, long sentence. Even I can express in long sentence, I sometimes use short sentence for some change. (WET, p. 8)

He also developed good reader awareness through these years of writing practice:

Sometimes, my classmates, my professor may not know as much as me in the subject I write, so I try to use the language they can understand. So the rule I use for my writing is that “is this clear for my reader?” But I only realized this recently.

In my Master’s program in CAG, I didn’t know this. I was struggling with short sentences, long sentences, the varieties, and the grammar. Right now, I still worry about
the grammar, the sentence variety, but I move to the stage to have the reader in mind.  

(WET, pp. 8-9)

He was able to distinguish his different roles and adjust his identities accordingly in interaction with people in academic settings. “When I am in the classroom, I think I am a student. When I am a TA, I know I am a TA” (WET, p. 10). However, in English writing, he had not been able to develop his personal style and a sense of unique self as he had done in Chinese writing. “Language is still a problem. Right now in English I haven’t had my own style. But in Chinese, my writing is definitely different from many other people” (p. 10).

He found it difficult to be critical in presenting arguments because his previous training was mainly on writing technical reports rather than for argumentation. “For the argument, not only because of the language, I think it’s because of the training. My training was mainly technically, so for writing technical stuff; but for argument, I don’t have much to say” (WET, p. 11). He understood that evidence from his personal experience could not be used to support his argument; therefore, “I have to do research to get evidence to support what I say” (p. 11). He found this was one of the differences from his work in China.

Successful as he was in his academic work, he felt the academic requirements in his Canadian institutions still too high for him to reach. “I don’t think I am at the level of academic culture here. I still think that I am a student, I’m learning. It’s a far way for me to reach that academic level” (WET, p. 11).

Although he said that his advisor and other professors at CAG were easily accessible, he felt he did not communicate with them as often as he would like to. Some of his thoughts on research were not approved by them because he was not able to get himself understood:

At CAG, I think I made a big mistake. I didn’t talk to the professors much. When I had some ideas for the research, they would say no no no, this is not correct. But by 20
minutes or half an hour meeting, you cannot explain to the professor clearly. We have something in mind, but they could not understand. (WET, p. 12)

When he came to QN, he adjusted his strategies and reached out to talk to the professors about these thoughts and found out “they are quite flexible”; “My professors here are happy about that [his ideas]” (WET, p. 12). He therefore started to pursue some of these topics that interested him.

However, he did not complain about his professors at CAG at all. On the contrary, he showed his understanding of them:

I think the professor in CAG, they were also right. They have research project, they have to follow exactly what the project is designed. But the problem is that I don’t get the written report. At that time, my English is not good, I misunderstand what they want sometimes. So I worked out something differently. (WET, p. 12)

_Hanyu: “I’m the double minority”_

Hanyu was a second year Master’s student in Education and had been in Canada for one year and eight months at the time when I contacted her. She wanted to become a teacher or social worker in future, so she exposed herself to English media everyday and made good use of all possible opportunities to master the language and the culture.

She was raised in a family that encouraged versatility. She had practiced Chinese calligraphy for six years, having attended exhibitions and won awards for excellence in it. She had also taken violin lessons for five years. These interests allowed her spare time to be more enjoyable regardless where she lived when she grew up.

Compared to other international students, she enjoyed a much more diversified and fulfilled social life. She was actively involved in and was the team leader of many student
organizations all through her school years in China and in Canada. At QN, she was the international student representative in the Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS), and worked closely with students from all over the world. Outside her university, she was also engaged in organizing activities for a multicultural women’s group in the local immigration services, generously giving her support to new immigrant women who lived on the periphery of the society due to language difficulties and cultural barriers.

She had a good sensitivity to the many differences between the two cultures in which she lived, and made comparisons consciously. She was able to perceive the differences between her home culture and Canadian culture regarding her role of a student leader. “In China, I was very careful in speaking, especially when my leaders or the older generation are at present. I would be very much concerned with their reaction to my words” (HAT, p. 2). In Canada, however, the experiences were very different. At SGPS meetings, she voiced the concerns of international students, such as tuition fees, health insurance plans, language difficulties, and discrimination. On such occasions, she could be critical in her views:

Because I am kind of a team leader, you have to share opinion with other people. When you share opinions, you have to use critical ideas. I think I am comfortable saying something pretty critical, or even criticism. I am comfortable with that if I just speak it out. (HAT, p. 2)

Her ideal was “to establish a community which is very open to any ideas, to many people with different perspective” (p. 2). However, she also admitted, “sometimes, I still don’t feel comfortable to direct criticism” (p. 2). Her strategy was not to walk around the issue; on the contrary, she tried to be very polite but firm in presenting her opinions.

When she took courses, she always gave priority to her academic work. Now that she finished her research proposal and was waiting for feedback from her supervision committee, she
was more than happy to switch to something different. She found the socials in the local culture quite different from what she was familiar with in her home culture; but she held an open attitude to the differences:

I am interested in the socials, but I choose the parties to go, and not to go to others. Actually I attend more than I used to be. I’d love to go out with other SGPS members sometimes, although sitting in a pub just drinking and chatting can be a kind of strange thing for me. When Chinese people socialize with each other, we invite people to our house, cook together, eat together and watch TV, and we chat. But these people just sit there doing nothing, with loud music, just shout, they seem to enjoy that. After that you cannot speak. It’s kind of strange. I wonder why people have so loud music that they have to shout. But I think I try to get involved in because I know it is part of the local culture in North America. Whether I like it or not, it’s worth it that I experience some part of it. So I always encourage myself to be there, sometimes just to see what’s happening there. Pretty interesting. (HAT, pp. 3-4)

Although she tried to merge in the local culture, she was acutely aware of her identity being a visible minority and the loneliness of being a minority:

Usually you cannot tell who are international students because most of them look alike. But in many cases, I am the only visible international student, only visible minority; I’m the double minority there. Of course, it’s kind of lonely, especially in the classes where you are the only international student. I mean other students, they share the similar culture, similar history, you are the only person [who doesn’t share these with them], of course the first impression is that I am the only one different, I feel quite lonely. (HAT, p. 4)
However, she learned to find a fine balance for herself: “But later on, I learned to be proud of myself; I tried to look at it from another perspective—I am the only one who has a different perspective” (HAT, p. 4).

Her circle of friends quickly expanded from the classmates to a variety of people from different backgrounds.

My classmates are the first people I got to know when I moved to this country. Later I think the circle is getting larger because of my involvement in different organizations like EGSS; some of them are classmates, some of them are not, but they are very nice, they help you. I met more people in SGPS, KDIS and QN international center. And because of my work [at the international center], I have to contact people, then I know more people. Now they are pretty diverse, they are from different backgrounds, they are doing different work, they have different lives…both Canadian and international students. (HAT, p. 4)

Learning to understand and respect different cultures helped her to communicate with people more efficiently:

…because we have different cultures, we can always communicate pretty well. We can always work well. I used to think it might be more difficult to communicate with these people, but now I feel it is not much as I imagined. I think people respect each other, and that makes me feel comfortable. At the same time, I try to know more about the system here, how to work here. I try to understand people’s way of thinking, then the communication difficulty will be minimized, instead of getting larger and larger.

(HAT, p. 4)

She quickly learned the western way of communicating with her professors:
I think email is the very first thing I will do. I think people here are used to making appointments, it is impolite to drop by their office. I usually email them very briefly and clearly what my questions are and when I wish to meet. (HAT, p. 6)

Despite her effort to merge into the new culture and make new friends, she was rather consistent about her identity as Chinese. When she was new to Canada, she always introduced herself as “an international student from China”:

I think it’s something I did subconsciously... I think it’s more like it’s pretty a natural thing for me. I want people to know where I am from. Now, I think it is sometimes still important; but it more depends on the situation. (HAT, p. 5)

In other words, even if she became more flexible in self-introduction on some occasions, her international student status and her nationality were still unchangeably important to her. Having been in Canada for close to two years and actively in contact with the new culture, she was still firm about her Chinese identity:

I never think I would be a Canadian. If I will be an immigrant, I will say I am a Chinese-Canadian. I think I’m pretty proud of my ethnic background as a Chinese. In Canada, where diversity is encouraged, I think I am pretty comfortable to say I am from China, I am Chinese. I am a typical Chinese. But I’m here for a while, in some kind of ways thinking, I might be a mixture of two cultures. I have adapted to the new system, I have learned some survival skills, but I always identify myself as a Chinese. (HAT, p. 5)

_Hanyu’s Academic Life: “I felt very comfortable to express whatever I want to say”_

Hanyu had completed her secondary and undergraduate education in China. She chose this Master’s program in Education because she saw education as a profession with bright prospects and she chose QN because her husband had already been in a PhD program in this
university. Her general comment on her program was, “It almost met my expectations” (HAQ, p. 1). Hearing such a comment, I felt that she reserved some disapproval of the program although she was satisfied with it overall.

Like most new comers to a different academic culture, it took her some time to merge in:

In the classrooms here, they encourage people’s participation and discussion, I felt quite intimidated at the very beginning. I was not very confident to share my opinion. Step by step, I feel my opinions are acceptable; I should let people know my opinions, especially in the classroom, the instructors is very welcoming to people’s different ideas, then I would raise my concerns or questions or suggestions to the topics of the discussion. (HAT, pp. 2-3)

However, being different posed some challenges to her, “sometimes when you are the only person whose opinion’s different from others and your opinions are very different from other people, I worry if they will accept it” (HAT, p. 3). Despite her worries, she thought it worth it to articulate her opinions, “I think at least I let people know what I think” (p. 3).

She was sensitive to cultural differences and was respectful to people of diverse background.

I try to be very sensitive to people, try to make it soft, instead of using very hard words. Especially when we talk about something which is cultural-related, because cultural differences are always there. I don’t think anybody who is qualified to comment on what other people do according to their culture, which seems good, bad, or offensive, because you were never in that culture, so you can never understand. But first of all, you have to respect. I always try to show my respect to other people’s opinion and their culturally related comments. But sometimes, I do worry whether people will get annoyed or not very comfortable because of my opinion. (HAT, p. 3)
The pressure on her in the initial contact with her advisor was not with the content of the conversation but with language. “When I first met my advisor, I was pretty nervous because I was worried if my English was good enough” (p. 6). But later on, she found out that it was not difficult to ask people to repeat or paraphrase when she didn’t understand them.

However, when talking about the language of instruction in the program, she found cultural knowledge was a greater challenge than language itself:

I think it is not a pure language thing. It’s always social thing. If you want to learn the language well, you have to have the knowledge of the context. That’s why I feel that in some of the classes, I’m going to be lost; especially when people are talking about a particular person everybody knows or a historical event which I had no idea, I got lost, totally lost. I would feel very nervous—what do they talk about? It doesn’t matter how hard you make an effort, you always wonder what they are talking about. But generally speaking, English instruction is easier to be understood than the TV dialogue and the movie language, I think. In the classroom, if I understand the cultural context, I think I understand all of them well. (HAT, p. 7)

Like other international students, she learned to write English academic papers through reading and imitation:

The reading helps me a lot, I learn the patterns, the language people use. I learn a lot from the reading. Step by step, when I read a lot, I learn their ways of writing, you can imitate or follow their writing styles in your own paper, that makes your paper more like an academic writing according to the requirements in this culture. (HAT, p. 7)

She tried to perceive the expectations of the instructors and strive to meet the required standard in writing. “Before every writing, I always make sure about the requirements, what the
teacher expects from the writing, what is the grading criteria, what is a good paper for them, what
should it be like. I try to meet their expectations” (HAT, p. 7).

However, writing to the reader did not mean she would give up her own argument in
order to favor the instructor:

When I say I follow their expectation, this is only about the format, the structure, it is not
related to the content. All the professors I took courses with are very open to opinions,
they are very encouraging to fresh ideas. I felt very comfortable to express whatever I
want to say, of course in educated language, not harsh words, nothing like that.
Sometimes when there are conflicting opinions, the professors are very open, very
welcoming to different ideas. Sometimes I have conflicting ideas with my advisor about
my thesis, but I think we negotiate pretty well. He [she] is pretty open, and very
encouraging to what I want to do. That made me very happy, so I don’t have to think how
to solve the conflicts myself. Probably that’s why I use “I strongly agree, I think” in my
writing. (HAT, p. 8)

Her confidence in a strong authorial presence in writing also came from a course she took:

I think it probably has something to do with the first course I took, Introduction to
Research at QN. I think I am the person who is more qualitative. The philosophy of the
course is that you are the person who knows it, because the research is not an objective
thing, it is subjective. That’s why I feel comfortable to express my ideas. The course
made me feel more confident to use this kind of language. (HAT, p. 8)

Similar to the process of oral communication, her initial worries in writing were also
about language. However, she soon realized that ideas were more important an issue:

At the very beginning, I worried about my language. Later I found that my English is
okay… I’m concerned about whether I can contribute my own perspective in my paper. I
don’t want just to follow what other people said; I’m a person who want to express their own ideas or suggestions. I think this is the value of academic writing, whether it is correct or not, it’s worth to express your own ideas. I also find the professors encourage this, so I want to do something good. (HAT, p. 8)

She also learned to be critical when reading published articles: “even if you write a literature review, you need to have a critical stance toward other people’s opinions…I always pay attention whether I have my own criticism, my own comments when I read other people’s work” (HAT, p. 8).

Due to the training in her undergraduate program in China, she was clearly aware of the differences in Chinese writing and English writing, and the fact that one can easily get lost in translation due to the differences.

Even in my undergraduate study in China, I took some courses like intercultural comparison, intercultural communication that were dealing with cultural differences, and people’s way of thinking. We talked about the cultural differences, like North Americans like linear and we like this, the circular. I got this from that class, I thought it was very interesting. When I consider myself, I found that was exactly the same. You can tell yourself the differences in Chinese writing and in English writing. Of course it led to some difficulties, but in English writing, you cannot just translate very beautiful article from Chinese into English, because you will definitely confuse the English reader. I always pay attention. When I write in Chinese, I try to follow the Chinese format, but in English, I try to follow the English format. (HAT, p. 10)

She realized that Chinese writing was beautiful in the sense that “you take it as a mystery, you entered the forest, and you wandered into another one for quite a while, and then you found what you want” (p. 10). English writing was straightforward and argumentative. After writing
straightforwardly in English for a period of time, it became difficult to write in the style that was considered beautiful in Chinese culture.

Being a good writer in Chinese, she said, “when I write in Chinese, I don’t even have to think…I use very short time to draft in my mind, …and can write very very quickly” (p. 10).

However, writing in English was a process of translation at the beginning.

You write in English, but you think in Chinese. I could not think in English at that moment. I thought my English was not too bad, but people can see the shadow of the Chinese there. But after some practice, and also the immersion in the English environment, I can now think more in English. (HAT, p. 10)

In academic writing, however, she did little translation, because everything you read is in English, you never get a chance to read a Chinese article for academic research. So for academic writing, I think in English. You have no space to think in Chinese. When I have difficulties, I look back to some articles when people argue the similar topic. I try to figure out their writing, their rationale. (HAT, p. 11)

Grammar was one of the concerns in her writing, but not the major one: “I always pay attention to the tense, whether there is a grammatical error, whether the coherence is okay, because English anyway is your second language” (p. 11). However, she knew better what should be the focus of a piece of academic writing:

I think I probably pay more attention to the structure and content rather than grammatical thing because I think grammar mistakes can be very easily identified. You can always correct them, but structure and content really need more time to think and to make more effort. (HAT, p. 11)

In her view, it was easier to exhibit a strong self in writing than in speaking:
I think writing is a private thing; you can make a strong argument in writing. But in public speak, even I was a presenter, I want the environment to be open for discussion, I was very careful about the words I’m going to choose. I probably will not use “I strongly agree.” I probably will use more about “I’m thinking that… Many people argue this… which I agree.” I don’t want to be arrogant; I don’t want to appear I know more about it than other people do. (HAT, p. 11)

Through observation, she found out that conference presenters and lecturers tended to be humble in their speech in order to establish “an open environment” and to “invite people for discussion” (p. 12).

With regard to her identity in academic settings, “student” was the keyword she consistently used to refer to herself:

If I present at a conference, I think of myself as a student researcher. When I participate in the classroom discussions, I think I’m a student participant, probably with some different cultural background. And when I talk to my professors, I feel I am a student who needs instruction in order to write a better thesis. (HAT, p. 11)

When disagreements with professors occurred with regard to their academic viewpoints, she tended to attribute the reason to her own lack of understanding or knowledge in the issues. She would reach out to discuss with them:

I would go and talk to the professor, ‘cause sometimes I feel that if I don’t agree with them, it’s just that I cannot totally understand them. If the professor is accessible, you can meet him or her and have a discussion; they will help you to fully understand them. You will realize that it’s not their problem, it’s something that is not wrong. You will make a more educated decision whether you agree with them or not. (HAT, p. 12)
She also had much respect for academic publications. She would be careful in her tone when she expressed her disagreement: “every published work has their own merits. If I want to use this piece of work, and I don’t have a strong evidence to say this is wrong, I won’t use these very strong words” (p. 12). From her student point of view, she noted “It’s okay for me as a student to be critical, but I think I have to respect other people’s effort in their work” (p. 12). It seemed that her self-positioning as a student played an important role in her attitude toward disagreements with her professors and other academic writers.

She did not think this was the result of her eastern culture. She steered clear of cultural stereotypes based on her own experiences: “people often say western people are less respectful to authorities, but according to what I observe, this is not true. Probably this is an individual thing, some people are very humble” (p. 12).

**Jian: “I’m a Chinese, and will be Chinese all this life”**

Jian had been in Canada for two and a half years, studying in a Master’s program in Geochemistry. He had a good family background in China. He had learned the piano when he was young out of the will of his parents. However, his real interests were in sports, particularly basketball and soccer. In his allocation of time, work had the top priority. He also made sure he spent three afternoons in the gym each week. He enjoyed playing basketball and soccer with people because these group sports gave him the feeling of being connected with people.

His social connections mainly revolved around his classmates and supervisor. For example, he played sports and ate out with other students in the department and he was invited to his supervisor’s house for dinner parties a few times. Other than these, he had very limited activities in which to participate:
I rarely have social activities. Occasionally, I have dinner at a classmate’s place. In the past, we went to the Grad Club every weekend. There were lots of students from South America; they were very warm-hearted and invited me to go with them, so I usually joined them on Friday evenings. But to be honest, they all switched to Spanish when they got excited; I didn’t understand them. Sometimes, I felt awkward, and I didn’t know why they laughed. (JIT, p. 3)

Language was obviously the big barrier in his cross-cultural communication. His sense of awkwardness was not uncommon among students studying in other languages and cultures.

According to him, his English listening and speaking were weaker than reading and writing. He rarely consulted English media, with the exception of any program related to NBA. Personal interest definitely played an important role in his language learning. He said, “I often download NBA (National Basketball Association), so I don’t have a tiny bit of problem with NBA commentaries. I can say proudly, it is the case. If I go to an English website, it is mainly for NBA and alike” (JIT, p. 21).

He never discussed the concerns in his academic or social circles with people, but he did have a concern of voicing his opinions because of his status as an international student. He said “Sometimes I may have different ideas but I never talk about them in the department. I am a foreign student” (JIT, p. 1). Another reason for not speaking out was to maintain a good relationship with people from different cultural backgrounds: “This is good for international friendship. I can speak out, but I can also reserve my opinions. If people have difference opinions and speaking out doesn’t help much for maintaining a good relationship, I will not do it” (p. 2). Furthermore, he thought that people’s subjective opinions prevented them from communicating peacefully. “If people are objective, we can all accept each other calmly, and will not have different
opinions” (p. 2). On the many occasions when he didn’t speak or didn’t get a chance to speak up, he would let it go and considered it unnecessary to argue.

Based on his own interactions with people from other cultural backgrounds, he found out that “Koreans have a strong sense of national pride. Westerners are similar to South Americans, they are more open-minded, like to joke and don’t take them [jokes] seriously. Canadians are more respectful to people, more self-cultivated and polite” (JIT, p. 3).

For the concern of the language, he felt more attracted to his Chinese friends, especially the few that were very close to him. “Sometimes, even if we don’t speak, just a pat on the shoulder makes me feel good. I feel quite intimate when they encourage me or talk to me. With foreigners, we have communication problems” (JIT, p. 4). He called non-Chinese students “foreigners,” including Canadians, as if there were only two groups of people in his concept. However, he did have a non-Chinese friend, a Venezuelan who also worked with his supervisor. They dined out together and were open to each other. “There are some language difficulties, but we can talk our mind freely when we discuss some internationally sensitive questions” (p. 4).

He felt that his Canadian classmates were polite to “foreigners” (JIT, p. 4), meaning international students, but they did not particularly reach out for friendship because “the barriers are there, we simply keep a surface level friendliness” (p. 4). Most of his friends, not surprisingly, were Chinese. “It is impossible to make as many foreign (meaning non-Chinese) friends as Chinese friends” (p. 4).

Interestingly, his notion of foreigner is relative; it refers to different groups of people depending on the position he takes at the time of speaking. Earlier, he referred to non-Chinese as “foreigners”; now he considered himself and other non-native-speakers of English as “foreigners” in this country. But in the last sentence, he switched back to refer to non-Chinese as foreigners. This occurs in his later discourse as well.
When he introduced himself to people, he tended to mention that he came from Beijing instead of China because he assumed that “I don’t need to say China; I think they all know Beijing… They generally all know that Beijing is in China” (JIT, p. 5). Although he claimed that his doing so was to avoid further questions on “where about in China?” the assumption indicated his pride in Beijing in his subconscious mind. He had an extremely strong sense of Chinese identity, saying that, “I’m a Chinese, and will be Chinese all this life. There’s no ambiguity about this matter” (p. 20). It is therefore no wonder that he felt strong ties to his home country. “You have received systematic education in China, you feel you are closer to your motherland, so you certainly want to emphasize it” (p. 5).

It was the first time he had left Beijing when he came to Canada, so he felt maladjusted to the life in a small city. “For one thing, there are not many people, you feel lack of people whatever you do, and you don’t feel you are in a prosperous metropolitan city when you are in the street” (JIT, p. 6). The differences between his home and host cities gave him ‘shocks’ each time he went back to visit. Although he fit in better now, he still desired the big city life and was thinking of moving to Toronto to pursue his PhD degree in future.

He hoped in future when he has graduated from his PhD program, he would “be able to switch between the two places often” (JIT, p. 21). He seemed to have envisaged an identity of an in-betweener, a cross-cultural global soul for himself. At the same time, he was firm about his identity as a Chinese. It seems that the two identities are not mutually exclusive to him.

Jian’s Academic Life: “I am mostly a student in front of teachers”

Jian received his secondary and undergraduate education in Beijing, China. Having graduated from the prestigious CHB University, he came to QN for its ‘fame’. However, he was the only Chinese participant I interviewed who was unsatisfied with his current program. “It is
very theoretical and there are lots of experiments gotta do,” he said, “I don’t think it met my expectations, I prefer more mathematic work, programming work, modelling work, not descriptive work, writing work like right now” (JIQ, p. 1).

His interest was in computer modeling so he was looking forward to enter his future PhD program in which he no longer had to deal with descriptive writing and he would be mainly writing programs.

He didn’t like his current program very much partly due to language barriers, “My English is just so-so” (JIT, p. 8), and “I have some problems describing things in writing” (p. 9). It was also partly due to personal preference. He knew his own strengths and weaknesses in academic work: “descriptive stuff cannot show my strength. For example, observing things under the microscope and describe them, I think it does not fit me. I like math, less description, ideally no description” (p. 7). However, in his current geochemistry program, a good foundation was considered very important; and this foundation entailed lots of fieldwork of collecting samples, lab work of observing them and paper work of describing them. “If you don’t do this step [describing the samples] well, it is impossible for you to do the analytical work that you want to do” (p. 7). This was something he considered quite inhibiting to him.

He held an objective view to descriptive and analytical work. In his point of view, descriptive work is not less creative than writing programs; “you can also get some new thoughts through description,” and “it is not so creative to write programs; I just need to match those blocks of models and put them together” (JIT, p. 7). In other words, it is not an issue of creativity, but an issue of personal interest: “It’s just that I like mathematical and statistical work; they are more suitable to me” (p. 7).

He learned the writing conventions in his field by trial and error. In the first paper he gave me, he used many first person plurals like “we” and “our” to talk about a project completed
by him alone. In our interview, he said, “It was certainly not right to do so; I no longer did this later on. It certainly does not align with the English writing conventions. My supervisor told me about this. That paper was written in my second term. Now I have corrected it, I try not to use “we, I”; I usually use passive voice. That is, I say “this study,” and avoid using the first person; it is not the standard [to use the first person]. Maybe sciences are like this; it is a default practice. Even if it is all your own work, you don’t say so. It may not be the case for some, but 90% are like this” (JIT, p. 8).

He did not know there was a writing center in the university that helped students with their writing. His supervisor suggested that peers correct each other’s writing. However, he did not consult his peers for revision. The reasons were twofold: “It takes up other people’s time. And my classmates, like the ones I mentioned who are from South America, their writing is not so good either. And we Chinese are at a similar level too” (JIT, p. 9). One of his strategies was “you leave it for a day or two before you read it again. You may find out the problems then because in most cases, it is not that you cannot write, but that your organization is not good” (p. 9).

When he first arrived, his biggest challenge was to understand the subject terms in class. He counted on his textbooks and the teacher in and out of class to solve his language problems. (He used the term teacher when he referred to his professors and sometimes to his supervisor.) He did not feel the necessity of making an appointment with his teachers; “just knock on their office door” (JIT, p. 10) was his common practice.

His feelings about asking questions were different in China than in Canada. Being an intellectually curious and active student in high school, he learned that “teachers like students who ask questions” (JIT, p. 11). However, in his undergraduate program in China, he started to feel uneasy to ask questions: “Usually the courses difficult to understand were foundation courses; there were dozens, even over a hundred people in these courses. Teachers might think it was not
necessary for you to go and ask questions; and you might wonder if you were the only one who
didn’t understand; so you didn’t feel at ease to talk to the teacher” (p. 11). Here in Canada, he
regained the confidence of asking questions; however, he still had concerns of taking the
teacher’s time. He only approached the professors when he felt certain that he had to ask the
questions.

In terms of status, he held that he played a student role and was learning from the teacher
who “knows much more than I do” (JIT, p. 11). He was modest when asking questions, “It’s not
the kind that I feel very confident, and feel equal to the teacher” (p. 11). He stressed the respect
for the teacher, “Teachers must be respected, for sure, should be respected” (p. 11).

His beliefs of proper respect for the teacher conflicted with the classroom behavior he
saw of his Canadian classmates. He said:

Canadian students would bang on the desk when they get anxious in seminar classes. I
couldn’t stand it the first time; how could they talk to the teacher in such a way? But the
teacher didn’t say anything. Canadian students in particular, they are used to this casual
relationship with the teacher. But I don’t know in their understanding, what does respect
mean, and how to show it? But I think it is what students should do to respect the teacher.
(JIT, p. 12)

It is apparent that his confusion around what counted as respect for the teacher in a classroom was
influenced by his own cultural beliefs of the teacher’s role and the student’s role, as well as the
culturally recognized behaviors in the classroom.

However, he realized that the kind of proper respect in his mind had some surface level
elements embedded in it—people may show more respect than they really have. At the same time,
he considered it possible that people might show respect for the teacher by arguing with them in
the west. In other words, there might be different ways of showing respect across cultures. The
western concept of respect might be more based on the equal conversations between the teacher and the students. He wondered “is it the case that this kind of respect is shown through ‘I discuss questions with you and listen to you teach and this is my respect for you?’” (JIT, p. 12)

He was sensitive to the issue of pronunciation in class, considering it a more serious problem for non-native speakers than for first language speakers:

I think standard pronunciation is most important. I have encountered teachers with non-standard pronunciation, listening to their lessons was much more difficult because you were a foreigner. If a Chinese speaks non-standard Putonghua (Mandarin), you can communicate with him without a problem. This is the question of your mother tongue. Now you are in a foreigner country, and English is not your mother tongue. Maybe they foreigners can understand each other; and they also understand Chinese who speak English with them. But as a Chinese, it is very difficult for you to listen to a teacher speaking non-standard English. (JIT, p. 13)

His choice of the word “foreign” again indicated a binary view, but to whom the word referred was relative and based on the stand he was talking about.

His understanding of the requirements for written assignments was confined to grammar and wording: “There are no set requirements for writing, but I think grammar errors should be avoided in the first place. There are certainly requirements on wording, but my supervisor will correct them all for me, such as improper use of verbs, he will correct them for me.” (JIT, p. 14).

It is obvious that his supervisor was a strong support to his writing. Other instructors mainly offered constructive feedback on the structure; “But if it is the thesis, my supervisor corrects all of them, both language and structure, he corrects all of them” (p. 14).

His English was proficient enough for his current program, considering the quality of the writing sample he gave me that was completed by him alone. However, he was very modest about
his language proficiency: “I think engineering disciplines have the minimum language requirements. If I have to do an art or social science degree, I can’t do it, impossible. Language requirements are too high, … With my present English proficiency, it is too difficult to do such things” (JIT, p. 14). He admitted that he lacked self-confidence in his language skills. When the assignment involved mainly computation, he was confident in getting a good mark. “However, if it is descriptive work, such as a term paper or thesis, it is quite a headache because you have to consider language” (p. 15).

Imitation was his major strategy to learn to write academic papers in English: “I will first find some relevant papers to read. I need to learn their language, and I need to learn their structure as well” (JIT, p. 15). According to him, his writing lacked a personal style because he did not have a profound knowledge in his subject area or sufficient language skills. He said, “my own writing has no style to talk about,” whereas “my supervisor’s writing is very accurate and long, very clear in whatever he wants to say” (p. 15).

He realized that students in Canada were more capable of doing experiments first-hand, whereas he mostly learned the theories in China. This reflected a major difference between education in China and in Canada. The contents may be similar, but the skills students acquired can be very different. “The basic theories are the same, just that we didn’t do the experiments first-hand. The students’ ability of doing things first-hand in here, I can feel it” (JIT, p. 16).

He claimed that he did not know much about the writing conventions in his field; but he learned from practice that English and Chinese writing were similar in basic structures: “they are all introduction, background, analysis of experiment, the result of experiment, and then discussion, and the last is conclusion” (JIT, p. 16). However, he was also aware that “the language expressions are different; there are many things you cannot translate word by word” (p. 16).

The processes of writing in Chinese and in English were different for him:
When I write in Chinese, I write off my head directly. Many formal expressions and terms can be expressed directly. When I write in English, I have to think in Chinese, and then think how to translate them into English. This is a process I must go through. Another issue is that there are different ways of saying the same concept. In Chinese, I can pick the right one freely, but in English, I have to think which one I should use. (JIT, p. 16)

In other words, writing in his first language was spontaneous and straight-forward while writing in his additional language entailed triple thinking, namely, thinking in Chinese, thinking on translation, and thinking on word choice when necessary.

His writing was getting better than when he first arrived. However, he was still not at the level of thinking in English.

I have never thought in English. I can write in English directly some sentences that I am already very familiar with, such as introducing some diagrams or figures. But in terms of thinking, it is still in Chinese. I even use Chinese to figure out how much to pay when I do shopping, and then I translate it into English; everything is like this. There’s no way for me to use English, impossible. (JIT, p. 17).

He demonstrated different aspects of his identity with different interlocutors.

Communicating with peers is more relaxing, “I feel freer, more casual and open when I’m with classmates; I am just myself” (JIT, p. 17). However, “I am mostly a student in front of teachers…I’m more serious, and speak in a more organized way, can’t be casual” (p. 17).

He never had any disagreement with his supervisor although he was not whole-heartedly keen on the theories developed by his supervisor. “My supervisor is working on his theories, I know little about these; but I am his student, I support him at the face level. But in fact, I am not so interested in these stuff” (JIT, p. 18).
His conformation to his supervisor and peers did not stop him from questioning the value of academic work by following the supervisor closely, maybe a little blindly. He took his classmate as an example:

My Venezuelan classmate supports my supervisor 100%; however, what proof did he have to say that others were wrong? He has been in this field for only a few years, he was under the guidance of my supervisor. If my supervisor told him to argue against the others, he would do it; he would say others were wrong if my supervisor said so. I think it’s quite meaningless to do academic work like this. (JIT, p. 18)

His supervisor had a different model from that of other researchers. Jian felt lucky that he did not have to use any of them in his thesis. It was not a deliberate choice but it avoided lots of trouble for him. “I didn’t do it on purpose, but my choice was really good, just right. Otherwise, I would feel very upset. We sometimes chatted with my supervisor, and mentioned this topic; I would not say much, but if someone laughed at the others’ opinions, I would laugh along” (p. 18).

He was concerned with “seeking scientific truth”, saying that: “I don’t feel I am somebody; but from the angle of seeking scientific truth, you should voice your views after doing the experiments” (JIT, p. 19). He was also objective in viewing scientific arguments. “Many things look good, but you don’t know if they really are, you have to do experiments to prove. If you can prove that his stuff is right, you support him. But still you cannot say that his stuff is right, others’ stuff is incorrect; you still have to prove it” (p. 19).

Despite his concerns of the value of academic work, he felt that it might be a tricky situation for him if he really had disagreements with his supervisor. “I would present my lab result. If it was not the same as his, and not the same as others’ too, it would be much easier to handle. But if the result was not the same as his but the same as others’, it would be really troublesome; I wouldn’t know what to do. You are his student anyway, right?” (p. 19). It seems
that his student status contradicted his sense of self as scholar and might put him in a dilemma if he was not careful enough.

In general, all six Chinese students were very positive about the support they received from their professors and administrative staff, as well as the services provided by the university, such as the writing center and the international center. They particularly appreciated their respective supervisors, who recognized their intellectual capacity and helped them with language problems. QN is one of the leading universities in Canada; it matches FN in China in terms of international reputation. However, with regard to services and support programs for international students, QN has received more praises than FN from the participants in this study.

In the next chapters, I will present my interpretive analyses and discussions of the major themes which emerged from the data.
Chapter 7

Identity in Additional Culture and Additional Language

Chapters 7 and 8 are my interpretive analyses of the data based on the descriptive findings in the last two chapters. My research questions serve as a guideline for the analyses. These questions are: 1). What are the factors influencing AL students’ identities, that is, their self-positioning and their perceived social positioning, in an additional (academic) culture, and how do they position themselves? 2). How do they manage the sense of belonging or not belonging in the additional culture? 3). What are the factors influencing their writer identity, that is, their self-representation and ways of expressing ideas in academic writing, and how do they do this? 4). What are the commonalities and divergences among these students in their identity re/construction in writing?

Questions 1 and 2 are concerned with personal identity; questions 3 and 4 are concerned with writer identity.

In Chapter 7, I present the analysis regarding personal identity in an additional culture first, and proceed with the analysis of writer identity in an additional language and culture, in order to correspond with the order of my research questions and to maintain coherence of the structure with Chapters 5 and 6. The subtitles in Chapter 7 are themes I abstracted from the data and the analyses within them provide the answers to my research questions. The two themes within personal identity are answers to questions 1 and 2. The themes within writer identity highlight the findings from the data. They match the answers to questions 3 and 4, but need to be synthesized and summarized more explicitly. This I will do in the Conclusion section of Chapter 8, after more in-depth analysis of relevant themes that contribute to the understanding of the research questions.
In light of the findings of the study, I establish some new concepts in Chapter 7. These new concepts are discussed briefly as they occur in the text. In Chapter 8, I further elaborate on these concepts and develop them into a theoretical framework to understand the condition of self in additional culture and additional language, when I discuss themes emerging from the data that are relevant to my research, but are not direct answers to the research questions. I also re-examine the model of additional language writer identity I developed earlier in this last chapter.

**Personal Identity in an Additional Culture**

Many factors played a role in the self-positioning and perceived social positioning of these additional language students, and they positioned themselves accordingly based on their perceptions of their selves. Their feelings for and attitude towards home culture and additional culture determined how willing they were to negotiate a comfortable space for themselves in the additional culture. In the following, I elaborate on these ideas based on the themes developed from the data.

**Additional Language, Additional Culture, and Sense of Belonging**

Language has always been a major concern among individuals living an additional culture. However, this study shows that proficient language skills do not necessarily guarantee a sense of belonging; it is the feeling of intimacy to the language and culture that nurtures a willing affiliation. Data showed that the participants’ sense of belonging to the additional culture was determined by their feelings about the additional language and additional culture. Their sense of closeness or distance to the additional language and culture was affected by a number of factors, including length of stay (number of years and/or months they stayed in the additional culture) and social network in the additional culture, additional language proficiency, personality (personal characteristics), personal beliefs pertaining to education, and attitude toward the additional
culture. These are the factors investigated in, or which emerged from, the study; they interact and affect one another. For example, their length of stay influenced their social network, proficiency in additional language, and attitude toward additional culture; and their personal beliefs pertaining to education affected their length of stay, social network, and attitude toward the additional culture. Each factor is of significance to other factors. The combination of all or some of the factors determines their feelings of closeness or distance to the additional language and culture, which in turn, determines their sense of belonging to the additional culture. I will explain these relationships in more detail below.

**Length of stay** played an important role in the participants’ comfort level in and attitude toward the additional culture. In the case of Jameson, a hasty entrance to and a rushed exit from the program probably did not give him enough time and opportunity to truly understand the academic culture. He left disappointed, with complaints about Chinese academic culture after only six months’ stay. Jenny stayed longer, and as she gained work experience, she gained a better understanding of the culture as a whole, not just the limited academic culture within the university. Mariola had stayed in China for three years, and Cesar was in his third year of the Master’s program and sixth year in China. Ilhane had been studying in China for six and a half years. The length of stay in China seemed to have a crucial influence on their attitude toward China and their sense of belonging to Chinese culture. The longer they stayed, the more comfortable they felt living in the culture, and the stronger sense of belonging they achieved. Change in Jenny’s attitude is a good case in point.

Jenny’s experience also indicated that the activities she was involved in during the length of stay were very important. Her experience suggested that if one stays in a passive manner, one is unlikely to grow as much as others who live a more active life in the additional culture. Getting involved in social life outside school is a way to open oneself up, a very good way to achieve
understanding of the culture and proficiency in the language. Cesar had been teaching in language schools in China. This gave him the opportunity to meet his wife and lots of colleagues of different nationalities. The social connections built through work experiences enhanced his sense of belonging to the Chinese society. Mariola revolved her life around her own academic connections and her husband’s colleagues and friends. It was an interesting mix of people from multiple nationalities, and socializing with them gave her the sense of belonging to both the Chinese society and the European culture.

The same is true with the Chinese students. Those who had connections outside the university tended to feel more comfortable with life in Canada. Xitong, among the six students, had been in Canada for the longest time, and his social network was also the broadest. He claimed “I’m a Canadian,” and proudly treated his Canadian self as a part of his triple identities. Similar to Xitong, Yuchen belonged to a church and had lots of religious friends, albeit they were all of Chinese origin. Academic work and religious activities were the two focuses of her life. She was busy but happy. Zhong was in Canada for four years, getting involved in volunteer and teaching work. He was firm about his Chinese roots but felt quite at home in Canada with the least worry about academic writing among all participants. Jian and Hanyu both have been in Canada for less than three years. However, Hanyu did not miss any chance to participate in volunteer or committee work, finding great pleasure helping other people while at the same time broadening her knowledge of the society and enriching her life experiences. On the other hand, Jian stuck mostly to his Chinese peers and friends, not even knowing the services available for students, such as the writing center that might be very helpful to him. It is no wonder that his nostalgia for home was the strongest among all Chinese students. Jian was also the youngest Chinese participant, and the only one who wished to undertake cross-cultural business in future.
However, his statement that “I will be Chinese all this life” defied the belief of young people being more flexible and open-minded.

In fact, this study indicates that age does not correlate with open-mindedness or sense of belonging to host culture. On the contrary, the variety of life experiences and broadness of social network, among others, are more relevant to how open a person is to changes, differences, and multiple identities. The three younger participants in this research—Jian, Jenny, and Jameson—who came to their graduate program abroad fresh out of university, were the ones who complained the most about the difficulties of fitting into the host culture. Participants with a wider range of life experiences tended to be more flexible and understanding, such as Ilhane, Mariola, Zhong, and Yuchen.

**Personality** is another factor that affects one’s sense of belonging in an additional culture. Generally speaking, people who choose to study abroad share at least one thing in common—they are adventurous. Other than this, each person has unique characteristics that may either facilitate or hinder their integration into the additional culture. Jameson was argumentative and defiant, which undermined his good sense of humor and sharp mind in reasoning. He refused to compromise; as a result, it was impossible for him to find a middle ground in an additional culture that was different from his home culture. Ilhane was outgoing and friendly, always smiling and joking, full of cheerful spirit. She made friends within minutes wherever she stayed. It was natural for her to find home in China. Cesar was gentle and understanding. He consciously avoided confrontations in class and was not very articulate: “I think too many things but I don’t tell people. I try not to get angry.” He seemed to possess some qualities that are highly valued in Chinese society, such as being tolerant and modest, avoiding conflicts in public, being careful in speaking one’s mind, and stressing family responsibilities. This was probably one of the reasons why he was considered by Chinese as more Chinese than a Chinese. Zhong was cautious and
precise. He would overcome his shortcomings as soon as he realized them; a good example is his attention to the organization of his writing. He always knew what to say and when to stop when he spoke with people of different status in academic settings. This gave him the confidence of being a member of his academic community.

A person’s **beliefs** are a complicated concept. What I discuss here is confined to religious beliefs and beliefs pertaining to education as they are what the data suggest. Yuchen and Xitong’s religious beliefs allowed them a sense of belonging to a tight, supportive community in the additional culture. They might not feel close enough to the host culture as a whole, but this small religious community functioned like a big family to them. Ilhane did not have religious beliefs, but she believed in the god in herself—her inner strength. This strength made her thrive in the host culture. Within academic institutions, beliefs about education play an important role.

Chinese students, in general, believe in the authoritativeness of teachers and professors, and modesty and respectful attitude on the side of students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). These beliefs lubricate the interpersonal relationships between the professors and students. The Chinese students in this study all had language issues and cultural barriers to deal with, but they all praised the support they received, which enhanced their positive feelings about their programs. On the other hand, Jameson’s strong beliefs about education were based on his prior education. He disliked the fact that Chinese professors usually agreed with the government, and speculated the reason being that their careers were dependent on their political views. This was opposite to his American professors who were always critical about the government. He thought he was raised to be critical, “my education was about picking things for yourself, doing things for yourself, being different, being original.” His strong beliefs resulted in a strong sense of autonomy that resisted changes in this additional culture: “I don’t think I can change that [being critical] for being here”, and “I wasn’t going to give up my
personal beliefs and opinions.” He was very much molded into the self that might guarantee comfortable feelings in his home academic culture but did not guarantee anything like that in this additional academic culture. His resistance to changes disabled him from claiming more identities that were different from his old ones.

This study indicates that language proficiency was not the decisive indicator of identity among these participants. In terms of first language, Jameson was raised in English-speaking America, but he felt more attached to the Jewish culture. His highly proficient English did not give him a stronger sense of being American than being Jewish, although his sense of independence is profoundly American. Xitong was a successful writer in China, but he embraced his triple identities with an emphasis on his religious identity—he was first of all, a Christian, and then a Canadian and a Chinese. In terms of additional language, the participants had varied language proficiencies before their arrival, and achieved different levels of progress during their stay, but prior language ability and later language achievements did not have a correlation with the sense of belonging. Jameson and Jenny had all studied the Chinese language in their home country, but they did not have any sense of closeness to Chinese culture. On the contrary, Mariola, Ilhane, and Cesar started to learn Chinese after they came to China; they were attracted to the culture immediately. All the Chinese students in Canada had an excellent command of English before they came, and achieved significant progress academically in their respective program; however, most of them did not achieve a sense of being Canadian after a few years’ stay in Canada.

Although there is no direct link between proficiency of language and sense of belonging to the society in which the language is spoken, there is a link between closeness to the language and sense of belonging. In other words, when one feels close to the language, one is more inclined to gain a sense of belonging regardless of the proficiency. Xitong’s spoken and written
English contained quite a few grammatical errors, but he enjoyed using the language in communication and enjoyed being a Canadian. Zhong spoke perfect formal English, but he did not feel strong connections with the Canadian society because he treated the language more as a tool for academic work than a means for social networking or daily communication.

With regard to personal identity in relation to the proximity/distance to the additional language, the five international students in China showed two patterns. The more motivated they were in learning and using the Chinese language, the more intimate feelings they developed for the Chinese culture, hence a stronger sense of belonging. This was the case with Mariola, Ilhane, and Cesar. And vice versa, such as the case with Jameson and Jenny.

Jameson and Jenny both made an effort at learning the Chinese language, but were not as successful as the three students from other countries. They both had the privilege of learning Chinese in their home country, while the other three students started to learn the language after they arrived in China. However, since English is a mandatory course in all Chinese universities and schools, many people speak the language with varied fluency. As Jameson indicated, he could get by without speaking Chinese in China. For Jenny, she would rather close herself off to Chinese students and confine her circle of friends to English native-speakers from the United States. The two of them lacked the motivation to polish their Chinese language skills so that they could communicate comfortably in the language with local people. Things were different for Cesar, Ilhane, and Mariola. They had to learn Chinese and speak Chinese on a daily basis in order to complete life and academic tasks. Mariola was so eager to learn Chinese that she inquired about learning the language in a formal instructional setting the second day upon her arrival in Shanghai. She did not miss any chance to practice Chinese with local people. After only two years’ intensive language study, she was able to undertake her doctoral study in Chinese. Her desire to fit in the local culture and her drive to succeed academically aligned harmoniously.
In addition to the intimacy with the language, there is a link between engagement with the culture and sense of belonging. When one accepts a culture as it is and feels close to it, one is inclined to fit in regardless of his/her language proficiency. The importance of language in identity construction has long been established; language is considered “a badge of identity” (Buruma, 2003, p. 19) and an important symbolic resource in society (Heller, 1995); identity is established and maintained through language (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982). This study indicates that while language competency helps one to find the self in a new culture more easily, it is not the imperative factor in one’s sense of belonging to the culture. In the case of Xitong, his language was not as proficient as Zhong’s, but he identified himself as a Canadian, in addition to being Chinese. He disliked some aspects of his Chinese experiences, so he was happy being able to live in Canada, a country that allowed the space he desired. He accepted the culture upon arrival, so he had a strong desire to be a member of the Canadian society. He accepted the predominant religion as well, and considered being a Christian his primary identity because, according to him, there are no national or ethnic borders for a Christian. He was the most published writer in Chinese among the Chinese participants. However, language proficiency did not enhance his sense of belonging to Chinese culture. He chose to leave his own culture and look for one to which he belonged. On the other hand, Zhong’s academic English was almost impeccable. He was confident that his English writing was good enough for academic writing and he didn’t need anyone to proofread for him. However, he did not feel he belonged to Canadian society. His strong sense of Chinese identity seemed to have little to do with his language skills but rather, with his cultural beliefs pertaining to learning and his religious beliefs about family, modesty and kindness.

Engagement with a culture can also be a result of changes in personal life. Cesar’s language abilities and his intimate feelings for the Chinese society were further reinforced by the
fact that he married a Chinese woman. He accepted the Chinese practice of having his mother-in-law living with them to help with child care. It might be the case that his big-family life in Colombia resembled this kind of Chinese life; therefore, it was not an unbearable barrier to his married life in China. It might be, instead, a continuation of the life style with which he was familiar. Although he never claimed that his Chinese was proficient enough for communication at school, work, and home, it is difficult for me to believe that he was not able to converse effectively with his wife’s extended family, who might not speak English as well as his wife did, and with whom he had close connections. In his case, it was not the language skills that gave him the sense of belonging, but rather the feeling of closeness to the language and culture, and particularly to the people in the culture.

The relationship between the sense of belonging and engagement with the culture is apparent among all participants. Their attitudes toward the host culture were indicators of their sense of belonging.

Jameson and Jenny expressed intolerance to Chinese culture at the time of our interviews, although the things they complained about were quite the opposite. Jameson did not like the “China Chinese culture” due to its Chinese characteristics that are different from the westernized Hong Kong or Singapore Chinese cultures. He recognized the current spurt of economic growth in China but thought its political opening-up too slow. Jenny disliked the westernized Chinese culture that lacked the “Chinese flavor,” which seemed to mean the stereotypical, exotic features that are already history to most Chinese but are still the images in many Western people’s mind. In other words, Jameson did not fit in well because he was looking for similarity and familiarity to his American culture; Jenny was disappointed because she was looking for differences and exoticism distant from her American culture but somewhat attractive to her due to her Chinese family background.
These two students made an effort to study Chinese but the resistance to Chinese culture they had experienced negatively affected their willingness to speak the language. The convenience of speaking their native language in China and the knowledge of its lingua franca status reinforced their sense of being American, people who speak the “powerful” language in the world, just as Jameson implied in his statement “As an American, I do not need to speak Chinese at all in classrooms,” and as Jenny explained why she didn’t want to mix with Chinese students, “many of the local students only wanted to befriend us (foreign students) in order to polish up their English speaking skills.” The reluctance to join the host society and speak the additional language pulled them away from the majority of Chinese people and caused unsettling feelings in them, so that they wanted to leave (in the case of Jameson) or recede (in the case of Jenny). This reality left them very few opportunities to claim multiple identities.

The three students from Spain, Colombia, and Cape Verde demonstrated a different pattern from the two American students. They were happy to be mistaken as Chinese although they never forgot their home country.

Mariola felt her European culture closer to Chinese culture than American culture, which was a surprise to me. Terms frequently appeared in written and spoken discourse such as ‘Euro-American’ and ‘Caucasian’ make it easy for some people to assume closeness of European culture to American culture. However, in the eyes of Mariola, “the Americans are very American.” She said this with an air of disapproval, as if the American culture was very different from her European culture and the Americans had little in common with her. She realized the differences in Chinese culture, but she immersed herself in it willingly, “I want to have more connections with Chinese.” Her attitude toward the new culture was also reflected in her desire to belong: “I wish people to consider me as a Chinese when I am in China. I am very happy when sometimes people take me as a Chinese from other provinces.” She understood that as a
foreigner, there were many things difficult for her to understand and communication could be painful at times, but she was always ready to venture. Her eagerness to master the language and her desire to mix with local people account, to a great extent, for her sense of belonging to Chinese society. She went through the “very painful” beginner period, exhausting all available resources in learning at home, on campus, and in public venues. Her drive to learn and her progress were very impressive. Hearing that her Chinese name was elegant and beautiful, she gave me a very Chinese response—“I will study hard and prove to be worthy of the name”—instead of saying “thank you” in a Western way. It seems that by practicing the language, she internalized the cultural norms embedded in the language.

The situation was similar to that of Cesar and Ilhane. They had an open mind to Chinese culture with an objective attitude toward its cultural norms in the same way they viewed other cultures in the world. Cesar said, “There are things I don’t like, but I think people are the same everywhere in the world,” and Ilhane claimed “we are very open to the outside world.”

Ilhane’s attitude toward China and its policies, and her way of participating in classroom discussions and extracurricular activities, explained her good feelings about China, her classmates, and her study experience. In her opinion, China had the best diplomacy in the world and China was very kind in supporting her country. Her statement that “I love this country” was the strongest expression I had heard from all the participants about their host culture. Ilhane was active in her classes. Her classmates usually had heated discussions and people articulated different views. She felt comfortable saying whatever she wanted to say, but she was also careful not to be too tactless and hurt other classmates’ feelings. Being polite and respectful was the bottom line in her communication with classmates. Regardless of her own view, she was always willing to listen to others and see from their viewpoints. The variety of her leisure time activities earned her many friends and allowed her to observe and understand the culture comprehensively.
Compared to Jameson’s critical comments on Chinese professors, Cesar was more tolerant of them. He was able to see different aspects of human personality—a good teacher can be impatient due to reasons irrelevant to students. His comment on his first Chinese teacher who was impatient with him was, “He was a good teacher, but for me Chinese was so difficult”. He detached a teacher’s knowledge from his personality or ways of teaching. Jameson, on the contrary, expected all professors to teach in the similar way with which he was familiar. Cesar understood that it was a different kind of academic culture in which teachers are authoritative and are explicit about their praises and criticisms, appreciations and impatience with students. The teacher’s impatience did not stop him from studying hard to catch up, it might have enhanced his motivation to improve; he was proud that “finally I got good grades.” Maybe this is the way the Chinese educational system works. The teachers are expected to be explicit with their expectations and criticisms so that students know what and how to improve. Cesar was not used to this culture, but he lived with it and went through his academic life without major roadblocks.

Cesar appreciated the people who had helped him or had been kind to him. He repeatedly commented that they were “nice.” The professors were nice when they reached out to understand him and accommodate his insufficient language proficiency in Chinese. The classmates were nice when they volunteered to help him clarify difficult points in class. Although they were not as close to him as “friends,” he didn’t fail to acknowledge their support and express his gratitude to them.

The participants’ attitudes towards the educational practices in the additional culture seemed to indicate that their pre-conceptions of the role of teacher and student shape their experiences and their subsequent judgments.
Home Culture, Additional Culture, and Space for Mediation

Feelings for their home culture and additional culture, as well as the effort of negotiating a middle space in the additional culture are frequently articulated by the participants. Their identities in the additional culture entail different components. At the very basic level, there are the assorted selves: the self brought from the home culture with a strong sense of loyalty to it, the self constrained by and expressed through language, the self trying to speculate or understand the additional culture and figuring out possibilities of fitting in, and the ideal (desired) self accepted in the additional culture.

Loyalty to the home culture is a common theme among the participants, including the individuals claiming multiple identities and ones claiming their primary identity being a non-native-cultural self. Jameson claimed a Jewish identity prior to his American identity; however, he was also very proud of his American identity. He stressed the fact that he was raised in the United States and educated to be critical in the American way, and deemed American education superior to other modes of education, such as ones received by his African classmates and Chinese students. Xitong considered his religious identity as most important, but he did not forget to mention his being Chinese as one part of his triple identities. Ilhane, Mariola, and Cesar were happy to be taken as Chinese, but they all emphasized that they were first of all, a proud member of their home culture. Ilhane said that Cape Verde was a small country and lots of people left for better opportunities elsewhere in the world, including herself. However, she was proud of being a Cape Verdian. The rest of the participants stood firmly with their home culture. Jenny expressed a strong sense of American identity; she also took on an air of superiority of American education and work ethics. The other five Chinese students almost chorused their strong sense of Chinese identity regardless of their age, gender, marital status, length of stay, and field of study. Being Chinese was not only a label shown on their face, but something more profound in their heart.
Statements like “definitely I’m a Chinese,” “I more and more clearly feel my Chinese identity,” and “I’m a Chinese, and will be Chinese all this life” speak much more than the words express. They demonstrated that the feeling of belonging to home culture is the primary part of their personal identity, the part they are unlikely to change or discard easily.

The participants all chose to come to the additional culture with either explicit or implicit desires to understand the society and to enrich their own life. Except for Jameson and Jenny who were simply venturing and observing, the rest were seeking long term job and life opportunities through the cross-cultural educational experience. Ilhane wished to be the bridge between her country and China promoting investments and cooperation, Cesar wanted to pursue a career in China or Colombia in journalism or diplomacy, Mariola would like to work in an organization dealing with Europe-China relations, Yuchen planned to go back and teach in China, Xitong was considering a faculty position in Canada, Zhong and Wei left it open to work at a university either in China or Canada, Jian was preparing himself for a career in environmental technology, and Hanyu was looking for a position as a teacher or social worker. They seemed to gain more from this learning experience when their purpose of study aligned with their career goals.

Jameson and Jenny, whose career goals had nothing to do with their Master’s program, were not in a hurry to improve their additional language or to fit into the additional culture. They were playing the role of outsider-observers with little tolerance to the differences they experienced in the new culture. As a result, they distanced themselves from the culture and were nostalgic for their home culture. For the other students, their career would be built on the education they were obtaining. This motivated them to become immersed in the host culture in order to get the best out of it. They were more objective regarding their academic programs and more tolerant to cultural differences. Cesar and Jian both had complaints about their professors, but at the same time, they recognized the scholarship of these professors.
An interesting comparison is that the three students in China enjoyed the society outside the university more than their academic programs whereas most of the students in Canada praised their respective programs but lacked interaction with the local communities. Even the few who had a wider range of social involvement in Canada had their circles of friends confined to mostly the non-majority of the society, such as other Chinese people or non-native-English-speaking classmates. Their acute sense of not belonging to the host culture might be attributed to the lack of integration with the real world in spite of their academic achievements.

Results of the study seem to defy cultural stereotypes while at the same time demonstrate culturally preferred practices and ideologies. Cases in point for the former include Yuchen’s effort in getting a chance to speak in class which was different from the image of silent Chinese students, and Xitong’s claim of triple identity which was different from other Chinese students’ strong sense of belonging to home culture. The latter can be illustrated by Chinese students’ strong sense of being students, their respectful attitude toward professors and authorities, their strenuous effort in study, as well as their tolerance to unsatisfactory situations. An interesting cross-cultural comparison is the students’ attitudes towards approaching professors after class. Jenny’s concern was the difficulties caused by languages in communication and Jameson’s concern was the power relations he had to face when talking to professors in private. Both of them focused on their personal feelings. On the other hand, Chinese students were more concerned with occupying the professor’s time. They showed more consideration of other parties. Mariola, Cesar, and Ilhane observed that Chinese students were more reticent in class and respectful to professors, and the teacher-student relationship was more formal than those in their own countries.

These disparities reflect different conceptualizations of self across cultures and some of the characteristics of Chinese academic culture, as documented by some studies. For example,
Heath (1991) maintained that American children were oriented to “see themselves as individuals who have the right and obligation to voice their judgments against those of others” (p. 12), while Cortazzi and Jin (1996) found Chinese students are taught that the priorities in society and classroom are such that “each person must be part of a group or community; learning interdependency, co-operation and social awareness: becoming oneself in relation to significant others; expressing that which is shared rather than individually felt; creating on the basis of mastery rather than discovery” (p. 178).

For all the participants, the outer environment changed drastically, they played along but part of the self stayed relatively stable. They desired an ideal self who could roam freely in the host culture with fluent language and comfortable feelings but found it unrealistic. The self that they considered they were was partially longing for changes while partially resisting changes. The part that was changing reflected their desire for becoming the ideal self and their efforts to cope with changes in their languages, living and studying environments, such as Jenny’s becoming subdued in the Chinese classroom, Xitong’s change from being critical to being cautious in Canada, and Yuchen’s strategy to avoid conflicts with professors in academic contexts. However, this was not the ideal self yet. It was the in-between stage from point A to point B. The part that resisted changing was the stable part that exhibited the traits of personal and cultural characteristics, such as Jameson’s argumentative nature, Jian and Zhong’s respectful attitude toward professors, and Ilhane’s open-mindedness. This is the self as “I” in Mead’s sense, which has been formed through their upbringing and is unlikely to change dramatically. The relationship between the relatively stable self and the relatively flexible self is best reflected in Hanyu’s statements: “I might be a mixture of two cultures. I have adapted to the new system…but I always identify myself as a Chinese.”
These statements about the self and the selves they attempted to construct seemed to suggest that what they eventually created was a mediated self, a self constructed through negotiation with the social contexts in which they lived, and with the people with whom they interact in the additional culture. This mediated self, in a way, resembles the hybrid self; however, the mediated self is constructed through negotiation while the hybrid self implies simply the pastiche of different identities.

To perform their daily tasks in work and in life, these participants endeavored to find a “third space” not only between their home culture and host culture (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 1993), but that also incorporates both. In light of the data, I conceptualize this space as the mediated space, one that is created through negotiation between these additional language students and their targeted interlocutors, namely, their professors, supervisors, and other people in the host academic culture. These students themselves were part of the agents of mediation. The mediated space is similar to the hybrid space or the third space, but stresses the effort of negotiation.

To some, this mediated space was broader, for others, it was a narrow stripe. This mediated space was determined by the socially available opportunities for them and their willingness to claim membership in the host society. In the case of Cesar, this space was huge. He found agreement between his home culture and additional culture, between his Colombian self and Chinese self, so that the mediated space merged into the other two spaces and the boundaries became obscure. His statement that “I live a Colombian life in China” was an indication of his contentment with this hybrid existence—an identity that embraced both his Colombian self and the Chinese self. For Jameson, this space was very narrow. He recognized the cultural differences in addressing people in different places, and adapted himself to calling professors in China by their last names instead of using first names as he did in the United States. This indicated that he
could be flexible in communication in an additional culture, and that his American self of an
equal to the senior could be replaced temporarily with the Chinese humble self in front of people
of a higher social status. Interestingly enough, he didn’t adapt himself to the ways of discussion
in a Chinese classroom. If he could not be his American self, there were no other selves he would
claim. Leaving the program was a protest against the defects of the program as well as a rejection
of negotiation. For the Chinese students, this space was vague and flexible. It seemed easier for
them to find the mediated space within their academic programs than to see it in the larger
society. They achieved recognition through studious work and respectful attitude, so they were, in
general, contented with their academic programs. However, they lacked interaction with local
communities due to limited work and social opportunities off-campus. Their sense of being an
outsider of the mainstream society was a result of this lack of communication and integration.

More discussion on the mediated space and the mediated self will be presented in Chapter
8, where I develop these concepts into a theoretical framework to illustrate the sense of self and
the condition of being of cross-cultural additional language students.

**Writer Identity in Additional Language and Culture**

Using an additional language in a host culture often puts the issue of language into the
spotlight. The concerns shared by the participants include the subtle meanings in the target
language and translation from a familiar language to the target language. Their writing usually
involves a tripartite progression of translation-observation-imitation in both the macro-writing
(learning to write) process and the micro-writing (composing) process. The combined effect of
such tripartite progression and their effort to make sense of their knowledge and ideas for the
reader is a mediated voice in writing, a hybrid writer identity.
**Nuances and Subtleties in an Additional Language**

Participants in this study stressed their effort in dealing with vocabulary and grammar in speech and writing. They particularly paid attention to grammar in writing. However, there were rules to follow in grammar and they were capable of handling them in most cases. The real challenge was the meaning beyond words and grammar. This can be attributed to the fact that at graduate level, basic language competence is no longer a major concern, but meaning making in a more sophisticated way becomes the focus. Jameson had trouble grasping the nuances in an additional language. His comment was rather characteristic of all additional language students: “I would miss those subtleties, those double meanings… I can’t figure out meaning when it is sarcastic, and when the tone is different… I would miss the whole meaning of it.” Ilhane echoed his point, “sometimes you know how to construct a sentence, but there are still something missing.” The missing meaning, according to her, was caused by different ways of thinking across cultures.

Jokes and humor are special kinds of subtle expressions in a language. Many additional language speakers have experienced the awkwardness of being lost when people laugh when they are supposed to laugh along. In the classroom, some professors have a good sense of humor, which is usually appreciated by native speakers of the language. However, it can be extra pressure on additional language speakers. Wei was not alone in worrying about humor, and Mariola was not the only one worrying about colloquial expressions either. In addition, accents can be confusing as well. Native speakers’ accents can be difficult for additional language speakers, and additional language speakers’ accents can make communication problematic too. Cesar, Ilhane, Mariola, and Wei were all frustrated by their professors’ accents; and Xitong and Wei both realized their own Chinese accent when they spoke English. Repeating or clarifying their points slows down the conversation and may cause embarrassment for both sides. This
situation can be one of the reasons for the lack of interaction between additional language speakers and the native speakers. To extend the point a little further, if subtle expressions cause difficulties or breakdowns in face-to-face communication with the aid of non-verbal facilities, how difficult it is in reading when additional language learners have to figure out meaning between the silent lines all by themselves? And in writing, how can they be expected to express themselves in subtle and sophisticated ways when they feel fragile in front of these intimidating words? I think the uneasy feeling of “something missing” in writing, as expressed by the participants, is not uncommon among additional language writers.

Translation, Double Translation, and Lost in Translation

Translation was nothing new to additional language writers. Literary writers are more articulate about this aspect. Hoffman’s (1989) *Lost in Translation* is a good example. In academic contexts, how universal is translation an issue? Is it a curse or blessing?

In this research, most participants voiced their concerns about translation. Jian said that “When I write in English, I have to think in Chinese, and then think how to translate them into English”; Hanyu said “You write in English, but you think in Chinese”; and Wei said “I try to think of the idea in Chinese, I translate them into English.” In a similar fashion, Xitong drafted the Chinese version in his mind and translated the sentences into English in his earlier essays. Mariola found writing in Chinese most difficult because “it’s inevitable to use my mother tongue to construct the writing first, and translate it into Chinese.” It is amazing how they articulated this point in such a concerted tone. Even if Jameson and Jenny did not have to write academic papers in their additional language, they recalled the frustration of translation on those occasions when they had to. Jameson experienced translation from English to Hebrew, and Jenny had to translate between English and Chinese back and forth. “It is just a painstaking process which I do not
enjoy too much,” Jenny complained. I think none of the students in this study enjoyed this translation process.

Translation among multiple languages can be more complicated than it is between two languages, as Cesar indicated. When writing in Chinese, Cesar had to translate from his mother tongue Spanish to his second language English, and then from English to Chinese. Because he learned English earlier than Chinese, he was more competent in English than in Chinese, and his spontaneity in translation was usually associated with English. To his relief, he did not have to do this double translation very often as his academic work was completed in English. Ilhane’s multiple languages were not advantageous either when it came to writing. English was her additional language, and Chinese was also her additional language. She was frustrated sometimes when she tried to translate her mental draft in Portuguese into Chinese or English because “it is difficult to find exactly the words”—the dictionaries did not offer much regarding the distinctions among synonyms.

In fact, synonyms are not the only thing that makes one lost in translation. There are different ways of expressing similar concepts or ideas, as Jian noticed, therefore, “there are many things you cannot translate word by word.” Furthermore, there are different ways of structuring the article, as Hanyu elaborated, “you cannot just translate very beautiful article from Chinese into English, because you will definitely confuse the English reader.” According to her, Chinese writing is like leading the reader through the forest of mystery to the wonderland whereas English writing gets to the point straightforwardly.

Translation, for Yuchen, was mainly involved in the reading process, but this reading process could be seen as a part of the macro-writing process. When she read academic articles, she translated back and forth from English into Chinese and from Chinese into English. This kind of flipping translation was necessary for her because only by so doing could she comprehend the
whole meaning of the reading and take notes for the benefit of writing. Writing became easier because of the notes taken in English based on her internalization of the reading material and the language usage.

Despite all the frustrations it causes, does translation benefit additional language writers? The answer is a yes, as indicated in the data. Translation slows down the reading and writing, but it helps with understanding. Translation causes confusion when dealing with synonyms and different ways of expression, but it allows comparison of languages. One makes progress through the effort of clearing the confusions and uncertainties. This conclusion is also supported by earlier studies that writing knowledge transfers across languages and translation from the first language facilitates writing in the second language (e.g., Edelsky, 1982; Friedlander, 1990; Uzawa, 1996). In this study, translation was inevitable for the additional language writers in the beginning stage but became less a concern as their language skills improved later on. After a varied period of frequent translation, they were able to think in the target language directly when the bulk of the knowledge they learned and the articles they read were all in the same language in which they wrote.

To answer the two questions I asked earlier and to sum up, while translation is most common and getting lost in translation inevitable, being able to translate is a blessing. In fact, Uzawa’s (1996) study indicated that translation helps produce better texts than writing directly in the second language. From this study, it is obvious that one learns and improves through this painstaking process. It is one of the first steps one has to take in order to reach the desired destination of mastering the languages.
Observation, Imitation, and Conformation in Writing Styles

A stranger to a situation is usually its best observer. Being an outsider of a community or culture, one is most aware of the differences between self and other. Routines and norms taken for granted by members of the community may contrast with those of one’s home culture. Knowledge of the similarities and differences of the home and host cultures is developed on the basis of observations. In this study, learning through observation was a common practice among the participants; some were more explicit than others in articulating their observations. Their observations include, but are not limited to, the differences in ways of thinking and writing between their home and host languages, as well as the culture-specific ways of expressing ideas and disciplinary-specific genres across languages.

Mariola found Chinese writing very different from Spanish or English writing and she started from zero in learning to write in Chinese. Ilhane considered Chinese “totally different” in ways of thinking and writing than Portuguese, French, and English. Zhong also noticed the different thinking processes in Chinese and English. They did not say what exactly the differences were, but other participants articulated their observations of the differences. In terms of minor writing skills, Cesar found that when people list supporting details for a point in English and Chinese, they use numbers or words to indicate the sequence, such as first, second, and third, but it is not the norm Colombians follow in Spanish. Cesar also realized the differences between Chinese and English writing, and followed the English conventions in writing. In terms of rhetorical styles, Wei’s analysis sounded like Kaplan’s (1966) theory of cultural rhetorical patterns in non-linguistic terms: “In China, we try to go around to say something. In the end, we come to the point. But here, we have to say the point first. Then we give the examples, the reasons, the evidence to support that point.”
Interestingly, opposite to Wei’s opinion on the differences between Chinese and English writing, Yuchen found them similar in academic writing. The basic structure in both languages is introduction-body-conclusion, and the way to elaborate the points is to follow the logic. Why were their views so different? The reason lies in that Yuchen was in a field where argumentative writing was the predominant style both in China and in Canada. She only read academic texts, so she trained herself to think and write effectively following the academic genre in her field. In the case of Wei, his work before his study in Canada involved more descriptive writing than argumentation. He was new to argumentative writing and the discipline-specific genre in his field. While the big structure of an article can be similar in Chinese and English, as Yuchen found, the way to present the main points and supporting details can be culturally different, as Wei observed. I think the two of them were talking about two different aspects of writing. Jian endorsed Yuchen’s view regarding the structure of writing: “they are all introduction, background, analysis of experiment, the result of experiment, and then discussion, and the last is conclusion” while he also acknowledged different ways of expressing ideas in the two languages. However, Hanyu agreed with Wei in terms of the culturally different patterns of writing, which she learned in her undergraduate class and proved to be true through her cross-cultural experiences. She used the linguistic terms such as “linear” and “circular” to explain the Western and Eastern rhetorical patterns and said she consciously transformed to the English format when she wrote in English. Apparently, she was influenced by and agreed with Kaplan’s (1966) theory, but it is a pending question if she was aware of the genre differences in exposition and argumentation.

Xitong observed the genre differences across disciplines. He used figurative language and creative style to attract non-academic readers in his Chinese writing; but in Canada, he realized that his English writing following this style confused his readers. He gradually conformed to the
style of academic writing in his discipline. He not only noticed the differences between his Chinese writing and English writing, writing for general reader and writing for the academic reader, but also learned to tell the differences between writing in different disciplines such as history and sociology because their ways of thinking and writing were different.

**Imitation** was a means to apply observations to practice. Students in this study imitated the writing styles of people around them and the published articles they read. Mariola learned Chinese writing by observing and imitating other Chinese students. Zhong imitated his supervisor’s writing style out of appreciation of his supervisor’s modesty and kindness (which were what I found in Zhong, interestingly). Wei read published articles to learn the linear organization in English academic writing. Hanyu and Jian used the same strategy to learn the academic language and structure in their field. Hanyu said, “reading helps me a lot, I learn the patterns, the language people use… you can imitate or follow their writing styles in your own paper, that makes your paper more like an academic writing according to the requirements in this culture.”

Indeed, **Reading** is closely related to writing. Most AL writers learn to write by reading published articles. However, without sufficient language capacity and subject knowledge, or familiarity with academic genres, reading was also challenging. They spent much more time than their native-speaker peers in reading, and translation back and forth between their previous languages and additional language was unavoidable. However, this was also part of the learning process. By observing and imitating the eloquent language and styles of expert writers, they learned proper academic writing in their respective field in the additional culture. Mariola said she had to use ten times the effort in writing because her reading was extremely slow, but she did improve significantly through reading. Wei also said reading of articles in his new field helped him think in English and avoid translation.
The effect of such imitations, without any doubt, is familiarization with the structure and language appreciated in the specific disciplines in the additional culture. In most cases, it is nothing but natural for the AL writer to conform to the conventions in the host culture. Zhong’s change from “the student” in his earlier writing to “we” in his later writing when he referred to himself, who was the single author, was a conscious conformation to the implicit rules in his field, according to him. Jian, interestingly, used passive voice or “this study” to avoid first person pronouns in his later writing in order to follow “the standard” of his science discipline. Xitong converted from figurative language to precise academic language, happy to be able to use abstract concepts in writing. He jokingly called this conforming “brainwashing” but without any negative implications. Wei not only followed the formal structure of English academic writing, but also tried to follow the English way of thinking. These participants reported their eagerness to conform and their relief in being able to compose in the recognized styles and sophisticated language. What they saw in their conforming was not betrayal to their native language, but extra skills in coping with different standards in different academic cultures.

Mediation and Hybridity in Additional Language Writing

Living with all the uncertainties and ambiguities of the additional language was not the worst thing for the participants to expect; and they all acknowledged enormous progress through the tripartite progression of translation, observation, and imitation in their writing. However, they were faced with more specific dilemmas in order to meet the standards of academic writing. While language accuracy and grammar correctness were common concerns, were they considered more important than content? How did the students reconcile the self as student and the self as scholar? Were they contradictory? How could they demonstrate critical thinking skills while
attempting to avoid confrontations with their professors? Answers to these questions inform the kind of identities they create in text.

**Content vs. Language/Grammar**

Graduate students are expected to be efficient writers after years of academic training. The high-stakes gate-keeping exams for non-native-speakers in a way help safeguard the high standard of academic writing. On the other hand, in-depth subject knowledge and insightful analysis weigh much more in graduate programs than language per se. Data revealed that while content was a concern for these AL writers, their most articulated concerns were still language and grammar.

Let’s take Mariola and Wei as examples. Mariola lacked solid knowledge in her research area, so it was difficult for her to learn the subject knowledge through painstaking and time-consuming reading. However, she thought that language was a bigger problem to her than content: “Knowledge accumulation is easy, thinking is not a problem, but the issue is how to express myself.” She was not alone in this regard. Wei paid a lot of attention to language in writing. Although he changed his field of research in his doctoral program, he did not mention much about difficulties caused by unfamiliarity with the subject knowledge. He went to great length talking about the differences between Chinese and English languages and his ways of coping with English writing, such as using varieties of sentences, correcting grammar errors, and developing reader awareness. He admitted frankly that “language is still a problem” and “in English I haven’t had my own style.”

Other participants offered similar views. Xitong relied on his supervisor to correct language and grammar mistakes but was happy she did not change his content or structure. This indicated his confidence in content rather than in language. Hanyu understood the importance of
content and structure, but still could not help paying close attention to verb tenses and other grammatical problems. It seems that language is a perpetual theme whenever AL writers have to deal with writing.

**Self as Scholar vs. Self as Student**

At the graduate level, students are trained to be researchers or scholars in their fields. The sense of being students is overshadowed by an urge to fit into the role of a scholar as they gain more in-depth subject knowledge. Both Yuchen and Xitong developed a sense of being expert in their research area and articulated it explicitly. Yuchen said “on some topics, I can see myself not only as a student, but also as an expert on China,” and Xitong found “in the PhD program, lots of students know more about their field than their supervisor.” This is a sign of an evolving sense of self as researcher in academic context. In fact, solid knowledge in their research area allowed them a louder voice in writing. They kept the Chinese modesty of being a student and consideration for their professors, but they learned to exhibit the new aspects of themselves that were influenced by the additional culture. Wei was more implicit with this point but he did acknowledge the awareness: “Sometimes, my classmates, my professor may not know as much as me in the subject I write, so I try to use the language they can understand.”

A well-published academic writer in China and a successful new researcher in Canada as Wei was, he still did not have the confidence to claim a strong self as scholar. His sense of being a student was predominant. The new field he was exploring, the new language he was using, and the new academic culture he was fitting into were all factors dwarfing him. His statement “I’m a student, I’m learning. It is a far way for me to reach that academic level” exhibited a humble but persistent student identity.
Self as student and self as scholar sometimes co-exist and complement each other. When this is the situation, learning is greatly facilitated and the outcome is most satisfying to both the student and the professor. Mariola, Zhong, Xitong, Wei, and Yuchen all stressed their student identity and highly praised their supervisors and professors. They respected them, learned from them, seeking support from them, and even imitated their writing styles on their way to developing themselves into competent scholars. Zhong and Xitong’s confidence in their writing and research derived from their modest attitude, persistent learning and high standard scholarly work. They both held that they were comfortable arguing for viewpoints different from their professors’ as long as they were able to justify their grounds.

Self as student sometimes overshadows self as scholar, so students have to negotiate a middle space that is acceptable to the reader. Ilhane was careful with language expressions so that the reader would see her points without feeling being judged. Yuchen chose to wind her way around arguments contradictory to her professors’. Jian’s emerging sense of self as a researcher urged him to seek “scientific truth” through empirical research. However, his sense of self as a student who should follow his supervisor stood in the way and put him in a dilemma when disagreements occurred between him and his supervisor. He imagined that, when conflicts arose, he would be tempted to compromise with his supervisor as a result of his upbringing in a culture that highly values seniority and expert knowledge. I felt as if he were a conscientious soldier tiptoeing around the minefield. Giving up the ground without exploration was not acceptable; however, it was also dangerous to approach the object directly. It is therefore easy to understand why he felt lucky that he did not go anywhere near the minefield yet.
Critical Thinking vs. Avoiding Conflicts

The contradiction between self as scholar and self as student is closely related to another issue—the need to demonstrate critical thinking skills and the attempt to avoid conflicts with authorities. Critical thinking is approached differently in North American and East Asian cultures. It is valued in both cultures, but people express their critical opinions in different ways (Balla & Clanchy, 1991; Pennycook, 1996; Prior, 2001). In an individualistic society, people tend to demonstrate an explicit, strong voice in their writing whereas in a collective society, critiquing voice is usually toned down strategically in order to seek group harmony (Carson, 1992; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). I am not trying to stereotype cultures because doing so may lead to shaky conclusions, but culturally preferred norms do exist and cannot be ignored either. Data in this study revealed remarkable cultural norms; but the few exceptions also defied stereotypes.

Yuchen was cautious in presenting her different views from her professors in writing. She did not fall short in critical thinking; in fact, she learned to be outspoken in class discussions. But she obviously bore some features of her home culture that restrained her from confronting people of higher status than her. In order not to “directly criticize” her professors, she chose the implicit critiquing strategy of speaking through the mouth of other authorities. Her avoiding disagreement was not a single case in this study. Jian demonstrated some valuable qualities of a researcher. He was objective in his views of research methods and results, insisting that empirical evidence was the only way to decide the truthfulness of any theory. He resisted following others’ opinions without careful thought for himself. However, as shown previously, he also chose to hide his different views from his peers and professors. In fact, most of the students from China voiced their strategies of avoiding confrontation regardless how confident they were in writing.
Xitong was the only one who was bold enough to assert that he was comfortable presenting his disagreements as long as his arguments were “well grounded and coherent”. I think one of the reasons is that his supervisors and professors gave him plenty of room to pursue his own ideas. On other occasions, when he realized the socially available options were limited for proper demonstration of self, he also chose to conform. A case in point was the change in his way of communication from a straight-forward manner to a going-around approach. Maybe the extent to which students are allowed to present their critical views without considering their professors’ has some connections with the extent of their avoiding conflicts. Socially available opportunities for students to be themselves in writing and students’ perceived spaces for themselves interact and result in the space that students are able to claim.

Opposite to Yuchen, Hanyu learned to appear gentle and modest in speaking in order to allow open discussions and to avoid showing off her knowledge. She toned down the personal presence in her speech. However, she was comfortable demonstrating a strong authorial presence in writing by using first person pronouns. Is it safe to say that she converted to the English way of thinking and writing? Maybe not. When she had to express disagreements with authors in published articles, she was cautious and respectful. She said, “every published work has their own merits”; “It’s okay for me as a student to be critical, but I think I have to respect other people’s effort in their work.”. Her tendency to consider a person’s effort in work in addition to the insights in a person’s work sounded a little like a “middle way” philosophy, which is fundamental in Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (Anderson, 1996; Hinkel, 1995; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). Hanyu’s fluid voice seemed to suggest that learning to use “I strongly dis/agree” is simply a superficial exhibition of authorial presence; the attitudes toward other people’s work and the way to present critical stances uncover the inner self of the writer.
Compromises and negotiations are almost unavoidable in any academic context. However, they are particularly the case in an additional language context, where all the uncertainties and anxieties cause enormous pressure on the students. There is urgency for them to (learn to) compromise and negotiate in order to create a mediated space that may not be ideal but good enough to allow growth in a less stressful way.

Wei compromised with his supervisor in the Master’s program about his research ideas, but he learned to negotiate with his supervisor in the doctoral program and got a green light to pursue them further. The shift from the first step of compromising to the second step of negotiating earned him a mediated space to grow. In terms of writing up his research ideas, Wei converted to the English linear way of structuring an article, but he did not find presenting critical arguments easy due to different training in China. The self exhibited in his writing was a mix of thinking, structuring, and writing in two languages.

Yuchen was overwhelmed by the discussions in her class at first, but she quickly learned to ask questions and join in the discussions. This is an act of conscious mediation. However, she was not able to change the deep-rooted part of her, that is, the respect for teachers and authorities, in writing. She wanted to avoid arguments with her professors directly, which aligned with her home culture; but she also had to demonstrate her critical skills, which was the requirement for graduate students in the host culture. The indirect critiquing strategy she worked out was also an act of mediation. She justified her strategy by saying “I know when I come here, I come to study not to criticize,” which can be interpreted as: 1) her role of being a student was to internalize the knowledge she learned; 2) arguing for a ground was not as important as internalizing the knowledge; 3) when it was difficult to reach an agreement, keeping harmony preceded the need for finding the answer. Here we can see, at the surface level, she was outspoken about her
different views; but at a deeper level, she was still leaning on the norms of her native culture. The changes in her were partial; her effort at mediation resulted in a hybrid self.

The urge for mediation and the condition of hybridity existed among the students in China as well. By showing respect to professors, Cesar behaved like a Chinese student. However, by following English conventions in articles written for Chinese professors to read, he undermined his act of respect. It might not be the case that he refused to write in the Chinese way, but rather the case that he was not confident enough to do so. It is my contention that writing as a demonstration of deeper understanding of the content and as a way of presenting the self in an organized manner involves more intricate concerns beyond the level of building blocks with words. It is a more complicated and painstaking process for one to convert from one style into another.

Ilhane endeavored to create a mediated space and fit herself in. She cared about people’s positioning of her, saying “it matters to me of what people think about me,” and saw the importance of social positioning in her positioning of the self. She realized that writing was a careful, intentional way of conveying information. One could convince people effectively by not judging their opinions and by using strategic ways of expressing ideas: “When you write the paper, you have to be a little diplomatic.” However, her language competence constrained her writing styles. When she wrote in Chinese, she drafted in Portuguese mentally and translated her thoughts into the limited Chinese she was able to write. Her Chinese friend would do substantial revisions for her. She felt that her limited Chinese proficiency resulted in a reduced self. Although she claimed that “most of the time, I am just me” even in formal writing, Chinese language did not allow her to be a full self. Her Chinese writing was more like a patchwork of her knowledge, her preferred way of composing, and her Chinese friend’s knowledge and way of composing.
Similar to Ilhane, Mariola also worked consciously to create the mediated space for herself. She was satisfied with her program, but the difficulties were not negligible: “the academic system is different from Europe and communication between teachers and students is also different, so it took me a while to get used to it. Anyway, learning this kind of different life styles is also one of my personal goals.” Her attitude of setting it a personal goal to learn a different life style bears some traits of a “global soul” (Iyer, 2000), a person who finds home everywhere in the world. In fact, she did very well in conforming to the Chinese system, such as living with the reserved classroom atmosphere and the restrictive student-teacher relationship. Occasionally, when she did get a chance to argue in class though, she would stand firm on her ground. However, becoming a global soul is easier to say than to do. She was constantly constrained by her Chinese language. She was particularly dependent in writing on her classmates’ revision. Her writing after native-speaker’s polish was fluent in language and convincing in arguments. Her writing without the golden touch of a native-speaker was still strong in arguments, but the language gave way and resulted in a reduced authorial presence.

Data in this study indicate that some participants tended to claim a strong sense of self belonging to their first culture; others talked about playing with the surface level selves in different cultures. However, no matter how many places these students visited, how many languages they learned, or how happy they were to hear people praise their native-like language competence, they all stressed their deep roots in their home country. Even the ones who were happy with their fluid, hybrid selves talked about the stable part of the self and their affiliation to their home culture (such as the cases with Ilhane and Xitong). When they wrote academic texts, they often found themselves caught between different academic requirements, different genres of writing, different rhetorical preferences. Most of them chose to conform to the host academic culture and display an authorial presence recognized or approved by their readers, but their
changes were by no means a complete conversion. The deep-rooted self nurtured in their home academic culture interfered in many ways, and resulted in a hybrid identity in writing.

To sum up, findings from the study showed both divergences and similarities within and across the two groups in China and Canada in terms of personal identity and writer identity. The five participants in China demonstrated two patterns. The two American students had much in common in their attitude towards Chinese culture, their distance to Chinese society, their complaints about the academic culture, and their reluctance to conform in writing styles. The three international students from Spain, Cape Verde, and Colombia shared many similarities in their openness to Chinese culture, their sense of belonging, their adaptation to the academic culture, and their uncertainty in writing. Data from the six students of Chinese origin in Canada exhibited variety as well. Five of them claimed a firm Chinese identity and dismissed belonging to Canadian society while one was proud of his triple identities. They all encountered difficulties with language in writing but some insisted on a strong voice of their own while others speculated and compromised for the reader’s sake. In general, these Chinese students were more similar to the American students in terms of the sense of personal identity as attached to home culture, but more in line with the three international students in China regarding the writer identity as restricted by the additional language. Certainly the last point regarding writing was caused by the fact that the Chinese students and the three international students in China had to write in their additional languages whereas the two American students had the privilege of writing in their first language in the additional culture. All the students writing in their additional languages shared in common the difficulties they encountered, the factors influenced their self-representation, the process of learning to write in the required style, and the hybrid self created through mediation.

In the next chapter, I elaborate further on the issues of difference and ambiguity that characterize the state of being of AL migrants. Then, I revisit my previous model of AL writer
identity, and provide a conclusion to this thesis, together with implications for further research and education.
Chapter 8

Discussion and Implications

This chapter is a further discussion of themes arising out of the data but not directly falling into the categories of my research questions. They are discussed here because they complement the analyses in Chapter 7 and offer more perspectives to view the condition of living/studying in an additional culture. In other words, they provide more comprehensive answers to my research questions. Because the themes in this chapter are based on but go beyond the data, my discussions tend to move from specific to general, from concrete to abstract, with the purpose of developing theoretical frameworks for better understanding the condition of cross-cultural AL students.

Two major themes are discussed: living in/with differences and living in/with ambiguity. The first theme was frequently articulated by all the participants—“difference” was a keyword when they described many aspects of their lives. I elaborate on the power relations in AL contexts, in which differences are everywhere and the stigma of insufficient language skills haunt these multi-competent AL individuals. I discuss the state of being living in and with differences and highlight the importance of recognition in culturally diverse contexts.

The second theme on ambiguity was not consciously and explicitly articulated by most of the participants; however, the condition of ambiguity could be inferred from many aspects—from the uncertainty in communication with peers, from the confusion in language use, from the dilemma of which style to follow in writing, among others. Most participants, however, were able to cope with such an ambiguous state of being and negotiate a middle ground for themselves. To this point, I present in more detail my conceptualizations of the mediated space and mediated self.

Following the above discussion, I revisit the framework of AL writer identity I developed earlier, promoting a historical perspective in viewing the construction of AL writer identity. Then,
I provide conclusions for the study and summarize the answers to my research questions based on the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8. Questions raised in this study but not answered are suggested for further research. I also offer implications for cross-cultural higher education in light of the findings of this study.

People who cross borders usually live in differences, and they have to learn to live with differences if they wish to maintain a balanced, positive self in the new culture. Another characteristic of border-crossing is living in ambiguity because of the mismatch of the old experience and the new reality. For border-crossers, living with ambiguity is probably the only way to carry on their life’s endeavors. These ideas are elaborated below.

**Living in/with Differences in AL Contexts**

Whenever there are differences, power relations are involved; and whenever there are power relations, stigma for the less powerful is unavoidable. There are no exceptions in the additional language context. Although living in differences is the reality for cross-cultural individuals, they can choose to live with differences or not. Living with differences requires an open mind and non-discriminating attitude toward different cultural norms and practices. Choosing not to live with differences, one is doomed to a cynical attitude to and rejection of the new culture.

In this section, I compare the two American students to the rest of the participants. The fact that the former could use their first language in the additional cultural context while the latter had to count on their additional languages to complete their life and academic tasks indicates the power relations in language learning and teaching.
Language teaching is considered a highly political practice (Giroux, 1992; Norton, 2000; Simon, 1987). This study demonstrated that language learning also entails political implications. The participants’ perceptions of the power of their additional language played an important role in their learning decisions and strategies.

The popularity of a language usually reflects the political and economic power of a nation. The lingua franca status of English is the accumulated effect of British colonization and the rapid growth and expansion of English speaking countries over the last two centuries. In a similar fashion, the trend of learning Chinese in China and overseas can be viewed as a result of China’s accelerating economic boom and political influence on today’s world. However, as a rising nation, its political, philosophical and educational ideologies are questioned, and its cultural norms are not yet fully recognized by many in Western countries. In educational contexts, some of the traditional practices that are due for revision or improvement to cater for the needs of the contemporary world are particularly challenged, such as the culture of teaching that emphasizes the teacher’s authority, and lack of vigorous discussions in the classroom. In this study, these points were mentioned by not only Chinese students in Canada, but also international students in China.

Seeing the differences in educational culture, the participants’ different responses mirrored the power relations and stigma nested in language and culture. The Chinese participants made a concerted effort to adjust themselves to the Western academic culture, and the three non-American international students in China also worked their way towards fitting into the Chinese educational system. There was no arrogance attached to their attitude toward their own culture of teaching. Recognizing the differences and adjusting themselves for the differences were their common strategies. The exceptions were the two American students who treated the Chinese
educational system as inferior to that of the United States. They were critical about the different ways of teaching and learning in China and refused to compromise. The stigma of failing to speak the perfect additional language haunted all the participants except for the two American students, and part of the reason, I argue, was the power of their first language. The accommodation of teaching international students in English at this Chinese university did not affect the American students unfavorably but brought the teaching staff stigma because of their ‘Chinglish’ accent and reduced expressiveness. This reality might further enhance the privileged feelings of the English-speaking students in some cases. It seems that the stigma attached to language always haunts the more competent people—those who speak an additional language on top of their native tongue. It is not how many languages one speaks that matters, but which language one speaks as a mother tongue that matters.

Norton (2000) put one of the central paradoxes in second language learning into the spotlight: extensive interaction in the target language is a prerequisite of mastering the language; however, a prerequisite of interaction is a minimal or basic level of communicative ability on the learner’s side. What is more crucial in Norton’s accounts is not the issue of language level or the amount of interaction; it is the power relation reflected in these interactions or lack of interactions. In other words, the possibility of having any interactions, the decision of participating in such interactions, and the topics and amount of interactions, are mostly under the control of the privileged group—the native speakers of the target language. The learners are, more often than not, in a powerless position to have any significant influence on these interactions.

However, this was not the case with the two American students who did not need to master Chinese for communication or for completing academic work in China. In their case, the native speakers of Chinese who were eager to master English—a major language of the world—were the disempowered group; whereas the native-speakers of English kept control of the amount
of interaction and the kinds of interaction they wished to have with the Chinese students. This phenomenon indicates that a person’s privileged linguistic identity empowers the person’s social identity and personal identity, resulting in a privileged status in social interactions and biased attitudes towards intellectual abilities, academic cultures, and social norms that are different from their own.

**Living with Differences: Cultural Diversity and Recognition**

Culture undergoes changes throughout history and in interaction with other cultures of the same era. Language is the indicator of such changes. The much debated circular rhetorical patterns were the characteristics of classic Chinese texts (González, Chen, & Sanchez 2001; Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Mohan & Lo, 1985). Their influences are still lasting, but to a much lesser degree on contemporary Chinese writing at a time of globalization and cultural integration, as indicated in the data of this study—some participants either consciously converted their writing style to or already learned to construct arguments in the western way. China’s opening up and the expanding population of overseas Chinese students creates a fascinating field for researchers to explore cultural differences and cultural influence on language learning. This body of research is valuable in that it helps educational practitioners to understand their students and their cultures. However, there also exists a danger that some may take these cultural norms as static, and therefore stereotype cultures at face value. Such an approach may result in viewing other cultures through colored lenses and having biased attitudes towards such cultures and their people (Jameson and Jenny in this study were good examples of this point). To understand fully the disputes around cultural norms, we need to develop a historical perspective to view the changes in languages and cultures.
Comparing two cultures with a purpose to promote understanding lends one further perspectives for viewing the world and broadens one’s mind. Comparing two cultures to judge which is superior to the other leads to biased attitudes towards the other culture and constrains one’s perceptive capacity. Cultural differences were articulated by all the participants, but their ways of treating the differences were not always the same. Ilhane noticed the differences and lived with them, just as Cesar, Mariola, and the Chinese students in Canada did. Being sensitive to cultural differences assists one to familiarize with the host culture and keep a balanced self. However, an oversensitive response may result in a closed-up self, as was the case in Jenny’s unease with the cosmopolitan life in Shanghai.

It is not difficult to understand Jenny’s disappointment in not seeing “the true colors of China” in cosmopolitan Shanghai where the population is composed of people from all over the country and all parts of the world. It indicated her unawareness of cultural integration in the contemporary world and her zeal for cultural exoticism. Human beings have had a long history of seeking cultural exoticism, especially when power relations were uneven among countries. People in powerful countries or cultures entertained themselves with different appearances, traditions, costumes, food, music, and sports of those in less powerful cultures at the time. The pleasure might not lie in appreciating the differences but in making fun of or having fun with the differences. For example, in China’s Tang Dynasty (618-907 CA), the Han people considered anything from outside China as exotic, such as the western polo game introduced from Persia and “barbaric” food and “barbarian” clothes from Minor Asian areas (Silk Road Foundation, 2007). In the colonial era, the colonies with their peoples and cultures were ridiculed and taken as exotic Others by European powers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands. The condition of “exotic” near-East India was a case in point, as depicted and theorized by Edward Said (1978) in his book Orientalism. However, in today’s world of more and more cultural integration within
and across nations, the zeal for cultural exoticism needs to be replaced with recognition of cultural diversity. We need to ask, are we looking for exotic flavors or different cultural practices when we experience a new culture? When people from different cultures migrate into our culture, shall we alienate them or recognize the differences and welcome them?

The answers to the above questions seem to be apparent, but biased attitudes and actions may not vanish with the token recognition of diversity as long as cultural domination exists. Human beings have a long way to go to eliminate cultural supremacy and celebrate differences. One way to achieve this goal is to develop the sense of respect for other people, other cultures, and differences. Data in this study revealed that most of the participants were aware of the significance of respect in cross-cultural contexts. They benefited from being respectful to others and being respected by others. Cesar’s repeated mention of respect for his teachers and classmates and from them, Ilhane’s respect for differences, and Chinese students’ concerted respect for their professors are all good examples of the point.

However, it seemed to take longer for Jameson and Jenny to develop this sense of respect for Chinese culture. Jameson’s preference of Asian Chinese culture (the Westernized Chinese culture in Hong Kong and Singapore) to China Chinese culture (the Mainland Chinese culture), his rejection of Chinese academic culture, and his disrespect for peers and professors, it appears, partially accounted for his uncomfortable feelings in China. Similarly, Jenny’s passive involvement in the Chinese classroom was an act of resistance to differences. Her zeal for the “true color” of China demonstrated a tendency to cultural exoticism. Moreover, her appreciation of Western workplace culture implied her biased attitude—she regarded highly people who were exposed to Western work ethics and etiquette. At this point, she was no longer looking for the exotic Chinese flavor in this cosmopolitan city, but was praising the non-Chinese flavor, something she rejected earlier. She was now more in line with Jameson; they both applauded the
hybrid Chinese culture that is losing its authentic, monocultural flavor. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with appreciating hybridity in the contemporary world, but it is important for us to be able to appreciate all components in the hybrid entity without favoring one and rejecting the other.

**Living in/with Ambiguity in AL Contexts**

Living in an additional culture and speaking an additional language, one is always accompanied by ambiguity, faithfully and annoyingly like one’s own shadow. Ambiguity is “embedded in cross-cultural encounters” (Ilieva, 2001, p. 1); it is particularly pervasive at the early stage of migration, with all the uncertainty in language use and cultural norms, as established in Naidoo’s (2007) article and as shown in this study. To be able to step on solid ground is the dream for cross-cultural AL speakers, but the negotiated middle ground under their feet is never as solid as they wish. This study indicates that the participants were fated to live in ambiguity, even after several years’ stay in their additional culture. They had to learn to live with ambiguity by creating a mediated space in-between, a space that allowed them to maintain their real self and, at the same time, to claim multiple selves.

**Living in Ambiguity: Language/Cultural Quandaries**

Ambiguity characterizes the experience of cross-cultural individuals; the faster and more frequently they move, the more ambiguous their life. Ambiguity decreases as they settle down in one place and feel the ground under their feet, but it will not fade away for a long time, as evidenced in this study.

Ambiguity existed in communication, in writing and in understanding cultural norms for the AL students in this study. In daily communication, they were intimidated by the most vivid and fun part of the language: humor and jokes, sarcasm and subtle meanings. These were
reminders of their inadequate AL proficiency. The breakdowns in communication and the awkwardness in miscommunication caused by language indicated unmistakably their non-native speaker status. AL speakers are sometimes complimented for their capability in understanding implicit expressions in their additional language; however, seldom do people seriously consider how awkward it is for AL speakers, when they “luckily” have a humorous professor who makes the class burst into laughter or a fun-loving English speaking friend who skillfully spices up conversations, but they have no idea why people laugh and what those punch lines really mean. The ambiguous smiles on their face are probably their patented trademark.

In graduate level academic writing, native speakers tend to overlook language concerns, assuming that AL writers have already grasped the language and writing skills. The reality, however, indicates persistent confusion and ambiguity; language continues to be a concern even after extended stay in the host culture. On the other hand, arguments and critical ideas, which are considered most important in graduate writing, may not appear very challenging for AL writers. The participants in this study articulated the pride in their originality and arguments as well as their ability in mastering the required genre in their field, but none of them felt at ease in writing up their ideas in AL, nor were they very certain of the language they used. Most of them had to rely on their native-speaker supervisor or classmates to polish the language. Zhong’s inability to express himself fully in English, Mariola’s concern of how to express herself in Chinese, and Ilhane’s limited self in Chinese language were all testimonies of the persistent ambiguity and uncertainty in the AL.

The much debated issues of critical thinking and cultural influence on writing (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Carson, 1992; Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Shen, 1989; Tweed & Lehman, 2002) also become ambiguous in AL contexts because these concepts are not static, but are consistently changing as AL students move along their cross-cultural paths. This
study demonstrated that Chinese students did not lack the sense of critical thinking and the awareness of text ownership, but that they had different ways of critical thinking and different traditions of honoring authors. Yuchen and Hanyu were critical in thoughts but strategic in presenting their critical stances and thoughtful in taking factors such as the author’s effort and scholarship into consideration. Wei and Hanyu both realized the difference between writing in their first language and second language. They chose to adapt their writing styles while not giving up their ideas. It seems that at the crossroad of two cultures and two writing conventions, AL learners take what they perceive to be valuable or desirable and adjust their habits and practices accordingly.

The ambiguity in such situations lies in that the so-called Western ideology of individualism that values explicit, unique authorial presence and critical voice in the text (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Shen, 1989) may not be completely appealing to Chinese students, but they have to learn to incorporate it in their texts. It is not always clear to them how and how much to absorb for each text. Their own traditional, collectivistic culture that stresses implicit, harmonious authorial presence and modest, constructive voice in writing (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Carson, 1992; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Shen, 1989) may stand in the way of creating a plausible self for Western readers but it is part of their deep roots. It can also be hazy to them as to how and how much to adapt it (or abandon it in the worst, extreme cases) to favor their reader. Each text is a trial, an experiment, a venture for them. However, with more and more practice, they eventually become more skillful in presenting their voice in a way that satisfies the intended reader and themselves as well. Their ways of critical argumentation may change and the influence of both home culture and host culture may mingle together, which symbolizes the next stage in their experience—living with ambiguity.
Living with Ambiguity: The Mediated Space

The stigma of speaking the imperfect language can hardly be avoided in cross-cultural contexts, but AL speakers can learn to negotiate a middle space so that their stigma can go less noticed, if not unnoticed, and their migrating experiences and multilingual competencies can serve them well. In this mediated space, AL speakers perform from time to time in order to position themselves and others correctly. However, performativity (in the sense of Goffman’s front-stage performance) is not all that matters. Their performances are based on who they are, what they are, and how they perceive the situation, all of which are based again on the will of their inner self. How much they are willing to perform and how to perform are decisions made by individuals in different ways.

In the following, I will elaborate on my conceptualizations of the mediated space in-between but incorporating the home culture and host/additional culture, and the mediated self in relation to the self as “I” and desired self.

The Mediated Space

This study suggested the existence and importance of the mediated space for AL speakers in the host culture. This space is a negotiated space integrating their familiar, home culture and the additional culture that they wish to acquire. There are always commonalities between cultures; the overlapping part gives migrating individuals a comfort zone in the additional culture. However, the mediated space is bigger than the overlapping zone. It encompasses the negotiable elements in both cultures, be they similar to or different from each other. It is the space AL speakers create for themselves, a space that is based on two cultures but grows beyond the sphere of either, as shown in the Figure 3.
The conceptualization of this mediated space borrows from the notions of cultural Third Space (Bhabha, 1994) and Interculturality in ESL contexts (Kramsch, 1993; Li & Girvan, 2004). Bhabha (1994) theorized “an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity,” arguing that “it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (p. 38), and “by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (p. 39). Bhabha’s theory of the Third Space aligns with Kramsch’s conceptualization of the third place in the ESL context, in which students and teachers work together to create a sphere of Interculturality. Kramsch (1993) saw AL individuals as “culturally ‘displaced’ persons, who have grown up in one culture but, having emigrated to another country, raise their family and are active professionally in a culture that is not their own” (p. 234). They feel “forever ‘betwixt and between’, no longer at home in their original culture, nor really belonging to the host culture” (p. 234). Both Bhabha and Kramsch’s conceptualizations of the in-between space are useful in my understanding the mediated space. However, they seemed to treat the home culture and host culture as separate entities, and cross-cultural individuals as living in the space between the two but inside neither. Li
and Girvan’s (2004) empirical study indicated that the teacher and students created a common space through negotiation among themselves. This third place is not only in-between, but also merging into both cultures. My current conceptualization of the mediated space focuses on the commonalities of the home and host cultures, and treats this third space as incorporating both and evolving out of both. It is the negotiated integration of both that gives AL individuals the space to be both their home culture self and the host culture self, but not completely belonging to either. The hybridity of the self demonstrates influences of both.

Li and Girvan’s (2004) exploration of interculture in the ESL classroom is also useful in understanding the mediated space AL speakers create for themselves in the macro-classroom of the whole society and their educational institutions. In this enormous classroom, AL speakers need to negotiate frequently for a common ground with whomever they encounter or interact with on their cross-cultural journey. The way they get along with professors, peer students, administrative personnel, the way they participate in social and academic events, and the way they carry out their life’s activities, are full of negotiations of meaning, culture, and recognition. When an immediate common ground is out of the question, they may move on to a new place seeking possibilities of negotiation. In this study, Jian and Wei both felt restricted in their Master’s program; they chose to avoid conflicts and leave for another program so that they could make better use of their intellectual capital. In such cases, walking away is not an act of giving up, but a strategy of finding a comfortable mediated space.

**The Mediated Self**

Although this research began with the perspective of the self which emphasizes fluidity, hybridity, and performativity in identity construction, the data indicate the limitations of this perspective. The participants in this study demonstrated a self which was relatively stable and
was formed through their upbringing, prior education, and work experiences. This self was also relevant to their personality, incorporating some characteristics of this person that might not be shared by others. I identified this self with Mead’s notion of the self as “I”. In addition to this self as “I”, those participants who desired to be integrated into the additional culture articulated a desired self, a self capable of roaming freely without language and cultural barriers. In-between the self as “I” and the desired self was what they actually achieved through negotiation, a mediated self. The relationships of these selves are illustrated in Figure 3. Following the figure are definitions of these concepts.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 3. The Mediated Self in an Additional Culture**

* Desired self is the socially appropriate self in the additional culture, the self that is commonly accepted as representing the dominant culture, including using the proper language
and behaving in proper ways on social occasions. It is also representative of the many aspects of the self that one wishes to be or achieve in life in any culture, such as having a successful career, a decent income, a well-shaped body, good health, a taste for music, etc. These aspects of the desired self are common across cultures, and may not be of immediate urgency to people in an additional academic culture, but will be of importance once the initial panic with language and socially preferred manners are manageable.

Mediated self is the result of the negotiation between the self one is and the self one wishes to be. Performativity, intentionality, uncertainty, and fluidity are features of this self. This is the self in effect in social interactions, a self that embodies the possible adaptations one is able to make to fit into the additional culture. This part of the self is more fluid and changeable, sometimes carrying more characteristics of oneself, other times defying any stereotypes of the personal, national, or ethnic selves. The mediated self is usually determined by one’s perceptions or misperceptions of the situation and the expectations for individuals in this situation.

Self as “I” is how one is raised into or really is. This is the self that is usually hidden behind the performances and negotiations in everyday display of the self. This is a more stable self yet still capable of changing to a limited extent.

Figure 3 is a simplified demonstration of the relationships among the three selves. In fact, the borderlines of these selves are not clear-cut or solid; they allow the different selves to flow or merge into the realm of other selves in the intricate processes of negotiation. The self as “I” is comparatively stable, particularly in less complicated situations. The fluid, multiple identities people play with are at the outer circle of the self as “I”. Depending on the situation, people display different aspects of the self as “I” to the audience, and with the intended, performative self on the outer circle, they create a hybrid self which may be different from time to time, from occasion to occasion. The self as “I” and the performative self negotiate with each other and
cohabit in one body. The performances vary in interaction with others, either directly in face-to-face encounters or indirectly through reading or writing.

The concept of hybrid self is closest to that of mediated self, but in my view, hybridity is achieved through mediation in additional cultural contexts, and it is created in the mediated space. I also argue that it is the quest for respect, recognition, and self-determination that drives one to change and play with different identities. No one desires an exiled, alienated, or stigmatized identity.

In cases that the AL individuals lack respect for the additional culture, there is a lack of desired self; or at least, the desired self is too obscure for themselves and others to see. Lack of a desired self in that context contributes to lack of a mediated self and results in an exhibition of a strong self as “I” or performative self. Jameson in this study may serve as a good example of this point. He showed no intention of tolerating cultural norms in his host culture that were different from his home culture. His strong sense of self as a scholar that was nurtured in the American educational system urged him not to conform to the Chinese academic culture in which he was supposed to be a respectful student. His either-or attitude deprived him of the broad middle ground between the two extremes. Looking for the mediated space is one of the characteristics of global souls. In this sense, he was not any closer to the spirit of a global soul. On the other hand, the other students embraced differences and endeavored to create a mediated space for themselves. While maintaining their self as “I”, they performed their different selves in this space, only to find their worldviews broadened and their lives enriched by claiming multiple selves in a multicultural environment.

Although in some cases, “It is the need to reconcile old and new or to scuttle one in favor of the other that produces identity crisis or alienation” (McGowan, 1991, p. 245), it is also true for the majority of the participants in this study that it is the need to reconcile old and new, inner
and outer, that creates the opportunities to claim multiple identities, to switch back and forth among the many options of self, or to settle down with a satisfying mediated self for the time being.

This study benefited greatly from Said’s (1991) notion of academic migrant. However, the results also suggested the limitation of his vision of academic freedom as “an invitation to give up one identity in the hope of understanding and perhaps even assuming more than one” (p. 18). Academic migrants do not have to give up one identity in order to assume more than one; they mix the old identity with the new through mediation and create a hybrid identity that encompasses old and new, stable and performative selves. This identity is multiple, but has a center to rest on; it is fluid, but not free-flowing without gravity. The gravity is the person’s self as “I” that evaluates influence and interference of outer factors, and takes protective measures by either resisting changes or adapting to changes.

Revisiting the Model of AL Writer Identity

My understanding of the re/construction of AL writer identity was influenced by the concepts of hybridity and fluidity. The study, while demonstrating these aspects in the identity reconstruction, also pointed out the stability and gravity of the self in writing. Moreover, my earlier model of AL writer identity lacked a developmental perspective in viewing the reconstruction of the self in AL contexts.

In my view, writer identity references personal identity; therefore, my writer identity model has elements of personal identity incorporated, and I always discuss the two concepts together. Writers usually have their own distinct language styles that align with their personal characteristics. Superficial changes in language expressions such as passive or active voices, in structures of text such as when to introduce topic sentences, or in exhibiting authorial presence
such as the use of first person pronouns, do not constitute the major changes of a writer’s identity. A writer’s ideas and ways of presenting ideas as well as personal language styles that are closely connected to the person’s upbringing, prior education, and idiosyncrasy remain relatively stable. For example, in this study, Zhong changed from “the student” to “we” easily, but did not change his modest, precise language style. Xitong learned to use abstract concepts but was still obsessed with metaphorical expressions. Yuchen adapted her way of critiquing but did not change her critical ideas. It is apparent that there is a core writer identity differentiating a writer from others.

The performative and hybrid identity in writing is the outcome of negotiation, with the purpose to satisfy the intended reader. When readers change, this aspect of the writer identity also changes accordingly. For example, if Zhong had to use “I” to present personal opinions, he would conform without any argument, and Yuchen would be happy to voice her criticisms directly if she perceived the possibility of doing so. However, none of them would change their basic ideas to be presented in the text.

Another point is that, at the graduate level, superficial language issues such as first person pronoun and passive voice (as discussed by Hyland, 2002a, 2002b; Shen, 1989) are no longer culture-related issues, but rather, the issue of disciplinary conventions. The attempt of judging the authorial presence through superficial elements only leads to partial understanding of the hybridity of AL writer identity. In-depth ethnographic analyses are required in order to see both the hybrid and the core identities of the writer in AL texts.

In elaborating the components of writer identity, Ivanič (1997) asserted that the autobiographical self derives from the writer’s life history and the sense of roots; but it is not a fixed “real self,” it is changing as a result of the author’s developing life history. The result from this study indicates that Ivanič’s concept of autobiographical self only partially works for AL writers at graduate level and in academic context. On the one hand, they are still developing their
life history, so the self is not fixed. On the other hand, their sense of self as being is already shaped to a great extent by their previous education and home culture; therefore, their sense of self tends to be stable, and the self in writing demonstrates both the real self and the performative self. It is a hybrid self through speculation, negotiation, and mediation. In other words, the autobiographical self or self as being is not fixed as long as the person is carrying on their life’s endeavors; but it can be real because the author may want to voice true opinions when possible or mix the true self with tentative performances when necessary.

My previous model properly describes the components of writer identity in AL texts at the beginning stage of their migrating experience. At a later stage when the writers become more skillful in integrating the desirable elements in both writing traditions, and when they feel comfortable with the mediated space, their identity in writing changes. The distinctions between the two layers of factors in the previous model become less obvious. Some factors that are characteristic of AL writers, such as self as NNS and self as outsider, may become less apparent, while other factors, such as self as being, self as writer, and self as scholar, may weigh more in constructing the self in the text. The model in Figure 1, therefore, applies to the AL writers at the beginning period of their cross-cultural experience. To make a distinction, I now call it the Model of Writer Identity of AL Graduate Students in Phase 1. As the AL writers stay longer, internalize more the cultural norms and writing conventions in the AL language, and as their AL language proficiency elevates to the near-native speaker level, the model needs to be revised to reflect such changes. Figure 4 with the same multiple, intertwining factors but different emphasis better captures the construction of self in AL texts at a later stage (I call it Phase 2) of cross-cultural migration:
In this model, the factors that are congenial to beginner AL graduate writers (i.e., self as NNS, self as outsider, self as observer, and self as migrant) are no longer highlighted; they become the background stratum, but they will not disappear for an extended period of time. Instead, the factors that are shared by most graduate writers (i.e., self as writer, self as student, self as scholar, and self as being) become more visible and move onto the top stratum. This model treats all the factors as developing; they may not play equally important roles in all the texts. For example, when the AL writer begins to gain an insider perspective, the self as outsider may become insignificant; and in texts where the author is familiar with the content and disciplinary jargons, self as NNS may not be as important as self as scholar. The model also stresses the
bidirectional influence between the writer identity and the contributing factors. Each factor contributes to the self in a text, and the self in the text and the reader’s feedback on the text affect the future development of each factor as well. The model considers the multidirectional influence of the contributing factors as well. The intertwining factors affect one another; a stronger sense of self as scholar may enhance the sense of self as author but weakens the sense of self as student.

What I must note is that I had originally designed the model in Phase 1 for EAL writers from East Asian countries, particularly from China. When later, my research evolved to include a group of CAL students in China, I felt more need to reconsider the appropriateness of this framework to these AL writers. However, data showed that the model in fact worked for both groups of students. And the revised model for Phase 2 applies to both groups as well. The important issue is not which language is the additional language, but if the writers have to write in their additional language.

**Conclusion and Implications**

*Conclusion and Answers to Research Questions*

This thesis represents a journey starting from the linguistic perspective on identity construction in second language learning, picking up theories of identity on the way to highlight the hybridity of identity in additional language contexts, evolving into re-examining the notions of identity, and eventually having developed a comprehensive model of viewing identity as both stable and fluid; that is, stable in the sense of self as “I” and fluid in the sense of social selves. The concept of identity in this thesis is drawn from the intersection of identity theories in language studies, cultural studies, and social studies. In other words, the identity in discussion is a conjunction of different identities, including cultural identity, social identity, personal identity and linguistic identity. The theory of a stable identity applies more appropriately in a less mobile
society in which people play relatively stable roles. The notion of a flexible identity is, in fact, looking at a person’s social identity, which is subject to changes and adaptations in a more fluid and multicultural society. They are different perspectives of the same issue.

Identity is not an either-or concept. It is both stable and dynamic. It is stable when people live at a comparatively stable state, and dynamic at times of change and mobility. In the contemporary world, the convenience of travel, the needs for border-crossing, and the desire for exploring the world make life more multifaceted than ever before and make the world a global village. People who are often on the move tend to develop temporary connections with others they meet and to show the performative self. This may result in the impression that identities are all about pastiche and performativity. However, not seeing the self as “I” does not mean that it is non-existent. A person’s self as “I” is always there, hiding behind the masks that the person wears in superficial social interactions. The self as “I” is only exposed partially to people with whom the individual has close connections or converses in an in-depth manner.

Now, I go back to the research questions and conclude with the answers I have obtained from the study. In fact, all the answers are already incorporated in the descriptive and interpretive analyses in the previous chapters. What I will do below is to highlight the main ideas and treat them as a conclusion to this study.

Question 1, what are the factors influencing AL students’ identity, that is, their self-positioning and their perceived social positioning in an additional (academic) culture, and how do they position themselves?

Many factors play a role in self-positioning of AL students, among which are personality, personal beliefs, social network, and AL proficiency. Their length of stay in and attitude toward the additional culture are also important factors. These factors interact with one another, and are decisive in the AL students’ self perceptions and their feelings for the additional culture. The
longer the person stays in the additional culture, the broader the social network, the higher the AL proficiency, and the more open the personality, the more positive images they have about themselves and the more intimate feelings they develop for the additional culture. The engagement with the additional culture leads to the sense of belonging and a balanced self.

Question 2, how do AL students manage the sense of belonging or not belonging in the additional culture?

AL students manage their sense of belonging through negotiation and mediation. When their self positioning aligns with the social positioning and their perceived social positioning, they are likely to find the mediated space and create a mediated self in interaction with the social context and in dialogue with the people significant to their personal and academic life. If a big gap is found between their self positioning and the social positioning, they are fated to feel alienated, exiled, and out of place. If they choose to leave, they lose the opportunity to get to the mediated space. If they choose to bridge the gap, they may find home in the mediated space in the end.

Question 3, what are the factors influencing AL students’ writer identity, that is, their self-representation and ways of expressing ideas in academic writing, and how do they do this?

This question is mostly concerned with language, namely, the additional language. However, it is not completely a language issue. As cross-cultural migrants who are elevated by their broad worldviews and multiple competences but at the same time are dwarfed by their limited AL proficiency, more factors need to be considered in constructing their selves in the text. From the perspective of writing the text, their knowledge of the writing conventions and genre differences, as well as their capacities in grammar accuracy and translation skills all carry weight in presentation of their ideas. From the perspective of constructing the self, the eight factors in my models of AL writer identity, both in Phase 1 and Phase 2, should all be incorporated and
balanced in each piece of writing in order to establish a plausible self in AL academic texts. In Phase 1, the factors congenial to AL writers play important roles in presenting the self in writing. In Phase 2, the factors shared by most academic writers become major concerns. Different factors have different degrees of influence in different stages of migrating experience.

Question 4, what are the commonalities and divergences among AL students in their re/construction of the self in writing?

The answer to this question is less complicated than I expected, considering the fact that there were eleven students from five different countries. For the two American students writing in their first language, Ivanič’s (1997) model of writer identity works well; therefore, their writing was not the focus of my inquiry. For the other students writing in their additional language, be they international students in China or Chinese students in Canada, more commonalities are found in their reconstruction of the self in AL writing. They share the difficulties in grasping the subtleties and nuances in the AL, and confusing processes of translation, the painstaking learning through observation, imitation, and conformation. They also share the dilemmas of focusing on language or content, on being a student or being a scholar, on critical thinking or avoiding conflicts. These are all issues articulated by the participants, and are aspects they considered in presenting themselves in writing. The difference lies in that some students need to learn to present themselves more explicitly in English than they do in their own culture, whereas others need to learn the Chinese way of indirect self representation in texts. In general, people writing in their additional language share similar difficulties and concerns in writing.

Implications for Further Research

Data indicated that social network and closeness to the host culture are critical in a person’s sense of belonging. One way to enable close connections with the host culture is through
first-hand work experience. China does not have restrictive policies against international students working off campus. This gives them many opportunities to practice the language, to interact with people, and to understand Chinese society through first-hand experiences. It also helps them find a balance in their life and a sense of belonging to the culture, not only academic culture, but a social culture that nurtures the academic culture. However, in some Western countries, different regulations were made to restrict international students working off-campus. This has reduced the chances of these students to mix with local people and to understand local culture. It is difficult for them to gain a sense of belonging when they are excluded from the majority of the society. The only place they are familiar with is the university, and the only culture they are familiar with is the academic culture of the institution they attend. However, the university is simply one stop in their life’s path; they need to move on into real society when they graduate. If they have not gained the sense of belonging while studying, it will be more difficult for them to acquire the social culture later on at work if they choose to stay. Canada’s new policy of allowing international students to work off-campus is a move to fairer opportunities for these students not only at school but also in the future job market. With the growing number of international, mostly AL, students working off-campus, more research is called upon to investigate how work opportunities affect their personal and academic life, their understanding of the host society, and their sense of belonging to the host culture.

This study suggests that most of the Chinese and American students did not develop a strong sense of belonging in the host culture. However, the three students from Cape Verde, Spain, and Colombia willingly claimed multiple selves and were happy to be identified as Chinese. Interestingly, Dolby’s (2004) study of American students in Australia demonstrated that many of the American students asserted a strong American identity, while some were open to negotiation and tried to “embrace a fuller, more contradictory national identity” (p. 168). Dolby’s
study had a different focus and situated in a different context from mine, and I do not feel justified to draw any generalizable conclusion; instead, I feel the urgency for further research to explore if the size, power, and history of home country correlates with the identity of its cross-cultural migrating people. In other words, are people in smaller countries more flexible in claiming multiple identities? Does the power of a country reinforce a strong sense of pride in its people’s national identity which leads to a strong sense of belonging to the country? Does a country’s long, civilized history instill a sense of deep roots in its people and result in a stronger, more stable cultural identity? In addition, age factors might play an important role in reshaping the self in the host culture but were not pursued in-depth in this study. Data indicates that younger participants were less flexible and adaptable living in an additional culture, contrary to what one might have expected. How age and life experience affect identity reconstruction is another area worthy of pursuing.

In today’s world, globalization of economy and internationalization of education accelerate the pace and frequency of cross-cultural migration. How do cultural norms in a country evolve or transform in the context of globalization and internationalization? For migrating students from a country like China with a deep-rooted culture, what are the cultural beliefs pertaining to education and ways of life that can be changed and what are not? How do people identify themselves in the process of change, and what becomes of them after the changes? These are topics cross-cultural researchers might want to investigate.

Among the factors influencing AL writing, self as outsider and self as observer are variables that can be changed over time. This qualitative study sampled only eleven students for in-depth exploration. Large quantitative studies may be helpful in determining how long it takes the majority of AL writers to gain an insider view, so that the factor self as outsider can be
removed from the AL writer identity model, and what happens to their keen observation as they get more familiar with the culture.

**Implications for Education**

The participants in this study articulated concerns that have implications for education involving international AL students. The participants’ criticisms and praises of the programs in China indicated the problems of Chinese international education. China is making an effort to align Chinese higher education with Western higher education. Offering courses in English to international graduate students is one of the endeavors the Ministry of Higher Education has made. However, it is a big challenge to make the programs accommodating to students from different countries with different educational levels. In this study, Jameson and Jenny who were from the United States felt their program and classmates’ levels constrictive (particularly those from the third world countries), while Cesar and Ilhane highly regarded the program and their classmates’ levels. This gap may be filled by offering preparatory courses in subject matters and intensive language training to students who do not meet the requirements of graduate level studies.

These students also pointed out the difficulties caused by the professor’s teaching method and attitude to students, for example, Jameson and Ilhane both mentioned a Chinese professor’s unprofessional responses to arguments in the classroom. The gap in different expectations of the professor and student roles is not insurmountable. With the internationalization of education, professors in China need to change their traditional ways of teaching and embrace the diversity international students bring into their classrooms. They need to develop a broader worldview in addition to their professional knowledge in teaching. Being a good professor in a mono-cultural Chinese classroom does not guarantee successful teaching in a multi-cultural classroom in which
students have diverse backgrounds and worldviews. Learning to discuss academic issues without personal bias is the very basic quality they should possess. An open mind and fair attitude of the professor toward differences are pre-requisites to maximize the intellectual growth of international students. I think the same is true for Western professors as well.

Professors’ availability to students was another point worthy of attention. Cesar, Mariola, and Ilhane all mentioned that their Chinese professors were less approachable than those in their home country. This is an area to be improved in China’s international education programs as well. Professors have been highly respected in traditional China, and they still should be. However, it does not mean that they have to appear formal and unreachable to students in order to maintain their prestigious status. International students are learning a new culture, which involves respecting the cultural norms in China. However, students’ cultures should also be respected and considered. Growing awareness of professors in this respect will facilitate the learning of international students from cultures in which professor-student relationships are more friendly and collegial.

China’s international education is still in its infancy. Most of the participants in China showed understanding of the situation while voicing their concerns. Lack of services in support of AL students’ academic work and academic writing, and lack of resources on international education subjects are undoubtedly roadblocks to quality international education in China.

There are also implications for higher education in general in both China and Canada. Universities usually stress the need to teach students to be critical, but may not stress enough the different perspectives or ways of being critical, or on being more understanding of the differences and embracing differences and diversity. There are numerous cultures in the world; therefore, there must be numerous lenses for people to see the world. Being critical should be grounded on the understanding, and ideally recognition, of the differences and diversities of other cultures.
Looking through a narrow tunnel, one misses the broad context of many happenstances and phenomena. This may lead to ungrounded criticism and biased attitude.

Another task of university education is to promote far-sighted visions among students. Seeing things as developing, evolving, and changing enables one to understand each phase of the whole process better. On the other hand, segmenting the phases only provides one with disconnected patches that may appear strange and unreasonable. Viewing things from a historical perspective, one is able to see the changes happening and understand why there are these changes and whether they are desirable or not. An open attitude toward differences should also be encouraged, particularly in education involving cross-cultural AL individuals. An unbiased attitude and a non-judgmental environment not only benefit AL students, but also benefit local students. Learning to recognize differences, to tolerate ambiguity, and to respect the mediated space are qualities people need to possess in a multicultural world.

In this research project, I explored the factors influencing the identity reconstruction of additional language students in an additional culture, and developed theoretical frameworks in light of the data to illustrate the formation of their personal identities and writer identities. However, exploring the phenomenon and developing theories are not my ultimate goal in such an endeavor. The messages I have learned from the experiences of these students are thought-provoking and invaluable within the context of international education. I think we as educators could not stress more the importance of recognition—recognition of the struggles and difficulties these students have gone through, recognition of the differences and vigor they have brought to their additional culture. It is through recognition that educators are able to better facilitate these students along their cross-cultural journey for knowledge.
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Appendix A  The Circuit of Culture

The Circuit of Culture (Hall, 1997, p. 1)
Appendix B  Aspects of Writer Identity

(Clarke & Ivanič, 1997, p. 137)
Appendix C  Letter of Information

Title:  Cross-Cultural Identity Re/Construction: Graduate Students Writing in their Additional Language

I am writing to invite you to participate in research aimed at investigating identity re/construction of international graduate students in additional/second language contexts. The ultimate goal of my research is to develop a theory of additional language (AL) writer identity and achieve recognition of the multi-competence and multi-reality of AL graduate students. I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, Canada. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board.

In this part of the research, I wish to document the views of AL graduate students about factors that influence their perceptions of the self in life and in writing. To do this, I am planning to conduct an email questionnaire, a written work collection, an interview, and an email follow-up if necessary.

If you agree to participate in this research, would you please complete the questionnaire, which will take you about 20 minutes, within two weeks’ time. Your completion of the questionnaire will be viewed as consent to participate in this study. Then, I would like you to share one or two samples of your academic writing with me via email or in person. The purpose of collecting your writing is not to evaluate it, but to look for indications of authorial presence that I am investigating. The interview will be conducted one-on-one at a time that is convenient to you. I will ask you to sign a formal Consent Form before the interview, which will last for approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded. The conversation will be transcribed and then the original recording will be destroyed. If I have remaining questions, I may email you again within three months after the interview.

Your email responses will be kept in a special folder in my email account to which nobody else has access except me. Your name and identity will be kept confidential. When I copy and paste your responses into a word document for data analysis, your name will be replaced with a
pseudonym so that your identity and the information you have provided will not be revealed to persons other than me. All the data will be saved in my PC laptop and I am the only person who has access to it. This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, and books. Your name will not appear in any publication created as a result of this research unless you so wish.

I do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable, and you are assured that no information collected will be reported to anyone who is in authority over you. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Xuemei Li at [1-613] 533-6000 ext. 75655 or 531-5458. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, 533-6210, or the Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email stevensj@post.queensu.ca

Sincerely,

Xuemei Li
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Appendix D  Email Questionnaire

Please note that your completion of this questionnaire will be viewed as consent to participate in this phase of the study. Please check the box below to indicate that you are consenting to participate.

☐ Yes, I understand that by completing this questionnaire and emailing it back to Xuemei Li, I am consenting to participate in this phase of her study.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Personal and Demographic Information:

1. How long have you been living in Canada/China?
2. Where did you complete your secondary education?
3. Where did you complete your previous university education? In what program?
4. What are you studying now? Which year are you in?
5. Why did you choose this particular field? And this particular university?
6. How have you found your current program so far? Has it met your expectations? Why?
7. What are your career goals?
8. What languages have you learned? When and where? Describe your proficiency in each, and your learning strategies.
9. Do you read English/Chinese newspapers, watch English/Chinese programs, listen to English/Chinese radio, or surf English/Chinese websites?
Appendix E Interview Questions

Social and Academic Life:

1. Tell me about your interests in music, sports, arts, politics, religion, and others.
2. In what ways have you participated in the broader community? Please explain.
3. How do you feel when you criticize, comment on, or offer suggestions to the major concerns of the community with which you have connections at meetings or gatherings?
4. How do you allocate your time for academic work, personal hobbies, and social activities?
5. Tell me about your circle of friends and how you feel when you are with them.
6. How do you introduce yourself to your professor/instructor, your classmates, department/university administrative personnel, and a person you wish to know?
7. Describe to what extent you feel comfortable in the cultural context in which you are studying. Please provide examples.
8. How helpful are the support programs, if any, in your department and university in resolving some of your problems in study, in writing, and in life?

Academic Work:

1. How do you approach your professors/instructors when you have questions, and how do you feel when you talk to them?
2. How do you feel about the language(s) of instruction in your courses or program? Please provide examples.
3. What are the language requirements for your written assignments? How difficult or easy it is for you to meet the requirements? Please provide examples.
4. Do you have any major concerns about your written assignments?
5. How much did you know about the subject area when you first entered your current program?
6. How much do you know about the writing conventions in your subject area in your home country and in this host country?
7. Tell me about the thinking and composing process when you write in your first language and additional/second language.
8. Who do you consider yourself to be when you ask questions or argue in class, when you participate in (critical) group discussions, and when you present your arguments/ideas in writing?
9. How comfortable are you in expressing your own opinions in writing and disregarding what authorities or your professor/instructor may say/have said? What are your coping strategies for disagreement?
## Social and Academic Life

### 1. Tell me about your interests in music, sports, arts, politics, religion, and others.

- **Sports**: Active life
  - I belong to a gym and exercise there, I mean here in China. I also play basketball and am a member of a basketball league for a few months until I hurt myself. I play a little squash with friends. Also I play football in the states.
  - I play a few musical instruments—guitar, base, piano, but I don’t have a lot time to play.

- **Music**
  - I’m Jewish but I am not very religious. I don’t practice my religion regularly.

- **Identity**: Cultural affiliation
  - I don’t have any political inclinations. I hate politics. Both my brother and sister are involved in public life. My sister is a public health practitioner; my brother is a campaign director. But I hate politics.

### 2. In what ways have you participated in the broader community? Please explain.

- **Sports**
  - Foreign to whom (from whose perspective)? To him or to Chinese?

- **Friends**

- **Chinese**
  - Compare what Chinese students say about “foreigner”.

- **Criticism**: Imlications for Chinese education: needs to change traditional culture of teaching (teacher no longer as authority who cannot be challenged but as facilitator); how to respond to

### 3. How do you feel when you criticize, comment on, or offer suggestions to the major concerns of the community with which you have connections at meetings or gatherings?

I guess this can be directly connected to the reason I left the program I was in here. That was because when I criticize something like government policy in my politics class, if I say something could be done better or a more correct way,
# Appendix G  Sample Data Analysis (Step 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data (Jameson)</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m Jewish but I am not very religious. I don’t practice my religion regularly. I feel [I’m] more a Jewish people.</td>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>Strong sense of cultural &amp; personal identity shaped by life and educational experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So the problems is that I was raised to do it, my education was about picking things for yourself, doing things for yourself, being different, being original. I don’t think I can change that for being here; and that brought me a problem, but I wasn’t going to give up my personal beliefs and opinions.</td>
<td><strong>Personal beliefs &amp; Identity</strong></td>
<td>Refuse to negotiate identity in AC—one of the reasons that he was not able to fit in and find a middle ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally I think I am very argumentative and aggressive. Sometimes I argue just because I think it is fun, just because I like to get people get angry with me.</td>
<td><strong>Personality</strong></td>
<td>Good sense of personal characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. In terms of content, no. Even if I write something they don’t want to hear, I’m going to write it anyway.</td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Strong, non-negotiable writer identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[How much do you know about the writing conventions in your subject area in your home country and in this host country?]</td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>AC writer identity same as C1 writer identity; not changing for different educational contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not necessary or resistant to change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. In terms of content, no. Even if I write something they don’t want to hear, I’m going to write it anyway.

[How much do you know about the writing conventions in your subject area in your home country and in this host country?]

I just follow what I did at home, which is basically for making arguments and arguing with evidence to prove I was correct. … The logical reasoning I learned at high school and college, I did it for papers here and I tried it everywhere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AC writer identity same as C1 writer identity; not changing for different educational contexts.</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not necessary or resistant to change?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refuse to negotiate in content and...
# Appendix H  Sample Data Analysis (Step 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jameson:                                                            | AL identity                  | • Nationality ≠ cultural affiliation  
| “I’m Jewish but I am not very religious.”                          |                              | • L1 ≠ sense of belonging to C1 (compare Xitong)                                                   |
| “I feel [I’m] more a Jewish people.”                                |                              | Fluency in lang. does not mean belonging to culture.                                               |
| Jenny:                                                              | Identity in AC               | • Defensive when reminded ethnicity ≠ nationality  
| “I don’t like to announce my nationality. People just don’t understand the United States is composed of more ethnicities than just Caucasians” |                              | • L1 = sense of belonging to C1 (compare Chinese stu.)  
| “I do feel comfortable living in China, but only after I began working.” |                              | • Length of stay & work experience affect sense of belonging to AC                                |
| Cesar:                                                              | Identity in AC               | All three had a strong sense of belonging to AC.                                                   |
| “I think I feel comfortable here. I feel I am more Chinese…. I left home for six years. …I miss my country a lot, I miss my people a lot, but I am particularly used to living here. I think it is easier for me to get used to life here. So I kind of living a Colombian life in China.” |                              | All articulated loyalty to C1.                                                                     |
| Ilhane:                                                             | C1 identity                  | All were aware of multiple identities                                                               |
| “Cape Verde is a small place, you have to go out. Everyone knows one day you'll go out. It’s almost a must; so we are very open to the outside world.” |                              | All were positive about mediated self in AC                                                        |
| “I normally say to some Chinese that I’m from Xinjiang - Wulumuqi, but most of them don't believe me. I like China a lot, but I still like to be considered Cape Verdian” |                              |                                                                                                  |