

The Writer, the Text and the Reader: An Exploration of
Identity in Second Language Academic Writing

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ABSTRACT

Students studying in university contexts often find learning to write English for academic purposes especially challenging. Some of the challenges reside in acquiring the necessary skills and strategies to be successful academic writers. A less tangible consideration which has received recent attention from first and second language writing researchers is the relationship between writing and identity. How do student writers become part of a situated community in which some discourses may be privileged over others? While all writing can be a potential site of struggle, this may have particular significance for second language students who bring their own unique backgrounds and literacy histories to their academic writing and may find becoming part of a new and heterogeneous discourse community profoundly unsettling. Using case study methods, this dissertation explores the experiences of four undergraduate students as they become academic writers in a second language. It also carries out an analysis of some of the linguistic features one particular student essay to examine how writers simultaneously construct their texts and are constructed by them.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an act of identity in which writers align themselves with interests (in both senses), values, beliefs, practices and power relations through their discourse choices.

(Ivanič, 1998: 109)

I'm writing different to who I am

(Student)

Learning to write English for academic purposes is a complex, often frustrating and unsettling process which many tertiary students find difficult. Some of these difficulties reside in the acquisition of skills and strategies for academic writing. A less tangible issue and one which has been receiving some attention from first and second language writing researchers over the last twenty five years is that of the relationship between writing and identity. How do student writers construct acceptable academic identities and become part of a situated community in which some written discourses may be privileged over others? While all writing could be viewed as a 'site of struggle in which people are negotiating an identity' (Ivanič, 1998: 332), this can be especially applicable to writers who have English as a second or additional language, hereafter referred to simply as second language¹ students.

Apart from the obvious language difficulties, second language students often bring quite different histories and expectations to their academic writing, and becoming part of a new and heterogeneous discourse community can be problematic. In this dissertation I explore the experiences, reflections and texts of

¹ I have chosen the term "second language" in the interests of simplicity, and because it is used most frequently in the literature in the discipline.

four student participants who were taking on new identities as writers of academic discourses in a second language. The study supports Ivanič and Camps' (2001: 3) claim that 'writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer' and suggests that further investigations in this area could benefit both teachers and students in second language academic writing contexts.

Background and personal orientation to the research

My interest in investigating the topic of identity in second language writing began when I was a teacher in a generic skills-based writing course and has continued through other tutoring work, content teaching, and my current role as a learning advisor with the Student Learning Support Service at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). In the course of such work, I have spoken with many students from a wide range of language and cultural backgrounds. Helping them with the skills of academic writing, such as understanding the requirements of the essay question, developing an argument, structuring an essay effectively, making appropriate lexical and grammar choices, and using source material according to accepted conventions has provided many insights into the very complex world of academic writing and the struggle faced by second language writers in particular. I also became interested in the stories students told about these struggles, their ambivalence, their successes and their frustrations in adopting identities as people 'who write' (Ivanič, 1998: 85).

Added to this, the comments that students sometimes made about how they felt about their writing and how they felt they were represented or, more usually, misrepresented by it, were quite revealing. Ivanič observed that, in her experience, mature students who were writing in an academic context for the first time often made comments about their writing that seemed to her to be related to issues of

identity (Ivanič, 1998:6). I have heard second language students articulate similar sentiments. The quotation – *I'm writing different to who I am* – which opens this chapter was made by a Vietnamese student to a colleague. It is an eloquent expression of one person's feelings of dissonance with aspects of her identity as it relates to a piece of academic writing and also encapsulates a reality for many second language students. The following vignette of another student's experiences, which I present here with that student's permission, is a more detailed example of a novice writer struggling to adopt what was deemed to be a suitable academic writer identity for a particular university essay.

A mature Island-born Pacific woman whom I call Ellie came to see me in my capacity as a learning advisor. She had many years of practical community nursing work behind her, but was having difficulty passing the assignments in a course she was required to take. As is a tendency of many Pacific students (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2005), Ellie's writing was very descriptive, and largely conversational, containing an abundance of adjectives and colloquial language. In terms of content, it was also highly personal with many references to the importance of her spiritual and family life, and some very subjective value judgements about her clients. She was clearly distressed by the pressure she was under to succeed in the course, and was well aware that she needed to pay attention to her writing style. Together we discussed ways in which she could write a more effective academic essay, and I demonstrated how she could construct a reflective piece of writing without being so relentlessly idiosyncratic in terms of both the content and the way she presented it. While she could acknowledge the necessity for this on an intellectual level, on a more emotional level, she was less sanguine. After we had reworked a piece of her text she commented that, although there were definite improvements and it now sounded more academic, it did not sound like

her. Students in Ivanič's (1995, 1998) research also used the phrase – “it doesn't sound like me” – to articulate the way they felt they were constructed by their writing.

Interactions with students such as Ellie, my reading of relevant research in the field of academic and second language writing, and discussions with colleagues, were the impetus for this study. Specifically, I wanted to investigate the kinds of literacy backgrounds and prior experiences second language learners might bring to their academic writing, how these issues might be played out in their texts, and what kind of impressions readers might get of writers through the actual language used in those texts. I also wanted to find out the ways in which texts did or did not meet expectations of the social contexts which they were written.

To explore these questions I carried out case study research using a narrative inquiry approach to tell the stories of the experiences of four undergraduate second language students who were becoming academic writers in a second language. It is because of this approach that my presence, the overt presence of the researcher, not found in traditional research, but appropriate – even mandatory – for the kind of narrative inquiry I am doing here is heard in this dissertation. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999: 138) argue ‘a text written as if the researcher had no autobiographical presence would constitute a deception about the epistemological status of the research.’ I therefore write using the first person throughout the dissertation, and make explicit references to my own teaching and professional observations.

Defining Identity

Identity constructs and is constructed by language

(Norton, 1997: 419)

The abstraction “identity” is rather tricky to define. This is largely because the term can be used in a variety of ways (Casanave, 2002: 21), and because related words such as *self, person, role, persona, position, subject* (Ivanič, 1998: 10) are used interchangeably by researchers in diverse disciplinary contexts, and may carry differently nuanced connotations depending on those contexts. The obvious and most straightforward meaning of identity is an individual’s sense of self. However, this implies a somewhat static, ‘singular self’ (Ivanič, 1998: 15) which does not equate with notions of multiplicity, the importance of context, and change over time. Norton (1997: 419), commenting on articles in a 1995 issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* focusing on language and identity, notes how all the contributors to that publication saw identity as a ‘complex, contradictory and multifaceted’ notion ‘dynamic across time and place’. This understanding of the concept of identity is echoed by researchers such as Angélil-Carter (1997: 265), Ivanič (1998: 10) and Norton (2000: 127-129).

In conceptualising identity in this dissertation, I acknowledge the comments made above. I also draw heavily on Ivanič (1995 and 1998) and Ivanič and Camps (2001) whose work has made a significant contribution to our understanding of issues of identity in both first and second language academic writing. Identity, then, is a plural, dynamic concept encompassing four interrelated strands of selfhood: a writer’s autobiographical self, his or her discursal self, the self as author, and the socially constructed possibilities for selfhood. The first of these strands relates to a person’s background, history and experiences as a writer of academic texts. The

second relates to the impression of the writer that may be conveyed through features of those texts. The third, the self as author, includes how a person may present ideas and opinions and how he or she may establish the authority to make a claim. The fourth strand refers to what is acceptable and valued in a given context. These four elements or strands are intertwined to make up the concept of a *writerly self* (Starfield, 2007: 881; see also Ouellette, 2008).

Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation has six chapters. Following this introduction I review the relevant literature, drawing on the work of some of the most well-known writers in the field of second language academic writing. I look at how the question of identity in second language learning in general and in academic writing in particular has come to be of interest to researchers over the last two and a half decades or so. Chapter 2 ends with a rationale for the study, a summary of the main findings of the literature, and articulates the research questions. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research methodology. I begin by briefly introducing the context and the participants and discuss how I recruited them for the study. Next I outline the two complementary research approaches, narrative inquiry and the concept of portraiture which have given this dissertation its particular flavour. I then discuss how I collected the information for the study, and how I interpreted and presented this.

Chapters 4 and 5 form the centre of the study. Chapter 4 is quite general and explores the narratives of four undergraduate second language students as they were becoming academic writers in new contexts. I begin by presenting some brief biographical information about them. Then, using insights from interviews and conversations and, in some cases, references to examples of their academic writing, I tell the stories of their impressions of becoming academic writers in an English-

speaking context, their successes and struggles, and the ways in which they might have felt their identities as second language users in general and as writers in particular were challenged by this new context. This chapter serves as a platform for the more focused discussion on writer identity that follows. In Chapter 5 I concentrate on the story of one of these participants, paying attention to one of her first year essays. Drawing on the work of Halliday (1994), particularly as it is used by Ivanič, (1998) and Ivanič and Camps (2001), I discuss the way this student planned, structured and wrote her text, and then examine a selection of linguistic features to look at, in Ivanič's words, '*how* discourse constructs identity' (Ivanič, 1998: 18).

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation. Here I return to the research questions and pull together the main themes that arose from the participants' narratives and from the discussion of their actual writing. I present some implications of the findings for the teaching of writing both in the second language writing class and for any teacher concerned with second language writing across the curriculum. I also suggest some directions for further research, in particular the need for continued investigation into the question Ivanič (1998: 327) asks in her conclusion, 'So what? Why should we be interested in identity and the way this is played out in the texts of student writers? I finish with some reflections on the process of having researched and written this dissertation.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is text, is composing, and is social construction.

(Cumming, 1998: 61)

The big picture

Over the last twenty five years second language writing has come to be seen as a unique field in terms of practice, teaching, and research with its own particular infrastructure (Silva, 1993: 657; Canajarah, 2001: 119; Kroll, 2003: 11; Matsuda, 2003a: 170). This ‘coming of age’ (Matsuda, 2003a: 171) of the field of second language writing is evidenced by a wide range of research and resultant publications. In January 1992 the first issue of *The Journal of Second Language Writing* was published. The editors stated that their aim was to provide a forum for the discussion of areas of interest in second language writing and writing instruction. A significant number of books and edited volumes have also been produced over the last two decades or so. While only a small selection of such material has been included in this review of the literature, it is largely representative of the diverse themes and considerations that have emerged from the research.

As can be seen in much of the literature that informs this dissertation, studies in second language writing are often carried out by people who are, or who have been, practising teachers, and who are motivated to address the puzzles and problems they see in their classrooms. These studies have at their core the pragmatic goal of helping second language learners improve their writing and

become successful participants in their various situated discourse communities. To this end, numerous quantitative and qualitative studies reflecting differing theoretical and ontological orientations, and covering a broad range of topics have been carried out. (For an example of an overview see Polio, 2003: 35-65). Much of this research has taken place, out of necessity, within the confines of a specific course or programme, and has sometimes focused on discrete areas of concern such as, for instance, teaching grammar, error correction, writing strategies or responses to teacher feedback.

Second language writing – different from first language writing

Two important considerations, which are evident both from the research and from my own experiences as a teacher and learning advisor, underpin the present study. The first is that learning to write English for academic purposes in a second language is a substantially different experience from writing in one's first language, and that the written product itself is 'strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing' (Silva, 1993: 669; see also Hinkel, 2002: 14). Silva categorises these differences in terms of composing processes including planning, organising, revising, and in terms of the fluency, effectiveness, complexity and sophistication of the texts produced (Silva, 1993: 668).

Secondly, second language writers have particular needs and require 'specific consideration' (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996: 140; Grabe, 2001). This is because, it almost goes without saying, the difficulties experienced by students writing for academic purposes in their first language are often magnified for second language academic writers who might need more explicit help with planning, organising and editing their work, with understanding expectations and with acquiring lexical and grammatical resources (Silva, 1993: 670-671). Silva furthermore suggests that we

should be asking ‘When does different become incorrect or inappropriate?’ and ‘What is good enough writing?’ Although Silva’s article was published over 15 years ago, these are still pertinent questions for writing and content teachers to ask.

In continuing to address the needs of second language writers and their teachers, there has been a shift away from the ‘narrow textual and procedural focuses of the past’ (Casanave, 2003: 86). Researchers have tended to take a more holistic view of writing development, seeing it as an evolutionary process in which the relationships between teachers, learners, the institution and the broader social context cannot be ignored. Examples of research of this nature include publications such as Zamel and Spack’s volume, *Crossing the curriculum: Multilingual learners in college classroom* (2004). This collection examines academic literacy development across the curriculum from the perspectives of students, teachers, researchers, and faculty.

Several key points relevant to literacy development generally and second language writing development specifically emerge from studies of this kind. These points include the observations that the generic writing class is a starting place only (Sternglass, 2004: 58) and that responsibility for supporting learners should be shared by all faculties; that the development of academic literacy takes place over time; and that the progress students make is often circuitous and uneven. Furthermore, it has become axiomatic that there is no such entity as a “monolithic” academic discourse community; students may therefore be required to become familiar with a range of genres and discourses as they move through their academic careers. (See, for example, Ivanič, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Starfield, 2002, 2007).

Another significant consideration is that students not only have to adapt to different sets of literacy practices, they also need to take on new identities in order to become “insiders” (Kutz, 2004) in their particular and various teaching and

learning situations. As a Japanese student in an American university explains:

The process of acquiring a second language is not simply learning a way of communication, but forming who you are which might be different from your self in the native language. I think this contributes to some degree to the difficulty in learning a second language.

(Spack, 2004:45)

The question of identity

In keeping with modern intellectual trends, the question of identity has become a ‘central matter for inquiry’ (Sieber, 2004; 131) within social science research generally. The relationship between identity and language learning is also of increasing interest to people working in the field of applied linguistics (Norton, 2000: 5; Norton & Toohey, 2002: 122; Block, 2007: 2); and researchers whose focus is the field of second language academic writing have similarly embraced a discussion of identity in their studies. Such discussion has led to a more explicit focus on the social nature of writing. There has also been, as Harklau (2003: 155) puts it, an acknowledgment that ‘learning to write in a second language is not simply the accrual of technical linguistic abilities but rather is intimately related to identity – how one sees oneself and is seen by others as a student, as a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority’

Second language writing research with a focus on identity typically involves autobiographical accounts, or ethnographic case studies of individuals or small groups of students. An early autobiographical study, and one which is referred to often in the literature, is Shen’s (1989) narrative of his ‘mental struggle’ to become an academic writer in a composition class at an American university. Shen discusses

his discomfort at having to present his own views and opinions in his texts, at being required to use the first person singular pronoun, and adapting to a western style of organisation of those texts. Framing the problem as one of identity he observes not only that ‘I had to create an English self and be *that* [his emphasis] self’ (Shen, 1989: 461), but also that when ‘I write in Chinese, I resume my old identity’ (Shen, 1989: 465). Shen describes how he was able to devise strategies in the form of creative visualising “games” which enabled him to move between one identity and the other, and the potentially liberating effect of this.

Confusion, conflict and anxiety about writer identity in new academic contexts are highlighted by some researchers working in a variety of teaching and learning contexts. For example, Cadman (1997) discusses some of the issues faced by international postgraduate students. Cadman’s article examines the way in which student writers in a discipline-specific bridging course perceive their writing experience. She concludes that not only can different cultural and educational backgrounds make it difficult for second language students to represent themselves in text, the whole question of identity has wider ramifications for the approaches and attitudes these student writers have towards their work.

Hirvela and Belcher report on case studies they conducted with three mature graduate students, all successful writers in their first languages. They make the obvious, but sometimes overlooked, point that multilingual students do not come to their English classrooms ‘devoid of a writerly identity’ (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001: 84). They then go on to suggest, however, that these existing identities may be ignored by teachers (see also Ivanič, 1998: 344) resulting in the loss of valuable teaching and learning opportunities. Tan Yew and Farrell (n.d.), researching Hong Kong students in Australian universities, similarly define the ‘root problem’ for many second language writers as being a question of identity. They also claim that

student writers have to acquire the right kind of “persona” if they are to succeed as academic writers.

Hawkins (2005) observes that developing an appropriate writer identity is important, but adds that individuals might resist taking up a particular position. This issue of resistance is an interesting one that is noted by Zamel and Spack (2004: x) and discussed by other researchers such as Ivanič (1998) and Currie (2001). Banjeni and Kapp, drawing on the work of other researchers in the field of second language academic writing note that ‘individuals also have some agency in their choices of which positions to take up within discourses and in resisting the constraints imposed by discourses’ (Banjeni & Kapp, 2005: 4). This is a point frequently made by Ivanič. Canagarajah’s (2001) article introduces another dimension to the notions of resistance and agency. He describes how one student, “Vijj”, challenged the conventions of her university in Sri Lanka and successfully refused to compromise her strong religious beliefs and conform to academic expectations.

A focus on the discorsal construction of identity

Ivanič’s work with first language writers (Ivanič & Simpson, 1992; Ivanič, 1995; Ivanič, 1998) and second language writers (Ivanič & Camps, 2001) both extends and focuses the issues in writing and identity that have been discussed so far. By paying close attention to the linguistic features in the texts produced by student writers, she looks at how identity can be constructed through discourse. In her most comprehensive work, *Writing and identity: The discorsal construction of identity in academic writing* (1998), she examines the relationship between academic writing and discorsal representations of ‘self’ for eight mature native speakers of English who were taking up academic study for the first time, and facing a particular set of challenges. The challenges for these students included dealing with a sense of

alienation, and acknowledging and accommodating the impact of their own ‘values, beliefs and literacy practices’ on their academic writing (Ivanič, 1998: 5). Ivanič discusses how the ‘autobiographical’ self can influence the ‘discoursal’ and ‘authorial’ selves a student constructs in his or her writing. She looks at how people can feel pressured to conform to certain (sometimes privileged) discoursal practices – such as writing a particular kind of academic essay – and how this in turn might require them to adopt an identity with which they might not feel comfortable. This discomfort is precisely the sentiment Ellie was articulating through her difficulties in adjusting her writing to course expectations. (See page 3 of this dissertation.)

At the centre of Ivanič’s book is a detailed discussion of one particular case study. Using material from interviews and less formal conversations, she first outlines biographical information which is relevant to the student’s identity as an academic writer. Using Halliday’s (1994) functional grammar which posits that ‘language is integrally bound up with meaning, and all linguistic choices can be linked to the meaning they convey’ (Ivanič, 1998: 39) she then analyses some of the most interesting discoursal features – including lexical choice, verb tense and aspect, clause and sentence structure, attribution, and punctuation – of one of this student’s essays. Drawing on her analysis, she explores how this writer is positioned in particular ways through the choices she makes, and how she embraces or resists these positionings.

Some of Ivanič’s observations could perhaps be open to different interpretations. For example it is possible the student’s non-standard punctuation (see pages 147-148) reflects a lapse of proof reading, and is less ‘communicatively significant’ than Ivanič suggests. However, her argument is cogent and her linguistic analysis adds depth and weight to the study which is not always present in other investigations into second language academic writing. These may draw on insights

from interviews with students and make commentaries on their writing, but go no further than that. Furthermore, Ivanič often supports her interpretation of this linguistic analysis with evidence from text-based interviews with the student, noting that while student writers' texts can be interesting and revealing in themselves, 'we would do well to listen to what they have to say about their experiences and about the demands and the dilemmas they face' (Ivanič, 1998: 115). She also includes comments from the student's tutor.

Although Ivanič's study was conducted with students who were native speakers of English, the research discussed in this literature review shows that 'multiple and conflicting identity in writing' (Ivanič, 1998: 6) may also be experienced by second language students who might have problems negotiating an acceptable academic self or selves, particularly considering the ways in which certain kinds of institutional power and status can be dominant in a given context. In their work with second language student writers, Ivanič and Camps argue that a writer's identity is constructed by 'lexical, syntactic, organizational and even the material aspects of writing' (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 3). By making particular choices, they claim, again drawing on Halliday, a writer positions him or herself in three different ways; in terms of ideas and world view, in terms of self concept and the relationship with the reader, and in terms of the position he or she takes in relation to the text. Although this research is structured differently from the 1998 study, the message is the same; 'writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer' (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 3).

Atkinson acknowledges the value of Ivanič and Camp's study for its 'sustained empirical analysis of student texts' (Atkinson, 2001: 116). However, he questions whether Halliday's three categories of positioning (ideational, interpersonal and textual) as adopted by these authors are as clear cut as they would

suggest. A further criticism of the study is made by both Atkinson (2001) and Stapleton (2002) who argue that, although the text analysis adds a measure of triangulation thus giving weight to the research, Ivanič and Camps make some tenuous links between the linguistic features they highlight and the significance they ascribe to these in terms of what these features say about the discursive construction of identity.

Identity in the second language writing classroom

These reservations aside, a recurrent theme which emerges from the research I have discussed above is that issues of writing and identity should receive more explicit attention in the second language writing classroom. Ivanič and Camps (2001:31) argue unequivocally that the issues of writing and identity are ‘so fundamental to writing that failure to address them from the outset can only hinder learning’ (see also Ivanič, 1998: 338). Hyland uses the terms *stance* – the overt presence of the writer in a text, and *engagement* – how the writer creates a relationship with the reader to talk about the connections between the reader, the text and the writer. His view is that ‘interpersonal features found in stance and engagement are integral to all successful writing and should be taught to even novice writers in undergraduate classes’ (see Johns, Bawarshi, Coe, Hyland, Paltridge, Reiff & Tardy, 2006: 237). He does not agree that the basic rules of grammar have to be mastered first.

The need for a deliberate focus on questions of identity in the teaching of second language writing is not a totally uncontested view, however. Stapleton is an outspoken critic of the attention paid to a particular aspect of identity which he defines as ‘voice’ – a term he uses to mean ‘authorial presence and authorial identity’ (Stapleton, 2002). He posits that this attention is unwarranted with regard to

second language student writers, making the unequivocal assertion that ‘the case for voice in second language pedagogy has been overstated’ (Stapleton, 2002: 177). He bases his conclusions on what he sees as outdated and essentialised views of different rhetorical conventions, over-generalised and insubstantial connections between writers’ personal issues and their texts, and research which does not provide enough contrastive examples or which tends too much towards the anecdotal. For example, as does Atkinson (2001), he expresses concerns about the legitimacy of some of the claims raised in Hirvela and Belcher’s (2001) article, expressing, in particular, a disquiet that ‘the problems of one mechanical engineering student with a bruised ego are being tied to notions of voice in writing’ (Stapleton, 2002: 182).

Stapleton’s main contention is that teachers should focus their attention on the prime concerns of ideas and the construction of logical argument. In a later article his co-author and he similarly raise the possibility ‘that in introductory academic courses, L2 learners benefit more from presenting valid, well-supported ideas in comprehensible prose than by focusing on developing a voice in order to “package” ideas strategically’ (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003: 246).

Although aspects of Stapleton’s criticisms might be reasonable and although his 2002 analysis of various studies does serve as a cautionary reminder about the subjectivity of qualitative research, he presents his arguments in explicitly binary terms. These “either / or” polarisations, which seem to miss the point that the relationship between the content and the voice that communicates it is complex and subtle, tend to run through Stapleton’s research and undermine his arguments. For example, he frames the discussion in terms of ‘voice’ on the one hand and ‘ideas and argumentation’ (Stapleton, 2002: 177) on the other when in reality they cannot be separated out so neatly. Secondly, Stapleton seems to suggest that the kind of

ethnographic, autobiographical studies which explore the problems faced by second language learners are underpinned by the 'notion that L1 writers have a firm grasp on the authorial voice and textual positioning as well as other conventions of academic writing' (Stapleton, 2002: 181). This seems to me to be something of a sweeping generalisation.

Continuing the debate

A number of the articles discussed in this Literature Review were published in a special issue of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* (2001) which the editors devoted to the subject of voice – an aspect of identity which in itself is an extraordinarily complex topic with a variety of nuanced meanings. Since that publication, it was noted that interest in questions of voice, self-representation and identity in the field of second language academic writing was expected to continue. (See for example, Casanave 2003: 93; Silva & Brice, 2004: 75). It might have been a reasonable expectation, then, that a robust discussion would have followed. The embryonic debate between Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) and Stapleton and Helms-Park (2008) and Matsuda and Tardy (2007, 2008) seemed to promise further discussion yet, in hindsight, it seems that the two sets of authors were often talking at cross purposes and, because of the difficulties in defining such a nebulous area of inquiry, had not established a common understanding of the terms of reference that lie at the heart of their research. It is worthy of note that, contrary to Stapleton's puzzling assertion (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007: 237) that 'the issue of voice and its associated discursive features' were being vigorously debated (Stapleton, 2002: 178), a full scale debate has not eventuated. Rather, as Matsuda and Tardy (2007: 237) put it, there has been a 'dearth of discussion on this topic in the L2 writing literature.'

Summary of main themes from Literature review

From this review of the literature, there were several key themes that informed the focus of the current study. The first is that there is an inherent difference between first and second language academic writing in terms of both the process and the product. The second is that learning to write across the curriculum in academic contexts can require people to take on new discursive identities with which they may feel uncomfortable. This can apply to a variety of students but may be especially applicable to second language writers. Third, there is no such thing as neutral writing, thus all writers give some impression, or impressions, of themselves in their texts through the linguistic choices they make. As writing essays in university contexts is usually a high-stakes activity, the literature suggests that both first and second language student writers and their teachers could benefit from some consciousness-raising activities around the issue of identity and writing.

Rationale for the research

As noted at the start of this chapter, the research I have discussed here was intended, at least to some extent, to make a difference to the experiences of both students and teachers. While there has been a considerable amount of significant and valuable work carried out in the field of second language academic writing, there is room for further in-depth investigations in a variety of different content areas and contexts around the world in which we hear – from the writers themselves – narratives of their *lived experiences* (See for example, Spack, 1997, 2004: 32; Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999: 493, 494; Leki, 2001: 18; Polio, 2003: 48; Matsuda, 2003b: 28; Smoke, 2004: 63; Casanave, 2005: 29). One aspect of such research which is relatively new (Hyland, 2005), and which, according to the majority of commentators, merits further investigation in a number of different

directions (Casanave 2003) is the relationship between writing and identity. In particular, there is a place for research with a multi-perspective approach which also includes careful linguistic analysis and commentary from the students themselves on aspects of their texts and why they wrote them the way they did. Such studies would further our understanding of the complex notion of writer identity.

The research questions

A tendency of narrative research – the nature of which will be examined more fully in the next chapter – is that it is fluid and constantly evolving, thus the research questions are likely to grow and change (Casanave, 2005: 22). This was certainly my experience as this study progressed. Keeping in mind Ivanič's concept of the four interrelated aspects of identity outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, I eventually framed the research questions in the following way:

- 1) What experiences, attitudes, self-concepts and expectations might second language students bring to their academic writing?
- 2) How might those experiences, attitudes, self-concepts and expectations affect the orientation to the academic writing process?
- 3) How do the discursal features of a specific text convey various impressions of the writer?
- 4) In what ways does a student's text meet, or not meet the expectations of a particular institutional context?

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research is a social practice, never free of values, investment, and ideology.

(Angélic-Carter, 1997: 263)

In this chapter, I describe how I carried out this study. I begin by giving some background to the context in which the research took place. I then introduce the participants and discuss how I recruited them. I outline my orientation to the research process, and the rationale for the methods and approaches I adopted. I also discuss how I collected and analysed the data and highlight some issues in writing up the participants' narratives.

The context and the participants

I undertook the research for this study at Victoria University of Wellington over the period February to August, 2007. Originally I had intended that it would involve several participants enrolled in WRIT 151, a credit-bearing writing class designed specifically for second language students. (For a general description of the way this course was organised at the time of this study see Cotterall, 2009.) However, my various approaches to several tutorial groups were not particularly fruitful. First, only a small number of students were interested in taking part in the research; and second, those that showed initial interest chose not to keep our interview appointments, probably for pragmatic considerations of time and availability.

I eventually recruited four participants through my work as a learning advisor at the University's Student Learning Support Service. Ethical approval had been sought and granted, and each of the participants was informed of the nature of the study and had signed a consent form which allowed me to use material from interviews and from any written work they gave me.

These students, to whom I have given the pseudonyms Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet, were studying in a variety of humanities and commerce papers at first year level. Because this research involved second language writing across the curriculum, when I refer to teachers I include content teachers (lecturers and tutors), language tutors and learning advisors, as well as teachers of academic writing.

A specific area for concern that arose during the interview period due to the nature of my job as a learning advisor is reflected in Connelly and Clandinin's observation that the 'major issue confronting narrative researchers ... is their relationship with the participants' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999: 134). This was a definite consideration in the present study. For example, while the students and I were engaged in the interviews, I was mindful that my dual role as learning advisor and researcher could possibly be seen as problematic for some students. To neutralise this, I made sure the students were aware that any involvement in or withdrawal from my study would not affect their access to learning support in either a positive or a negative way. I also made sure that they were aware of the different natures of our sessions together. I was careful to articulate at the start of each session whether it was an interview for my research purposes, or whether it was an advisory session. I taped only the interviews, and requested permission for each new interview. Whenever possible, I held the interviews in a location other than my

office, but this was not always practical. I also encouraged the students to see other learning advisors, which both Isaac and Serena did.

The table below outlines some basic demographic data about the four student participants. This data is amplified in Chapter 4.

Characteristics of student participants

Characteristics	Serena	Isaac	Maya	Juliet
<i>Country of origin</i>	Korea	China	Chile	Italy
<i>First language</i>	Korean	Manadarin	Spanish	Italian
<i>Other languages</i>	English	English	English	Spanish English
<i>Length of time learning English</i>	at middle school, grammar exercises	8 years (at school In China)	3 years, compulsory academic subject in Chile	Basic communication skills through travel. No formal study
<i>Length of time in NZ</i>	3 years	4 months	3 years	7 months
<i>Previous tertiary study before VUW</i>	Degree in Fine Arts(Korea, 1984) Private Language Institute, Community Centre (Wgtn) EPP ² (VUW)	Twinning Student: Yr1 Accounting Stats Marketing Management Economics Info Systems	3 years of Political Science and Linguistics in Chile. Degree not completed EPP (VUW)	Architecture. (24 yrs ago) Degree not Completed. EPP (VUW)
<i>Intended course of study at VUW</i>	Art History Classics	Accounting Commercial Law	Psychology Stats Anthropology	Anthropology Social Policy
<i>Age</i>	43	22	28	44

² EPP is the English Proficiency Programme offered by the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University. It is a 12 week English Academic Preparation course for second language students at an intermediate level (4.0 IELTS) or above.

Orientation to the research process

In keeping with the nature of qualitative research, the methodological framework for this dissertation was drawn from my reading in a range of interrelated disciplines including Applied Linguistics (Nunan, 1992; Canagarajah, 1996; Richards, 2003; Matsuda & Silva, 2005); Education (Stake, 1995; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); Social Sciences and Social Psychology (Kvale, 1989, 1992, 1996; Burr, 1995; Travers, 2001; and general Qualitative Research Methodologies (Chase, 2005).

Several key points which are encapsulated in the opening quotation to this chapter emerged from the literature review and became integral to my orientation towards the project as a whole. First, researchers working in the kind of qualitative, interpretivist tradition that I use here do not take a neutral stance within the research process but, rather, bring to it their own histories, their views of knowledge construction, and their biases. Added to this, their ‘tacit knowledge, their knowledge about their field and their project’ (Angélil-Carter, 1997: 26) can be a positive feature of the research. Third, the position a researcher adopts in relation to philosophical and epistemological debates also ‘becomes a dimension of methodology’ (Salner, 1989: 64). Finally, the researcher must retain transparency and reflexivity as necessary ingredients of good interpretative research, and research practices need to be evolutionary (Atkinson, 2005: 49).

The research methods

Not surprisingly, the case study was an appropriate vehicle for the type of qualitative research I wished to carry out. There were several reasons for this. First, the case study allows for a mixture of methods (Ortega & Iberri-Shea, 2005: 25)

depending on the focus and nature of the research questions, thus creating the possibility for in-depth, ‘rich’ investigations. It also allows for the possibility of a closer relationship between the researcher and the participants than do more objective methods (Casanave, 2002: 31) which seems important in the context of having a meaningful discussion of issues such as identity. Third, case study research can have practical implications for learning and teaching (Nunan, 1992).

Ivanič’s (1998: 125-180) case study of writing and identity served as a starting point and as a model for my own study. It uses ‘a number of complementary methodological approaches’ (Ivanič, 1998: 168) to investigate the ways in which individuals can construct and be constructed by their writing.

The research approaches

Human experience is basically storied experience...humans live out stories and are story-telling organisms’

(Connelly and Clandinin, 1999: 132)

In creating the text, the portraitist is alert to the aesthetic principles of composition and form, rhythm, sequence and metaphor.

(Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997b: 12)

Through background reading for this dissertation, I became interested in two kinds of research approach which draw on metaphors from the worlds of literature and art respectively. The first, narrative inquiry recognises that human beings make sense of their experiences over time through the medium of story-telling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999: 132; Bell, 2002: 207). In narrative inquiry participants tell their stories to the researcher who then constructs those stories as a research text. Narrative inquiry is a useful approach for understanding the experiences of people from differing cultural backgrounds (Bell, 2002: 207); for

avoiding essentialising and stereotyping second language writers (Casanave, 2005: 29); and for allowing people who may be from marginalised groups to take part in the knowledge-making process (Canagarajah, 1996: 327). Such an approach has been used in social science research in general and seemed to me to be a respectful way of understanding the experiences of the participants in my study. Because it focuses on more than just processes and outcomes, it allowed me to capture, in an holistic way, some of the challenges and complexities of becoming a writer in a second language.

The second approach which informs this study, particularly in terms of the way I chose to write it, draws on metaphors from the world of visual arts. I discovered this way of viewing research part way through the period March to August 2007 when I was interviewing the four participants. Casanave's (2002:33) observation that the term 'case study' seems 'clinical and ... impersonal' seemed to fit with my own impressions of the interactions between myself and the student participants, the relationships that were evolving, and the way I was writing up early drafts of the interviews. At the same time I was struck by the following words in a work of fiction I was reading: 'I could not make a whole round life. I lacked the stillness and the breadth; I lacked the measure' (Gee, 1983: 199). Although, of course, I was not trying to write an entire biography as was Maurice Gee's character in *Sole Survivor*, something of Ray Sole's feeling of inadequacy resonated with my own writing.

As I transcribed the interview notes, drafted and rewrote the experiences and perceptions of the participants, and then re read the narratives, I realised how thin the information was when viewed as written text, in comparison to the reality of our discussions. To illustrate: although I was able to signal the hesitations, the emphases, the laughter and the sighs in Serena's transcripts, for example, this alone

did not capture the complexity and nuance of her answers. The look on her face as she searched for a word or a phrase, the shake of her head when she stated emphatically that she would not feel confident in taking up her tutor's offer to talk with him about her struggles in writing English, or the way she used her hands to make the shape of an essay that she was having difficulty structuring; all these imbricated images created a more richly textured picture than I was conveying in my early drafts.

Through Casanave's (2002) work I was introduced to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) concept of "portraiture" which is described as a 'method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics and subtlety of human experience and organizational life' (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997a: xv). Although, like Casanave (2002: 34), I had not set out from the start with the techniques of portraiture in mind, it seemed that it was still early enough for me to make the requisite detailed notes and observations and to blend 'literary and esthetic [sic] dimensions' (Casanave, 2002: 34) with the other data. The overlay of this approach was intended to add texture, depth and individuality to my study.

Collecting the data

I collected the data for this study from several different sources, including semi-structured interviews, notes from informal conversations, extracts from student writing and discussion about those texts. In the case of Serena, I obtained one complete Art History essay.

In March 2007 I conducted an initial interview with each of the four participants; Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet. These interviews were designed to gather background information about the students' experiences and their

perceptions of themselves as academic writers in both their first and second languages. I discussed aspects of their writing with them in subsequent interviews paying attention, where possible, to the actual texts they were creating. These text-based interviews and, in some cases, my linguistic analysis of the students' writing enabled me to elicit information on how those experiences and perceptions affected the orientation to and the outcomes of the writing process. It also allowed me to explore how the discoursal features of a specific text might convey various impressions of the writer. In the case of Serena I was also able to discuss the completed Art History essay with her after it had been marked, which added an extra dimension to the study; namely her perceptions of what she was doing, not just my interpretations of this. There was, however, only one opportunity to have such a conversation with her and, as I will show later, further opportunities of this kind would have made for a much more meaningful text analysis.

Data analysis

After conducting the interviews with each of the participants I transcribed them, adding my own notes and observations. I then went through these transcriptions looking for recurring key words, phrases or concepts as a way of structuring the material and presenting the experiences of the participants. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997c: 185) notes that the 'development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist's first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data.' While I looked for common themes that seemed to be emerging from the interview texts it was also important, in the spirit of narrative inquiry, to listen for the individual voices '*within* narratives' (Chase, year: 663). I then wrote the narratives, constructing the 'lived stories' of each participant.

In these narratives, which appear in Chapters 4 and 5, I use the following transcription symbols:

<i>Italics</i>	comments made by the students. (I do not use speech marks as I find them disruptive to the flow of the text as a whole.)
---	pause
(...)	student's words omitted if not necessary to that part of the interview
Bold	point emphasised by student
(? Unclear)	difficult to hear or understand word or phrase

Following Ivanič's (1988: 121) transcription format, I use conventional punctuation if it clarifies the meaning of the text. For information from course documents or teacher feedback I use **Arial font**, and for written excerpts from student essays I use *italicised Arial font*. I sometimes underline a specific word or phrase if I want the reader to take particular note of it. Throughout the dissertation, I weave Serena's story and her written words, and the experiences and written texts of other student writers into my own text. My aim here is to create a more or less seamless narrative of the discoursal construction of identity in second language writing, intending, in the spirit of 'narrative strategy', to both 'connect and separate' (Chase, 2005: 664) my voice and that of the narrators.

This project was designed not only to explore the 'text related experiences' (Casanave, 2005: 21) of the participants as evidenced by what they *said* about becoming second language academic writers, but was also intended to pay attention to the actual linguistic details in the texts they were producing. Serena's essay

provided a good platform from which to create a discussion of the construction of identity in second language academic writing.

Through background reading for this study, I became interested in the way researchers such as Ivanič (1998), Ivanič and Camps (2001), Starfield (2002) and Forman (2004) based their analyses of academic writing (both first and second language) on Halliday's (1994) framework. It seemed to me that a Hallidayan approach could provide a useful way of systematically analysing Serena's essay. I liked the accessibility of Halliday's notion of the three metafunctions of language: *the ideational* (related to content, ideas, experience), *the interpersonal* (related to the social relationships between speaker/listener, writer/reader) and *the textual* (related to the organization of text to create cohesion and coherence). In any text, he suggests, these metafunctions are realised at clause level through features such as lexis, verb choice, modality, linking devices and pronoun choice (see Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 11). Furthermore, they relate to the text as a whole (Derewianka, 2001: 258) and also to the 'larger social context' in which the text belongs (Starfield, 2002: 124; see also Derewianka, 2001: 258).

Writing the narratives

A message of significance for the audience

(Casanave, 2005: 22)

Who writes? Who takes up the position of power, pen in hand?

(J.M. Coetzee)³

In writing the narratives I needed to achieve two things; connection and accurate representation. The first, connection, relates to turning the material into something that would have significance for readers other than myself and the

³ See Morphet, T. (1984). An interview with J.M. Coetzee. *Social Dynamics*, 10 (1), 62-65.

participants. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999: 134) explain, ‘the main point about transition from field text to research text is that the research text is written for an audience of other researchers and practitioners and must be written in such a way as to go beyond the particulars of experience captured in field texts.’ The way I did this was to link the stories of the four participants with the experiences of other student writers as discussed in the literature and with those of student writers with whom I have worked over the years. I also drew on insights and observations made by other teachers and learning advisory staff.

The second thing I needed to achieve was an accurate portrayal of the people I was writing about. As Casanave (2005: 21) explains, in writing up research with a narrative inquiry focus, ‘at least two levels of story are involved. At one level, participants tell and retell stories over time to researchers; at another level, researchers construct a story of the participants’ stories for the final research text.’ It was during this construction of the four participants’ narratives that I found myself returning to Coetzee’s elegant quotation which embodies a sentiment frequently echoed by the scholars whose work I have used to inform this dissertation. For example, Casanave (2005: 29) expresses it thus; ‘It is we who choose who to describe, how to portray the details of their characters and activities, what themes to highlight within our narrative plots, and how to interpret and ascribe significance to what we learn.’ To put it simply, I had to think carefully about my responsibilities for the way in which I represented the participants, and maybe particularly so in the case of Serena, the student with whom I was most closely involved over this period.

Chapter Four

BECOMING ACADEMIC WRITERS IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

Stories of the stories of others

(Casanave, 2002: 33)

This chapter is largely descriptive and tells the stories of Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet and their experiences of becoming academic writers in a second language. Using data from interviews, notes from less formal conversations and, in some cases, observations about actual pieces of academic writing, I explore the attitudes and self-beliefs these four people communicated about themselves as second language learners in general, and as writers in their first and second languages. Along with this, and more specifically, I discuss how they took on new or recent identities as writers of second language academic texts, the aspects of academic writing they felt they could do well, and those they struggled with, especially those that meant they had to think about their writing in different ways. In focusing on the participants' autobiographical selves, then, I am paying attention to what Ivanič (1995: 13) calls 'perhaps the most intuitively obvious meaning of writer identity'. (See also Ivanič, 1998: 29). Using the narrative conventions explained on pages 28 and 29 of this dissertation, I begin by outlining briefly the demographic characteristics of the participants, fleshing out the table on page 23 and describing the personalities of Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet in a little more detail as I came to know them. Next, I present the common themes that emerged from our interviews

and conversations, and a discussion of what these may mean in terms of writer identity. I have categorised these themes as:

- First language writers
- Second language students: A question of legitimacy
- Second language writers: Early self impressions
- People with something to say
- The self as author
- Some specific challenges
- The relationship with the reader

I end the chapter with a short summary of where Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet's journeys have taken them as I write up this dissertation.

Serena

I wrote my ideas with confidence but unfortunately the reader doesn't understand because I couldn't write good English

Serena was the participant I came to know the best and for that reason features rather more prominently in the narratives in this dissertation. She was a 43 year old Korean woman studying in the field of Art History. She had already completed a degree in Fine Arts and Art History in her home country where she subsequently attended a private English teaching institute, *but just for speaking*. When she moved to New Zealand in 2003 with her family, she attended a community-based Language school but said it was *not enough for me, I want to learn more, I want more academic English, write essays not just speak*. To prepare herself for academic study in New Zealand, *because my English is not enough to go straight to university*, she took the 12

week English Proficiency Programme (EPP) at Victoria University before starting her undergraduate studies in the second trimester of 2006. She enrolled in first year papers in Art History and Classics, and in an English as a Second Language (ESL) writing course (WRIT 151). In that trimester she passed all three papers with B grades, but decided not to continue with Classics which she found difficult. I first met her in March 2007 in my capacity as a learning advisor when she came to the Student Learning Support Service to attend a writing workshop.

The picture that I constructed of Serena was of a hardworking and deliberate person who took care to plan out her course of study. She was prepared to put in the background work to acquire the skills she needed (by studying at the language school, taking the EPP and WRIT 151) and to defer a course (Classics) until she felt more ready for it. She was reflective about her learning needs and could talk about her development as a writer, but she often found it hard to explain things exactly as she wished. She articulated this frustration overtly both by her words, *I can't explain, how can I explain, not exactly how I explained it*, and by her body language – a movement of the hands, a particular way she had of shaking her head. She sought help from learning advisors at the Student Learning Support Service but, because of her concerns about her spoken English, was rather more diffident about going to see a course tutor even though he had made a clear written offer for her to do so.

Throughout our interviews and conversations, Serena assessed herself quite harshly. She used words such as *disappointment, regret, and shame* to express her feelings about her academic writing. She also described herself as *lazy, confused* and *not brave*, which is anything but an accurate representation of her.

At the time of our first meeting she lived in Wellington with her Korean husband and two teenage sons. The family spoke mainly Korean at home.

Isaac

Writing is important for my western life

Isaac was a 22 year old student from China whose first language was Mandarin. He learned English for 8 years, *but* he told me, *in China we just learn vocabulary and grammar, we don't talk much, don't write much.* Isaac came to New Zealand to gain an academic qualification and to improve his English. He was a twinning student, which meant that he would complete the first and last years of his degree in his home country and would study for the two intervening years at Victoria University. He was studying for a double major in Accounting and Commercial Law. At the time of our first meeting Isaac was living with Chinese speaking Malaysian students who, in his view, *have very good English and don't need to practise.* This meant that everyone in the flat tended to speak Chinese and he felt he was not getting sufficient opportunity to improve his spoken language. Although he had recently met some Thai friends with whom he could speak English, he wanted to meet more *Kiwi* [New Zealand] *students* in a social capacity.

Of all the participants, Isaac articulated most overtly a feeling of having a dual cultural identity (Chinese/western). He also framed the stumbling blocks to his writing as an issue of culture not simply of language. In this way, he reminded me most of Shen, the student whose article I referred to in the Literature Review. Isaac spoke about *dreaming in two languages* and mentioned explicitly that he had a *western life* as seen in the opening quotation to this section. Perhaps because he was closer in time to his first language academic writing experiences having come straight from university in China, he was also quick to articulate the differences between writing *the Chinese way*, and writing *here*. He had a good sense of humour, was a confident

and relaxed interviewee, and his self-deprecating, although sometimes ironic, wit meant that our interviews were punctuated with a lot of laughter.

Maya

I guess I will evolve

I made contact with Maya, a 28 year old Chilean woman, through a colleague who taught on the EPP. Maya had learned some English, *a bit of grammar, vocabulary, phonetics*, as a compulsory part of her university studies in Chile. Apart from that, all her academic study until coming to New Zealand had been in Spanish. She had completed three years of a five year degree in political science and linguistics, but was adamant that she would take it no further. When I first met Maya she had been in New Zealand for three years, working as a waitress and as a teacher aide for special needs children. She had acquired communicative language proficiency in New Zealand through this employment, and upon finishing the EPP was about to embark on an undergraduate degree in Psychology, Statistics, and Anthropology. Maya seemed to be quite anxious about her life as a university student, commenting; *I am not very confident. I am always anxious about what I am doing.* I eventually lost touch with her, except for one meeting in the middle of 2008.

Juliet

I have a clear idea of what I want to put on paper. I can write and write

Juliet was a very confident and outgoing 44 year old Italian woman. She had moved to New Zealand with her husband who was in the diplomatic service, and

their 12 year old son. She had been in Wellington for several months when we first met and, like Maya, became a research participant through the EPP. Juliet had been a student *over twenty four years ago*, in Italy but had not completed her Architecture course. She had never studied English in a formal context but had learned it *just going around the world*. She enjoyed immersing herself in the culture and literature of whichever country she happened to be living at the time and conveyed a love for reading in English. When I asked her what she read since she had moved here she replied, adamantly, ***everything***. She was particularly enthusiastic about the novels of New Zealand writer, Patricia Grace, saying, *I look for all her books now*. Her plan was to study Social Policy and Anthropology with a view to completing a degree in Criminology.

The Findings

Through the iterative processes of listening to, transcribing, reading and re-reading the interview data, reflecting on the comments the students made and looking for commonalities within and differences between their experiences, I eventually drew out some key themes (see page 33) which I discuss next in the body of this chapter.

First language writers

Neither Maya nor Juliet spoke much about their impressions of themselves as academic writers in their first languages. Maya seemed reluctant to talk about it, cutting off discussion about why she had not completed her degree. Juliet had not studied in higher education for over 20 years, but said that she had been a very good writer in her first language at school. Both Serena and Isaac were quick to convey positive impressions of themselves as writers in their first languages. Serena had

already established herself as a successful academic writer through the completion of her degree; she liked writing in Korean, and also continued to write recreationally, *creative writing, short story, I like writing --- very comfortable*. Isaac portrayed a strong identity as an academic writer in Chinese. At our first interview he stated, *I am a good writer in my first language (...) I think I have some intelligence in Chinese writing*. In a subsequent meeting, I asked him again if he thought he was a good writer in Chinese, and he replied with considerable self-assurance, *yeah, very good*.

Not surprisingly, none of the participants, except Juliet to some extent, expressed the same kind of confidence about themselves as users of their second language in general and, more specifically, about themselves as writers of academic English. As the research repeatedly shows, learning to write in new ways and thus taking on identities as academic writers can be challenging enough for native speakers, but as Raimes (1979: 259) succinctly observes, second language writers 'have all the worries of the native speaker and many more besides.'

Second language students: A question of legitimacy

He doesn't speak the language, he holds no currency

(Paul Simon)⁴

A useful way of thinking about the 'worries' that the students articulated during our interviews and conversations is to see them in terms of Bourdieu's argument that, put simply, language is more than a means of communication, it also carries representations of power and legitimacy to which some people have greater

⁴ Simon, P. (1986). You can call me Al. On *Graceland* [CD]. New York: Warner Music.

access than others. This notion is encapsulated thus; ‘all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices’ which may be ‘defined as the practices of those who are dominant’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 53). This way of thinking about language underpins the research of scholars such as Bonny Norton and Shelley Angéllil-Carter who see the struggles of the people they have worked with – immigrant women in Canada (Norton: 2000), a Zulu speaking student in South Africa (Angéllil-Carter, 1997) – fundamentally as issues of acquiring legitimacy.

At our first meeting Isaac commented that people could not see an important aspect of himself, his humorous self, when he was interacting in his second language. I was reminded here of the answer Australian writer and journalist Robert Dessaix gave when he was asked in a radio interview why he did not live in France, a country he loves. He replied that, although he was fluent in the language and, superficially, would fit in with French communities, he would always be an outsider. He preferred, finally, to live in an English speaking country because, in his words, English is ‘the language I have permission to play with and be naughty in’ (Kim Hill with Robert Dessaix, Radio NZ, 9 July, 2005) Similarly, Isaac explained that speaking to his friends in English limited the way in which he could express his personality, *I can’t give my idea clearly --- maybe if I speak Chinese I can --- you know show my humour*. I found this idea of permission – which I see as relating to the concept of legitimacy discussed above – pertinent to the participants in this study, as well as to many of the students with whom I work.

In the course of our interviews, and informal conversations, I became interested in Isaac’s belief that his lack of progress – in his mind as evidenced by his grades – was not entirely of his own making and that, in some sense, his identity as a second language student meant that he was treated unfairly. He told me that he was *not a good student* but I got the impression that there was more to this self-criticism

than was apparent on the surface. The content of comments such as, *if you are not a Kivi student and your English is not very good you learn a lower standard*, and *although I have some accounting knowledge I don't think I have any strong advantage compare with Kivi --- with local students* were in themselves revealing. Chase (2005: 656) observes that 'many contemporary narrative researchers embrace the idea that how individuals narrate experience is as important to the meanings they communicate as is what they say'. Picking up on this point, Isaac's sense of frustration was further signalled by changes in intonation and volume, his fluency when he was impassioned by something, and his body language, particularly his way of emphasising certain points.

Isaac further articulated a sense of unfair treatment in the following rather intriguing excerpt. He told me that in one of his courses, *if you are not a Kivi student* [the lecturer] *traps you like that*

Traps? Is that what you mean?

I mean that --- our lecturer wants you lose points --- lose marks on this point

They want you to lose points?

(Isaac laughs) --- *Yeab*

Are you saying they set a trap to catch you?

Yeab yeab

You think they do that?

I think so --- yeab

Whether or not there is any truth in Isaac's opinion that "non-Kiwi" students are deliberately caught out by this teacher, this is an unequivocal expression of a perception of powerlessness.

Serena expressed some strong negative feelings about herself as a speaker of English in one particular context. For example, she was very reluctant to approach

her tutor for help as indicated by the following comment; *if the tutor is not tutor, if they are one of my friends I would go but they are my tutor. I worry about mistake of conversation. I will try but (? unclear) maybe shame. As you know [she laughs] my conversation is --- shame over myself about conversation. I always feel if I make mistake I really feel upset by myself --- I won't go my tutor and ask them about something. I want to go but --- I think it is personality.* It is, I think, reasonable to see her self image here partly in terms of a person who does not feel she is yet a legitimate speaker of English. Eventually Serena did find a way of corresponding with this particular tutor that worked for her: *When I start the second essay I sent him email because email is more comfortable for me (...) he responds to me with lots of ideas.*

Maya, in talking about her early experiences of being on the EPP, made this comment: *I explained to [her EPP teacher] that I speak very good Spanish but when I speak English I sound like a five year old.* A glance at an interview, however, would tell a different story, as Maya's English conversation was anything but childlike. She had a well developed vocabulary and syntax and could talk in detail about, for example, the differences in writing in Spanish and in English. Her perception, however, was that the level of her mastery of English did not do her justice.

Of all four participants, Juliet was the one who conveyed the most confidence as a user of her second language. She had no trouble expressing her opinions either orally or in writing and she did not appear to question her legitimacy as a writer of academic English. Although she had not been in a tertiary context for a long time, she adapted quickly to the demands of the EPP

First two weeks I was completely lost after two weeks I think I had the best teacher, she gives me all the feedback which I need (...) she told me my writing was really really good and I was pleased because it was my first experience.

Juliet was happy to accept this positive feedback from her teacher, and move on.

Second language writers – early self-impressions

Serena, Isaac, and Maya were reasonably critical about their achievements in English proficiency, tending to highlight their perceived failings rather than their successes, as seems to be the case with many second language students I have encountered. Serena was disappointed that she had not made more progress saying, *I thought my writing improved after EPP but this trimester I disappoint with myself --- my writing not improved.* Isaac told me, *I have not mastered English too well.* Comments of this kind came readily from the participants but I also wanted to encourage them to talk about any positive attitudes they might have towards their second language academic writing.

When I asked Isaac what he thought was his strongest point in his writing, his initial response was an expression of incredulity. He sighed and said, *I can't find any strong points.* This rather rueful comment was followed by a laugh which made me think, however, that there was an element of false modesty in his statement. Added to this, he spoke rather more assuredly about his writing at other times, and could find some strong points to discuss. For example, when I asked him what he was confident about at present in his English writing he said, *the construction --- yeah I just feel confident --- introduction, conclusion, in the middle is the body, topic sentences and all that.*

Maya felt that her knowledge of academic vocabulary and her enjoyment of reading would stand her in good stead, and Juliet was quite definite about her strongest qualities; *I think can be the age. I am not very young. I am used to read a lot, I have quite enough background which helps me in writing.* Although Juliet commented on problems with sentence structure and vocabulary (see page 46) during the time that I continued to see her in my capacity as a learning advisor, she did not seem bothered by her continued grammar errors; she was never particularly interested in

improving the accuracy of her English, and often appeared impatient if I tried to explain the nature of the errors. She acknowledged them in a cheerful, rather off hand way saying, *most of the time I do the grammatical mistake but usually I know what I want to write so I don't have a lot of problem*. It seems, then, that she was comfortable enough with her identity as a second language student and that she had found her own kind of legitimacy.

Serena commented that her strongest point *is my ideas, I already know the subject*. The other participants also agreed that having ideas and being comfortable with the content of their courses was an area of strength.

People with something to say

In her study, Ivanič observed that mature student writers often seemed characterised by 'a sense of *inferiority*, [her italics] a lack of confidence in themselves, a sense of powerlessness, a view of themselves as people without knowledge, and hence without authority' (Ivanič, 1998: 88). As I have already shown, to some extent and at different times and for different reasons, Serena, Isaac and Maya conveyed elements of inferiority, and a lack of confidence and power brought about by their status of being second language speakers and writers. However, and this is the case for many second language writers with whom I have worked over the years, they did not identify themselves as people without knowledge. Serena's comment above about having ideas was echoed by all the other participants in this study. Maya said that she had *a lot of ideas* and that she found it difficult to limit herself to just three or four main ones; Juliet commented that she never found it hard to find ideas; *it seems I have a clear idea of what I want to put on paper. I can write and write*; and Isaac said, *I have my own idea, so that is the thing I love the most*.

However, for Serena and Isaac in particular, there was a significant gap between having ideas and conveying them in a way which was authentic for the writer and meaningful for the reader. Serena's comment; *I wrote my ideas with confidence but unfortunately the reader doesn't understand because I couldn't write good English*, and Isaac's comment; *I have my own idea but how can I show it in standard Kivi ways? This is a problem for me now* encapsulate a reality for many writers, but especially, perhaps, for writers of second language texts; that there will always be, to borrow from T.S. Eliot, a shadow between the idea and the reality, between the motion and the act.

The self as author

In a thought-provoking article, Starfield (2002) looks at how, in one particular context a successful student is one who can 'construct a powerful, authoritative textual and discursal identity'. The less successful student on the other hand 'struggles to negotiate an *authoritative self as author* and, relying heavily on the words of recognized authorities in the discipline, becomes a "plagiarizer"' (Starfield, 2002: 121). Paraphrasing Angélie-Carter (1997: 269) 'the extent to which [a writer feels that he or she] is authorised to write' will, at some level, be reflected in the way his or her own voice is "heard" in a text.

I can only really comment on this in any depth with regard to Juliet and Serena. I discuss Serena as author in some detail in the next chapter. For the purposes of the present chapter, however, I look at an aspect of one of Juliet's essays. Juliet did not appear to have much trouble finding her own voice in her writing, and at establishing herself as the author of her text. On one occasion we discussed an essay that she had written for Anthropology. The conventions of this discipline seem to allow for quite a subjective orientation compared to other disciplines such as Art History, Psychology, and Accounting (courses taken by the

other participants) and the students, according to Juliet, were encouraged to use expressions such as “I think” and “I believe”. Juliet was able to take advantage of this and convey her own opinions explicitly. Several linguistic features in her essay combine to give a strong sense of authorial voice. These include; first person pronouns which introduce strong assertions such as *I believe, What I have found, seems to me, I argue, I think, I personally believe*; questions asked directly to the reader, thus establishing an interpersonal relationship of equality, *What is family?, Furthermore, are women universally subordinate to men?, Why should a woman pay a price?*; and an abundance of categorical statements which read like definitive, authoritative truths. Here is just one short passage from Juliet’s essay in which the present tense state verbs (in this case forms of the verb “be”) and lack of hedging lend a tone of objectivity (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 18) to the text:

What arises is that the women have to provide a dowry before the marriage. Usually they have to provide the house. Yet the man’s authority, despite the fact they move into the wife’s house is not challenged at all. The man are supposed to sustain the family so employment for married women in Yerania is seen as not suitable. Women in this culture are still identified to domestic role.

One interesting non-discursive feature of this essay is that she wrote the thesis statement in bold type; ***I believe what arises is that inequality between men and women in the family cross-cultural is often found.*** When I asked Juliet about this she said she wanted her thesis statement to be obvious. All these features combine to construct a discursive identity that has a strong authorial voice, presents a definite claim, is confident of the content, and seems to share a common ground with the reader. The marker gave the essay an A- grade, a clear indication that it met expectations and more.

Some specific challenges

Writing acceptable academic English

To explore the initial challenges of learning to write acceptable academic English or, in Isaac's words, *in standard Kivi ways*, I asked Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet to tell me about the aspects of academic writing they found difficult. Not surprisingly they, variously, mentioned the obvious second language difficulties of developing proficiency in **grammar**, *I always have grammar mistakes and I think it is forever* (Serena); **syntax**, *Spanish is my first language and we tend to write really big sentences* (Maya) and, *the sentences here are different. You have a shorter sentence; you put a stop and then start again. For us – no. We can have a chapter* (Juliet); and the **acquisition of an academic vocabulary**, *I know a lot of words but to find this academic words in English is even more difficult I think* (Juliet).

Learning to structure a university essay in a new way, in a *standard Kivi way*, seemed to both challenge the participants but also to provide them with some feelings of success – a feeling that appeared to be more elusive in other aspects of academic writing – as they became more confident with a different rhetorical style. They had all had some background in generic, rather than content-based, academic writing either through the pre-university EPP course (Serena, Maya and Juliet) or in WRIT 151 (Serena and Isaac). This had provided them with some basic ideas of what might be expected in their subject courses. They were then able, with varying degrees of ease, to transfer this new knowledge to their essays. As noted above, Isaac found this an area in which he had some confidence, but he had had to learn it here; *before I came to New Zealand I have learned writing construction but I don't think it's enough*.

Serena had to master quite a steep learning curve when she embarked on the EPP course; *my way of writing was wrong* she told me. *When I was in Korea, I put my effort into my conclusion. Very long, about 500 words [of a 1,500 word essay]. In conclusion I write all my ideas and include new ones. This is what I did. My EPP teacher said not right way.* However, adapting to a new writing format was something which she negotiated relatively easily.

Areas of difficulty that seemed especially pertinent, however, for the discussion of writer identity in this dissertation relate to academic reading; in particular the ease with which the participants could comprehend the various readings, and how they used this source material and blended the words of other authors with their own texts, while also avoiding what is seen, institutionally, as the 'heinous crime' (Pecorari, 2003: 317) of plagiarism. I discuss these points next.

Academic reading for academic writing

Dealing with required reading and incorporating source material into their own texts can present significant challenges for many student writers and these challenges are often magnified for second language writers. Neither Maya nor Juliet commented much about the academic reading they were required to do except in passing, and usually in a positive way. This was probably because the reading burden was easier for them due to their first language backgrounds. For example, Maya said, *I've studied political science and I've read a lot and the words that I use are basically the same.* Isaac, on the other hand, noted that *the scariest thing is have to read a lot. I need to read ten thousand words to write one hundred words.* This slightly hyperbolic statement sums up a common experience for second language students in particular; that a great deal of input is needed to generate even small amounts of text. Serena found that the level of academic reading required for her courses was a significant

challenge; *I often have some trouble with the books.* This is a theme in Serena's story that I explore in more detail in the following chapter, as this *trouble with the books* had quite a visible impact on her essay.

Using the words of other writers

Not only do students have to read and understand the source material pertinent to their courses of study, they have to make decisions about its relevance and usefulness, select excerpts to support the arguments and claims they make in their essays, and present quotes or paraphrases in an acceptable format. Explaining the pressure of this, Isaac commented, *In the Chinese way (...) I just give my idea. Here I need to give examples to prove everything.*

Even just the mechanics of citing and referencing material can be, at best, frustrating for second language students who have to cope with a myriad of other cognitive demands. Juliet found the practice of in-text citation simply *distracting and annoying*, but had no trouble actually doing it. Serena and Isaac found it more of a problem. Although Serena always seemed to be a careful and precise person who paid attention to detail, her citations and references to works of art were sometimes inaccurate even though the correct way of doing this was modelled explicitly in course handouts.

When I asked Isaac if he was "okay" with the referencing requirements of his Accounting course he replied, **NO!** *No because I don't write such things in China. I know I should write a reference but I don't know how to do that.* While he had received specific instruction on this in WRIT 151, and although there is plenty of information available on the University website, in course handouts and at the Student Learning Support Service, he still felt that the mechanics of referencing were something at which he was not yet adept.

Generally speaking though, these mechanics can usually be mastered relatively easily. A far more complex challenge for students is learning the finer points of effective summarising and paraphrasing. This can be daunting enough for English-speaking students; it is a substantial demand for second language writers. The worry that is most frequently articulated in the processes of acquiring these skills is the need to avoid the “sin” of plagiarism at all costs.

When students and their teachers talk about plagiarism they are often referring to its most obvious manifestations; the overt copying of other people’s work, inadequate paraphrasing and/or problems with the methods and accuracy of attribution. Students generally, even those whose socio-cultural and academic backgrounds do not have such stringent requirements about the use of source material, seem to understand what is meant by the concept of plagiarism, and can articulate its various forms, at least in terms of its most obvious manifestations, the wholesale borrowing of another author’s words, the cut and paste essay. Regardless of whether they agree with the importance attached to it, they seem to learn, with varying degrees of success, how to conform to the stated conventions. Serena claimed to *always be careful* to avoid plagiarism, which, she said, would not be tolerated in her Korean university, either: *you are not allowed*. This sentiment was echoed by the other participants.

It is often the case, however, that actually finding one’s own words is extraordinarily difficult. This may be especially so when does not think of oneself as a fully legitimate user of that language, those words are not one’s mother tongue, when the content is challenging, and the context new.

Finding their own voices

Bartholomae uses the metaphor ‘inventing the university’ to capture the idea that the student writer ‘must speak our language. Or he [sic] must dare to speak it to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is ‘learned’” (Bartholomae, 1985: 134). In academic discourse communities, student writers are urged to sound like the authors they read in their various disciplines. They are urged to ‘appropriate the language of the discourse community, its lexicon and collocations, the way sentences are constructed and linked into coherent chains and paragraphs, the way arguments are constructed and evidence used to support them’ (Wilson: 2006: 225). This inventing of the university is, again, particularly challenging for second language students.

Students are sometimes exhorted by their teachers to write in “their own words”. This is something which often derails inexperienced writers, and can be especially daunting for students who do not yet have the words of their second language, or who do not feel that they have the permission to use those words. For a novice second language writer, blending one’s own voice with that of more authoritative writers and achieving successfully a ‘creative recombination of voices’ (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 31) is no easy task. I am not able to comment on this in respect of Isaac as I did not receive enough text from him around which to build any kind of discussion and this aspect of Serena’s experiences merits a more detailed discussion and will therefore be left until the next chapter.

I can, however, comment here on Maya whose lack of confidence as a bona fide user of English led her to rely very heavily on directly quoted material, either with or without quotation marks, in one short tutorial assignment which she showed me early in her Anthropology course. I was interested in this as she was well aware of the expectations and conventions for acknowledging source material from

the EPP. We talked about ways in which she could paraphrase or summarise the material but she appeared very reluctant to do so. She articulated this reluctance by explaining, *but they were saying we need to be quite clear about concepts and ideas --- I just didn't feel confident. I thought I needed to be quite precise.* It seems clear here, that Maya felt that her control of English at this stage was insufficient for the task; she did not hold the currency, she was not yet a fully legitimate writer of English in this context. If she had handed in the draft response in this state, she could well have been accused of plagiarising. Various researchers, however, have urged caution in seeing such intertextuality in purely black and white terms, and have suggested that taking a 'developmental perspective' (Ouellette, 2008: 256) might be a more constructive alternative. (See also Pecorari, 2001).

The relationship with the reader

The writer is a lonely figure cut off from the stimulus and corrective of listeners. He [sic] must be a predictor of reactions and act on his predictions. He writes with one hand tied behind his back being robbed of gesture. He is robbed too of his tone of voice and the aid of clues the environment provides, he is condemned to monologue; there is no-one to help out, to fill the silence, put words in his mouth or make encouraging noises.

(Rosen, 1971: 141- 142)

Although, as this dissertation argues, students do create tone of voice and gestures of sorts in their academic writing, the quotation above captures rather poignantly the feelings of many students about their writing as they send it off on its own, as it were, to be assessed and graded without the benefit of any mediation. The relationship between writer and reader in the contexts such as those I have described here is generally not one of equality, and the outcome of the reader's response, a relatively high stakes assessment of the text, is usually of some concern

to the writer. Through his or her written discourse, the student writer has to create a favourable impression on the marker with no 'control over the conditions of reception and interpretation' (Riley, 1996: 125).

I was interested in whether the participants had thought much about the impression their markers might get of them through their writing. Isaac seemed surprised by my question, what kind of impression do you want the reader to have of you? *I have no idea --- I never think about that.* But then he went on to say, *I just concern to expand my idea --- I think maybe if the reader has same idea she might be interesting.* I find the use of the female pronoun notable here. Is it an unreasonable extrapolation to assume that he did, in fact, have his female tutor in mind although he professed not to think about a reader?

Serena wanted the reader to see that she was a confident writer. This wish is articulated in the quotation I used to introduce her on page 33; *I wrote my ideas with confidence but unfortunately the reader doesn't understand because I couldn't write good English.* Her failure to create the impression, the discursal self, she wanted was a constant source of frustration for her, a frustration that she communicated both verbally and non-verbally throughout our interviews.

Postscript

This chapter ends with a brief update on any information I could gather on what the four participants went on to do after the interview period ended in August 2007.

Serena

Although Serena was disappointed with her performance in the first trimester of 2007, at the time of our final interview (August 2007) she appeared

determined to continue with her studies and aim, eventually, for a Master's degree. In this way, it seemed that she was making a serious 'investment' (see Norton, 2000: Angéilil-Carter, 1997: 268-269) in her identity as an English language learner. She planned to give herself more time for reading and studying in the future. However, as the year progressed, she continued to achieve C and C+ grades for her papers and, for whatever reasons, did not re-enrol in the second or third trimesters in 2008.

Isaac

Isaac continued to achieve mostly B and B+ grades in his BCA degree, and did not return to use the Learning Support services in 2008, possibly because he was comfortable with his level of achievement, and comfortable with himself as a student. I think that this is not an unreasonable extrapolation, as he did apply to become a "Campus Coach" at the start of 2008, thus offering to become a buddy for new students during orientation week and the first month of the trimester. His application was favourably received and he accepted a position as a Campus Coach, a role that requires confidence, good social and interpersonal skills, and the ability to communicate in English with a range of students from different backgrounds.

Maya

Maya's personal life seemed to cause her some difficulties and her studies were at times disrupted by ill-health. She made several appointments with various staff members at the Student Learning Support Service but only kept one of these which happened to be with me. She had given up her studies in Anthropology, focusing instead on Psychology. She revealed that she was surprised to find that she preferred the writing style required in Psychology, *it is more objective, you can be more precise.*

Juliet

At the time of writing, Juliet had nearly finished her Anthropology papers, achieving mainly A- and B+ grades. She planned to make up the rest of her degree with papers in Criminology, Psychology and Spanish. She recently told me that she was thinking of going to a private language school to improve her English grammar. This was somewhat surprising given the kinds of comments she made during our earlier interviews and conversations. (See for example, page 42-43) I asked her why she was thinking of working on her grammar, and she said, *because I think I can improve more. I realise from being here, I always do the same mistake. I think I can do better.*

Summary of Chapter 4

In this chapter I have told the stories of four second language undergraduate students, Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet and the different and evolving identities they brought to their academic writing in a new or relatively new context. I have looked at the various literacy backgrounds they brought to their writing and how establishing identities as legitimate users of English in the context of second language academic writing is an ongoing and dynamic process. It is also a process which can be profoundly unsettling for some students.

In the following chapter, I amplify Serena's story and look in more detail at a piece of her academic writing. I relate the themes that have arisen from the four narratives presented here in Chapter 4 to a more focused exploration of writer identity as it is played out in the discourse of one actual text.

Chapter 5

A PORTRAIT OF WRITING AND IDENTITY

The writer-as-performer's task of creating a writer-as-character

(Ivanič, 1998: 21)

In this chapter I look at how, in Norton's words, one person's 'identity constructs and is constructed by language' (Norton, 1997: 419). To do this, I concentrate the discussion on an analysis of an actual essay written by Serena. I also extend and focus the issues of writer identity raised in the previous chapter, revisiting the data that emerged from the three interviews I had with Serena which took place in April, May and August, 2007. I explore in more detail two further aspects of identity, Serena's discursal self (the impressions that may be conveyed through her text), and the socially constructed possibilities for selfhood (how her essay fits with what is valued and accepted in this particular context). The aspect of identity I focus on most specifically, however, is that of the self as author. This is a particularly important consideration in respect of academic writing (Ivanič, 1998: 26) because it refers to the extent to which writers establish themselves as people who have something to say, and who are able to make a claim.

My approach to the text analysis in this chapter is borrowed from Ivanič's (1998) and Ivanič and Camps' (2001) studies with mature first and second language writers respectively in that I use Halliday's (1994) functional grammar as the analytical tool to underpin the discussion of the linguistic features of the text. I also draw on Halliday's (1994) concept of the three metafunctions of language as

explained by Ivanič and Camps, (2001) and Derewianka (2001) as a way of talking about how Serena uses language to *represent* the world, to *interact* with her reader and to *create* the text (See Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 11).

To put it simply, Halliday's systemic functional grammar posits that form and meaning are inextricably linked (see Ivanič, 1998: 39; Derewianka, 2001: 256) and thus offers a description of language that goes beyond traditional or formal grammars which are more concerned with individual words and rules of language use. In particular, I liked the accessibility of Halliday's notion of the three metafunctions of language as outlined in Chapter 3 (page 34-35); *the ideational* (related to content, ideas, experience), *the interpersonal* (related to the social relationships between speaker/listener, writer/reader) and *the textual* (related to the organization of text to create cohesion and coherence). In any text these metafunctions are realised at clause level through features such as lexis, verb choice, modality, linking devices and pronoun choice (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 11). It seemed that this could provide a useful way analysing Serena's essay and exploring how she was learning to make meaning in a second language.

Serena's essay

In this chapter I discuss, to rephrase Ivanič's words, an actual person writing an actual text (Ivanič 1998: 27, 283). I focus on the first essay Serena wrote for a stage one Art History paper. She chose to write on the development of perspective during the Renaissance. Specifically, the instructions were to

define the investigations and advances [in perspective] and, using a range of works to illustrate your answer, explore how [perspective] impacted on art.' (1500 words).

The department's comprehensive style guide, *Researching and writing Art History essays* (Art History Programme, 2007) provides information for students about essay writing in general and writing essays in the discipline of Art History in particular. In an informal discussion, the course coordinator made some additional comments about expectations for this particular essay question. These expectations, none of which are surprising, can be summarised as follows: the essay would actually answer the question; it would deal with one area of inquiry: it would define that area, and would pay close attention to a range of works. The students would follow the guidelines set out for referencing source material, works of art, and their locations, and would take care not to plagiarise source material. The essay would be structured effectively, and would contain three parts – an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The style would be semi-formal; first person pronouns, colloquialisms, and contracted verb forms would be avoided. The students would proofread for accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation, and would pay attention to features of presentation such as style and size of font, margins and spacing. In other words, they were asked to write what may be socially recognised as a typical expository essay, 'the purpose of which is to explain some aspect of the world and bring the addressee to share the writer/speaker's point of view' (Painter, 2001:169).

Serena's essay is reproduced below. This reproduction contains the original line spacings and spacing between words. I have included line numbers for easy reference during the discussion that follows.

Define the investigations and advances [in perspective] and, using a range of works to illustrate your answer, explore how [perspective] impacted on art.'

During the Renaissance, in the 14th century, artists and scholars began to look out the world in a new way and became to concern about the natural world; the individual object or person and humanity as a whole. French word *renaissance* and the Italian word *rinascita* are meaning of "rebirth".

5 Therefore, scholars and artists in the Renaissance, they were exploring a rebirth of art and culture. Before the Renaissance, the Byzantine style was the fundamental art in a society which was essentially from a religious point of view. Artists in the Renaissance began to pursue the real beauty in arts from humanity rather than follow God. Consequently, artists

10 undertook theoretical and practical studies to depict the natural world in a number of areas, based on natural humanity. One of the most important developments in renaissance is the innovation of perspective. Early in the renaissance, most artists acknowledged the construction of pictorial space which is the appearance of three-dimensional reality on the two-

15 dimensional picture surface. This essay will define the investigation and advances made in perspective during the Renaissance, using many artists' works such as Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Masolino, Donatello, Ghiberti and Leonardo da Vinci and one written theory by Alberti. At the same time, this essay will explore how perspective impacted on art.

20 In the Renaissance period, linear perspective (the ancient Greeks and Roman's basic principles) became popular which was the most outstanding scientific achievement of their works. It was not only a new method of painting but also a magnificent changing in a way of the art. The basic principle of perspective is also called geometric, mathematical,

25 optical single/central vanishing point or scientific perspective is made up of geometric lines from the picture's surface which meet the central vanishing point, a single point on the horizon. The mathematical proportion of picture's surface which is based on perspective makes the painting looks systematical. During the early Renaissance, Filippo di Ser

30 Brunelleschi(1377-1446), who was a sculptor, architect, "artisan-engineer", demonstrated the first linear perspective based on the mathematical perspective system since classical antiquity. Unfortunately Brunelleschi's pictorial manifestos are lost but in the *Adoration of the Magei* of 1423 which is Presentation (Paris, Louvre) from the predella of Gentile

35 da Fabriano's Strozzi we may see reflected Brunelleschi's method of perspective. Furthermore, Antonio Manetti firmly expressed in his *Life of Brunelleschi*, the perspective was Brunelleschi's own innovation, a pictorial perspective with a scientific basis. In his *Life of Brunelleschi*, Antonio Manetti says

40 'Thus in those days, he himself proposed and practiced what painters today call perspective; for it is part of that science which is in effect to put

down well and with reason the diminutions and enlargements which appear to the eyes of men from things far away or close at hand: buildings, plains and mountains and countrysides of every kind and in every part, the figures and the other objects, in that measurement which
45 corresponds to that distance away which they show themselves to be: and from him is born the rule, which is the basis of all that has been done of that kind from that day to this' (White, John, *The birth and rebirth of pictorial space*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 3rd ed, 1987, pp 113). In this Manetti supported Brunelleschi as a creator of new perspective who well knew about mathematical and scientific proportion. Therefore, Brunelleschi has been well known about perspective based on mathematical system and his new observation of reality gave new geometric construction to follow artists such as Masaccio and Donatello.

55 If we accept Brunelleschi as the inventor of linear perspective, then Alberti is the man who carefully developed and interpreted this linear perspective. Leon Battista Alberti was a patrician intellectual and he wrote *Della Pittura* in 1435 which is the first written recorded theory of perspective in the visual work of art. In his book he explains about
60 definitions of geometric expression and the most elemental figure, the point, the line, the planes, the nature of visual rays, and describes the visual pyramid. According to Alberti, the visual image is produced by straight lines from our eyes that link to objects. These straight lines come

out from eyes and heads off to what we see, those lines make visual
65 pyramid. According to Alberti, art is like a window in a certain place
which penetrates the pyramid. If we draw an image that passes the
window, every person, a thing, distance will look exactly like the real
object. Furthermore, Alberti expressed that appearances of all things are
relative each other but only the human figure provides the measure of
70 artistic representation. This perspective by Alberti dominated Italian art
and influenced Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Donatello, Ghiberti and Luca
della Robbia.

After Brunelleschi, Masaccio followed and materialized the linear
perspective rules to show extent in his monumental form in fresco, *Trinity*
75 fresco in the church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence. This is the first
surviving picture which was constructed according to linear perspective.
However, the painting of the Brancacci chapel frescoes in Santa Maria
della carmine, Masaccio clearly shows his adaptation of
Brunelleschi's linear perspective rules by the accurate vanishing point.
80 Fresco in Brancacci chapel is a classical form of architecture framing. In
two frescos *Tribute Money* and *raising of Tabutha and Healing of the Cripple*,
the viewer follows the stories by employed linear perspective for
instance, by applying horizon line which is all figures are in the same
horizon line. Masaccio developed accurate vanishing point construction
85 with his unique figure style. The vanishing point is the same height as the

heads of the figure in the painting. In Masaccio's fresco the shifting of the viewpoint which low viewpoint is combined with high positioning as the heads of the figure to prominent the architectural space. His greatness of painting was the construction of three dimension by using
90 linear perspective from the two dimension.

The enthusiasm for perspective space was continued by Masolino. *The Crucifixion* which covers the whole altar wall in St. Clemente is the greatest effort in use of pictorial space by Masolino. The scene is on a high hill but all the figures are confined by downward slope. However,
95 from the far horizon view come out beyond the figures. Masolino used normal viewpoint rather than hilltop viewpoint. Therefore we can see foreground as well as the distance with the bird's eye. This is a significant method of Masolino which is using normal viewpoint bring the figures from the picture to the viewer.

100 Donatello also demonstrated linear perspective into his works. His method such as the threefold value of each individual formal feature is clearly shown by his fresco. In his fresco '*St. Philip Exorcising a Devil*' shows creation of great space and figures which are brought to him by linear perspective. This fresco gives direct emotional expression of the
105 story to the viewer by this method of creating reality.

Ghiberti also carried his fascination of perspective illusion in the famous east doors '*Gates of Paradise*' , baptistery of Florence Cathedral, Florence. This east doors shows us depiction of space using painting techniques. In this relief, Ghiberti created illusion of space which is
110 using pictorial perspective. The figures in relief, appear in the full round consequently, the eye progress upward and finally in the background of architecture.

By the end of the fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci advice to other painters recommending the study of geometry in perspective in order to
115 acquire fundamental artistic skills was, 'a youth should first learn perspective, then the proportions of things' (Boxandall, Michael, *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 2nd ed, pp 31). However, his interests in optics lead him to explore the linear perspective's problems. Leonardo recognized the problems of
120 linear perspective such as short viewing distances and unnatural angles of wide viewing. Consequently, Leonardo developed a system of synthetic and curvilinear perspective which is deals with the lines of sight striking a foreshortened body. He use two centre point system or distance point rather than one vanishing point.

125 In conclusion, perspective in the Renaissance period made both scholars and artists fond on enthusiasm. Perspective was not only a simple

method of the arts but also upraise the arts as the same aid of science.

Before the 14th century, the art is reproduction of surface with simple composition of lines, colours and figures. However, enthusiasm of perspective in Renaissance, the arts can rebirth as a window which is show the visual and natural world by artists. Expanding interest in perspective provided to artists developed their works compare with the previous century, and also produced important influence for the other masters after the Renaissance period.

Serena's strategies for researching and planning the essay

Serena's choice of essay question – broadly the development of the concept of perspective in art – was, I think, particularly difficult and especially so for someone writing in a second language. To research the topic, she consulted at least two books from the university library and made use of her own resources and the city library. However, as she did not include a reference list with the copy of the essay she gave me, I only have evidence of the two sources which she cited in-text.

She found these books difficult to read, a point which I pick up later in this chapter, and mentioned some strategies she used to compensate for this. These included reading *again and again*, and moving on if the material was too difficult; *if I couldn't understand it, just leave it*. Not surprisingly, part of the difficulty stemmed from the inaccessibility of some of the vocabulary in the source books. Because Serena had to resort to frequent use of the dictionary she would then *lose the main ideas*. I was interested in how she actually went about thinking out these *main ideas* and

asked her if she thought about the concepts in Korean or English. Her answer was, *in Korean*.

I then asked how she transferred the language from Korean to English on paper. This was her answer; *first I think in Korean and write in Korean finding words from electric dictionary*. She told me that this was *not a good idea, because sometimes when I use the word from electric dictionary, the word is not in use nowadays*. In spite of the drawbacks, her decision to use an electronic dictionary was a pragmatic one; *I have limited time to write essays so looking through the paper dictionary is --- makes me spend more time*. It appears that, although she was aware of the potential dangers, she persisted with this resource, and that this continued to cause difficulties in her writing. (Learning Advisor, Personal communication, 30 May 2008).

Anecdotes of problems caused by direct translation and using electronic dictionaries are often material for conversations among second language teachers and learning advisors and there are examples of places in her essay where, possibly because of this strategy, certain words or phrases were problematic for her marker. For example, the opening sentence of the conclusion reads, *In conclusion, perspective in the Renaissance period made both scholars and artists fond on enthusiasm* (lines 125-126). Serena told me that the phrase, *fond on enthusiasm*, was something she could say in her first language and that she had more or less just translated it into an English equivalent. Her marker, however, was unable to interpret the intended sense of this phrase, writing in the margin, *what do you mean here?*

Finally, Serena talked about her strategies for planning her essay, something she typically took care about; *I make the step by step plan for every essay*. For this particular essay, she chose to discuss a selection of artists in chronological order because it made it *easier, focus on one person and after move to another person*. This way of organising

her essay also mirrored at least one of her source texts, *The birth and rebirth of pictorial space* (White, 1987) thus indicating the possibility that she was aligning herself with a more authoritative writer in the field, a writer with more legitimacy.

Identity construction in Serena's essay

Discourse analysis reminds us that writing involves writers making language choices in social contexts peopled by readers, prior experiences, and other texts.

(Hyland, 2003: 170)

In this section, using Ivanič's case study of Rachel Dean as an organisational model (Ivanič, 1998: 125-180), I illustrate how it is possible to argue that the structural/rhetorical form of Serena's essay and the various linguistic choices she makes position her in several interrelated ways – as a writer of academic texts, as a writer of Art Historical texts and as a second language writer. I also discuss an aspect of writer identity that is particularly salient to academic writing, that of 'self as author'. I finish by discussing what I saw as different side of Serena and her relationship with her reader.

I begin by looking at the essay as a whole, and then concentrate more specifically on her choice of particular language features at the level of clauses and individual words. As does Ivanič, I use the word 'choice' cautiously here in that I do not wish to imply a conscious deliberation every time Serena put pen to paper. As Ivanič notes, the linguistic 'choices' [her scare quotes] a writer makes are usually 'fleeting, subtle, complex subconscious processes' (Ivanič, 1998: 54).

Serena as a writer of academic texts.

At the most fundamental level, and in terms of what Ivanič (1998: 274) calls ‘global discourse organization’, Serena’s essay conforms to the socially recognised expectations inherent in this kind of academic writing. As noted in the previous chapter, she had faced some early challenges in learning to write in, what was for her, a new way, and at the macro level had had to rethink the way she presented her arguments; for example she had to create a more acceptable balance between the body of her text and the conclusion. Her essay consisted of nine clearly defined paragraphs – an introduction and a conclusion and seven body paragraphs. The marker praised the introduction in which Serena mentioned that she will include *many artists’ works...and one written theory* (line 18). The former is an overt reference back to the requirements of the task; the latter is, perhaps, Serena’s attempt to put her own stamp, her own mark of individuality on her text. At the ideational level, that is, looking at how language can be used to create meaning and represent the world, Serena was following another convention common in academic writing – the incorporation of theory. In the May 2007 interview, she talked quite confidently about including the theorist, Alberti, in her essay; *I just put him in because from his book the following artists influences by him. I think he was important for perspective development.*

The table below provides an overview of the constituent parts of Serena’s essay and is intended to provide an easy reference to its structure.

Overview of Serena's essay

Lines	Section
1-19	Introduction. Begins with general information on the Renaissance, narrows to focus on perspective, outlines plan of essay with reference to 6 artists and one theory. Restatement of the essay question
20-54	General introduction to linear perspective and the way it changed art. Paragraph focuses on Brunelleschi as the innovator of linear perspective. Includes a long quotation
55-72	Deals with Alberti's theory of perspective mentioned in introduction
73-90	Paragraph contains a further example of linear perspective. The artist discussed is Masaccio
91-99	Another example of the use of perspective through a discussion of Masolino,
100-105	A very short paragraph about Donatello and linear perspective
106-112	Another short paragraph on Ghiberti and pictorial perspective
113-124	Moves to the end of the fifteenth century. The topic is Leonardo da Vinci,
125-134	Conclusion. Ties up discussion on perspective by looking back to previous century and forward to the period after the Renaissance.

In terms of ideas and content, each of the body paragraphs refers to one aspect of perspective and one artist. These paragraphs follow the 'map' she had set out for them in her introduction, the map, as noted above, being a chronological handling of select artists over a period of time. This was an effective structural method of giving cohesion to the text and was also commented on favourably by the marker. Cohesion was further achieved through adverbs and prepositions to signal chronological sequence, and duration of time. These included words and phrases such as *during, before, early in, after, by the end of*. Serena also used a variety of different linguistic devices common to academic discourse to structure her text, something which second language users in particular may have to be taught explicitly if they are going to use them correctly. These devices include words such as *therefore, consequently, furthermore, however* and *also*. Such words have the textual metafunction of providing the reader with a path through the text in that they signal how the information is organised and serve as connectors between ideas (Derewianka, 2001: 256).

There are some other examples of lexical choices which position Serena, at the ideational level, as a writer of academic texts. Taking the introduction to her essay as an example, these lexical items include words such as, *fundamental*, *theoretical*, *pursue*, and *innovation*; they (or their headwords) are common in the discourse of academic writing and are found in the *Academic Word List* (See Coxhead, 2000).

Another way in which Serena's text is consistent as an academic discourse is that it follows the 'highly valued convention' (Ivanič, 1998: 48) of including quoted material from sources. There are two quoted passages in Serena's essay. The second one (lines 115-116) is unremarkable, except for the fact that it is cited incorrectly and I could not therefore locate it – a point which is discussed later. The first quoted passage, however, is worthy of further comment. I reproduce it here for easy reference:

'Thus in those days, he himself proposed and practiced what painters today call perspective; for it is part of that science which is in effect to put down well and with reason the diminutions and enlargements which appear to the eyes of men from things far away or close at hand: buildings, plains and mountains and countrysides of every kind and in every part, the figures and the other objects, in that measurement which corresponds to that distance away which they show themselves to be: and from him is born the rule, which is the basis of all that has been done of that kind from that day to this' (lines 40-48).

This passage was taken from a recommended source book and is usually attributed to another Renaissance writer, according to the author of that book. (See

White, 1987: 113, 130). It is constructed as a single sentence, the structure and language of which could reasonably present problems for certain readers. I wondered if Serena had fully understood its meaning in light of a revelation she had made about using source material. She had told me on one occasion that she used the words of other writers verbatim if she did not fully understand a particular passage; *if I understand I use summary, if I don't understand I use quotations*. In the final interview, August 2007, I returned to this comment. I was interested in the quotation referred to above and asked her whether using long quotes that she might not fully understand was something she typically did. This was her response;

Actually --- sometimes I use long quotation for limitation of the words.

I ask for clarification. You mean? What do you mean? [There is a long pause.]

*Using quotation makes more quantity of words --- sometimes I make long quotation for --
- for ---- for extension of the words*

To make up the word count?

Yeab

Because your essay is too short?

Yeab

When I asked her if it is 'okay' to do this, to use direct quotes to make up the word count, she replied, **NO** --- (laugh) --- *definitely not --- sometimes I do like that. Not a good idea*. I did not get the opportunity to probe this further as we had no subsequent interviews, but this point raises interesting questions at the interpersonal level. Superficially, it is not unreasonable to assume that students write with the intention that their texts will be understandable to the reader. However, my work as a writing tutor and as a learning advisor with both native speakers of English and second language students has led me to question such an assumption. And conversations

with colleagues have reinforced this. As one learning advisor commented, students sometimes seem to take the position, ‘why should I understand what I write when I don’t understand what I read?’ (M. Roberts, Personal communication, 15 May, 2007) Isaac also expressed a similar sentiment telling me, *sometimes I summarise article but I don’t quite understand what they talk about.*

Serena as a writer of Art History texts

In the previous section I looked at how Serena created an identity as a writer of academic discourse in a general sense. She also created a more specific identity as a writer of Art History discourse in this essay. Again, taking the introduction as an example, lexical items which position her more specifically as a writer of Art History, include the French and Italian words for “rebirth”, *renaissance* and *rinascita*, (which she had italicised) and words such as *art*, *artists*, *natural world*, *depict*, *humanity*, *beauty*, *pictorial space*, *three-dimensional reality*. Stapleton (2002: 183) sounds a note of caution against overstating the implications of what it means for a writer to use particular vocabulary in terms of highlighting identity construction, noting in response to Ivanič and Camps’ (2001) article that although certain terminology may locate a writer ‘in a particular academic community ... it says little more than that.’ While his observations have some merit, Ivanič (1998: 39) also notes that ‘every discursal decision positions the writer doubly: as a thinker of such things and as a user of such words and structures.’

Serena’s identity as a writer in the discipline of Art History is more complex than is reflected simply by the choice of particular nouns and verbs, however. In the April 2007 interview she articulated that she wanted to write in the manner of her reading material, *when I read the book (...) I want to write like that.* This is a clear expression of a desire to ‘invest’ (see Angéil-Carter, 1997; Norton, 1997, 2000) in

the language of her chosen subject, and to identify herself as a member of the Art History discourse community, at least for the purposes of this essay. When I scanned the two books she cited in her essay, Baxandall (1972) and White (1987), it was evident that she was ‘trying on’ (Hull and Rose, 1989), in at least two ways, the kind of discourse that seems to be appropriate for Art History.

The first was that the essay generally contains declarative statements in the simple present or simple past tense, thus giving the impression of presenting indisputable truths. (See Ivanič and Camps, 2001: 17). Some examples taken from lines 20 -30 are noted here, *became popular; which was the most outstanding scientific achievement; It was not, is also called; is made up of; which is based on; makes the painting look systematical*. Added to this any adjectives or adverbs Serena used serve to intensify meaning rather than to hedge it for example *the most outstanding scientific achievement, a magnificent changing, Antonio Manetti firmly expressed, produced important influence*.

Second, from time to time, and again as seems to be accepted in Art History discourse, Serena wrote using first person plural pronouns, *If we accept, our eyes*, and *If we draw*. Ivanič and Camps (2001: 26) argue that, at the interpersonal level, the use of the first person plural can be a ‘potential marker of equality between writer and reader’. (See also Tang & John, 1999; Hyland 2002; Starfield, 2002: 129).

Referring back to the comment about linguistic choices made on page 71, I do not wish to suggest here that Serena was necessarily making a deliberate and conscious choice in selecting the kinds of verbs and intensifiers noted above, or using personal pronouns. Rather, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter, the text analysis showed indicated she was borrowing a style and small chunks of language from her source material. The point here though is that, according to an Art History tutor, the conventions of making present or past tense

declarative statements without hedging and using first person plural pronouns are ‘authentic and accepted ways of writing Art History discourse’ (H. Clayton, Personal communication, 10 April, 2008). Serena, in this way was taking an identity as a person who wrote Art History.

In the next section, I look at Serena as second language writer; as a person who was trying to find a voice in a language which is not her mother tongue.

Serena’s identity as a second language writer

As the literature suggests, second language writers’ texts are often different from texts produced by native speakers in a variety of ways that are related to structure, rhetorical characteristics and/or linguistic features. (See for example, Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hinkel, 2002). The ‘differences’ in Serena’s text meant that in terms of her discursal self, she very obviously had a definite “accent” as a second language writer. She had become familiar with appropriate rhetorical and structural forms for her essay as noted in the previous chapter and earlier in the present one, but her still developing proficiency with English grammar was a continuing source of disruption in her writing. Some of these difficulties arose from her use of non-standard grammatical structures that are typical of many of the second language students with whom I work, especially those from Asian language backgrounds.

Such structures include phrases such as *compare with* (line 132), and using an adjective as a verb, *to prominent the architectural space* (line 88). Another common feature is verb structures such as *began to look out* (line 1-2); *became to concern* (line 2); and *are meaning of* (line 4). Lack of subject-verb agreement is also found frequently in second language writing, although it is by no means exclusive to it, and there are several examples of this in Serena’s text, including, *Makes the painting looks*

systematical (lines 28-29); *the eye progress upward* (line 111). While such verb forms do not generally cause too much interference with meaning, and there are sometimes more problematic issues with the phrases, on occasion they can add to lack of clarity in Serena's text. For example, the clause, *These straight lines come out from eyes and heads off to what we see* (lines 63-64) could cause confusion. The first verb, *come out*, is correct, but the second verb, *heads off*, is a present tense singular verb where it should be plural. The added complication relates to its juxtaposition with the noun *eyes*, possibly leading the reader to read *heads* as a plural noun rather than a verb. I think it is not unreasonable to assume that this clause would need to be read carefully for the actual meaning to become clear.

Although there might only be one or two individual instances of the kind of non-native grammar noted above, when they are combined in one text the effect is cumulative and the end result is a text that is indeed different from those produced by first language writers. While the surface errors discussed above do not necessarily cause significant disruption to comprehensibility, the style shifting caused by typical second language structures mentioned above being juxtaposed with rather more sophisticated structures such as *we may see reflected* (line 35) serves to unsettle the text to some degree and it becomes difficult to hear Serena's voice clearly.

Serena as author

Ultimately you are reading text to know what I think, even if, at times, I use other voices to help me express my views.

(Coulthard, 1994: 6)

Throughout our interviews, Serena presented as a person who, because of her background as a graduate in Fine Arts and Art History, had her own ideas and opinions and had "something to say" on a variety of topics in this field. She could

not always articulate these ideas and opinions clearly in English, and was constantly frustrated by her inability to explain herself. However, if I recast one of her phrases and it was not what she meant, she was quite definite about communicating this.

As noted in Chapter 4, Serena also had ideas that she wished to bring to her academic writing. In this section, then, I discuss an aspect of writer identity that is particularly relevant to academic writing, that of ‘self as author’; the self that has something to say. Ivanič notes that the significance of this strand of writer identity is contained in the fact that ‘writers differ considerably in how far they claim authority as the source of the content of the text, and in how far they claim authorial presence in their writing’ (Ivanič, 1998: 26). To try and claim such a presence however can be particularly difficult for second language learners who are often forced to borrow – or rely too heavily on – the words of others. (See also Starfield, 2002: 126). Further, I would suggest that many novice writers from English speaking backgrounds could find it difficult to find their own words to explain an especially demanding subject field such as art historical perspective in a precise way. To help her write her essay, Serena – to return to the quotation that introduces this section – uses the voices of others, extracting small chunks of language from the books she consulted and weaving these in to her own text. Here are three examples:

only the human figure provides the measure of (line 69)

the human figure alone provides the measure of (White, 1987: 122)

in his monumental form in fresco (line 74)

were given monumental form in fresco (White, 1987: 135)

gives direct emotional expression of the story (lines 104-105)

to give direct emotional expression to the narrative (White, 1987: 152)

Like the student in Ouellette's (2008) study, Serena does not always present the ideas she takes from this source material in an accurate way. In fact, the change of preposition as underlined in the third example above completely alters the meaning of the phrase. However, she does not merely copy and paste from the original either, and although her attempts to make meaning might be flawed – sometimes seriously so – and may come close to plagiarism, they can also be seen as evidence that Serena is trying to establish herself as the author of the text

There are several other passages in this essay that rely heavily on the source text but which end up as technically incorrect explanations of some aspect of perspective because of Serena's grammatical choices. Here is one example. Describing Masolino's *The Crucifixion*, White (1987: 145) wrote this;

The scene takes place high on a hill, with many of the figures only partly visible upon the downward slope beyond the foreground plateau. All the figures are confined, however, to a relatively narrow forward strip....

Explaining perspective in the same painting, Serena wrote this;

The scene is on a high hill (which is not the same as high on a hill) but all the figures are confined by downward slope.

One does not have to be very familiar with the rules/laws of perspective to see that this is quite a misinterpretation of the original. This entire paragraph presented problems at the ideational level for the marker of the essay, who almost certainly would not have had the time to analyse it at the level I have done here, but who nonetheless found her attempts to "speak Art History" unsatisfactory, noting in the margin that he found it hard to follow what she was saying.

In this section and the previous one, I have given some examples of writing where Serena has added her own voice to the voice of another author, and has produced phrases which still sound like other people. Furthermore, in some cases, this blending of her words with those of another author has resulted in technical inaccuracies. These are all examples of how, in Bakhtin's words, 'Expropriating it, [language] forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complex process' (Bakhtin, 1981: 291); and it is particularly difficult and complex when that language is not one's mother tongue.

A different side of Serena

As Ivanič and Camps (2001) and Matsuda and Tardy (2007) note, all the features of a text, both discursive and non discursive, say something about the identity of the writer. Discursive features have been discussed in some detail in this dissertation and include 'lexical, syntactic, [and] semantic ... aspects of writing' (Ivanič & Camps, 2001: 5). Matsuda & Tardy (2007: 239) add to this list of discursive features including not only aspects of form, but also 'content ... the choice of topic and specific examples, argumentative strategies'. Non-discursive features they highlight include, 'the use of margins, the choice of font face and size, the use of blank space between words and punctuation marks as well as the use of extra line-breaks between paragraphs and block quotes' (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007: 239).

As I have already suggested, Serena presented as a very careful and deliberate person who paid attention to detail. There were aspects of this essay, both discursive and non-discursive, however, that tended towards carelessness and thus seemed to me to be at odds with her usually meticulous approach to her work. For example, she made a number of small errors, probably a result of inaccurate

transcription, including spelling mistakes, *pictoral*, (line 33); *describs*, (line 61) and variations on spellings of artists' names, for example Albertis (line 56) She also spelt the name of one of her source authors incorrectly, calling him *Boxandall* rather than Baxandall. (Line 116) Given that "box" is a more usual configuration of letters than "bax" this is probably understandable. She used the word *import* instead of "important" (line 11). She used a contracted form when writing about the fourteenth century (lines 1 and 128) which the marker noted and corrected.

Serena also made several mistakes with her references which was also interesting. For example, she did not reference the art works themselves correctly, even though the conventions for this are set out in the *Art History guide to researching and writing essays* (Art History Programme, 2007); nor did she format the in-text citations of sources correctly, putting all the bibliographic information in the body of her text rather than as a footnote. Her marker also commented on this. Another puzzle was that I could not locate the quotation (lines 115-116) in either of the editions of this book held in the university library in spite of trying various different page number combinations to track it down.

Non discursive features that the marker chose to remark on included the need for wider left hand margin for comments, double spacing between words (for example at line 12 and 27) and the lack of spacing (line 30). Apart from that the presentation of her essay was favourably received.

Individually, all the points I have noted above are very minor, but collectively they could contribute to an impression of a writer who is perhaps not completely in control. The point of raising these issues is not to criticise Serena's essay, nor to criticise Serena herself in any way as paying attention to details such as, for example, the spelling of unfamiliar words or small details of presentation could be an added burden for second language writers who already have enough cognitive

demands to cope with. I raise them simply to show another example of how all the features of a text can contribute to the impression writers can give of themselves in their texts.

Serena and her reader

The accomplishment of success also resides in the interaction between writer and reader that the text constructs

(Starfield, 2002: 138)

The relatively private nature of writing appeals to some people in some situations; *I prefer writing to speaking because it's not so embarrassing* [second language student in Academic Speaking workshop], and not at all to others – *'what I don't like about writing is that people don't know I'm Irish'* [adult educator in Ivanič (1998: 70)]. However, as Riley (1996: 125) points out, and as the quotation from Rosen on page 49 suggests, 'the advantage of privacy is balanced by the danger of feeling isolated, and the protection which writing affords to the writer has to be paid for by a complete lack of control over the conditions of reception and interpretation.' As has already been noted, this 'reception and interpretation' is particularly important for university students whose writing is to be assessed and graded, as this is often a high stakes situation.

Serena's essay achieved a C+, which, according to the style guide means that the essay 'fulfils some of the criteria to a satisfactory standard' (Art History Programme, 2007: 27). The marker clearly had some problems with Serena's essay as evidenced by comments such as, 'clumsy writing but I get your point'; 'does not make sense'; 'this could be written to make more sense'; and 'what do you mean here?' These comments indicate that the interactions between writer and reader in this text were not always successful.

Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, I aimed to explore the issues of identity in second language writing in more detail. I added to the narrative of one of the participants and carried out an analysis of one of her essays which was intended to be indicative of the kind of linguistic decisions she made. The text analysis proved to be particularly difficult the more I became immersed in it. One of the reasons for this was the sometimes problematic way Serena used the English language. As Ferris (2005: 227-228) puts it, ‘text analysis is complex and challenging, and it becomes even more so when looking at texts composed by L2 writers, whose “nontarget” constructions can make it challenging to ascertain their intentions and categorize them in some way.’ The only way to really understand a writer’s intentions is to discuss the text with the writer. In recognition of this I referred back to comments Serena made about actually writing the essay. These comments, however, were taken from our last interview in August 2007. It would have been very useful to have been able to speak with her further as the study progressed.

The second reason was that the more I delved into Serena’s essay and the source texts, the more I realised that it was almost impossible in places to separate out Serena’s voice from the other authors. The confusions in her text seem to come in part from the difficulties she experienced in explaining the concept of perspective in her second language. Like Tshediso in Angélic-Carter’s (1997) article, and as Serena herself commented, her level of English proficiency made it challenging for her to read and understand material in her source books, write a summary and then weave this in to her own text in a way that allowed her to express accurately her intended meanings. This was a constant source of frustration for her as she was not able to create the desired relationship between herself – the writer, the text and the

reader; nor was she able to reveal fully her understanding of the topic or her own confidence in writing about it.

Chapter 6

IDENTITY IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING: DOES IT MATTER?

So what?

(Ivanič 1998: 327)

In this dissertation, I set out to explore issues of identity in second language academic writing. As a result of reading and research, observations arising from my own work with student writers from many backgrounds, and discussions with colleagues, I developed the four research questions presented on page 20. These questions were informed by Ivanič's (1995, 1998) four aspects of writer identity, the autobiographical self – a person's history and sense of who they are; the discursive self – the impressions, often multiple and changing, a writer gives of him or herself through a particular written text; the authorial self – the writer's voice in terms of making a claim and stating an opinion; and the possibilities for selfhood – what is acceptable in the social context of the writing.

The first question explored the experiences, attitudes, self-concepts and expectations the students brought to their second language learning in general and to writing in particular, while the second question looked more specifically at how those experiences, attitudes, self-concepts and expectations might affect the students' orientation to their writing in a university context. I sought commentary and insights in response to these questions through a series of semi-structured interviews and conversations with four undergraduate student participants, Serena, Isaac, Maya and Juliet, who were studying in various academic disciplines at university.

The findings of these two research questions were discussed in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I presented snapshots of the participants' background stories and sense of themselves, focusing in particular on their literacy histories. While these students expressed some confidence about themselves as speakers and/or writers in their first languages they all, with the exception perhaps of Juliet, conveyed the impression that being second language *learners* challenged them in a variety of directions. For example, they were often aware of being outsiders to some extent, of not being fully legitimate users of the language, of having less currency than their native-speaking counterparts. In terms of being second language *writers*, while they all felt they were people with something to say, they had to learn to "say" these things in new ways which sometimes made them feel they were portraying an identity that did not sit entirely comfortably with them.

The third research question had a narrower focus in that it explored *how* the discursal features of a specific text might convey various impressions of the writer. This was the topic of Chapter 5, where I attended to an actual piece of student writing, an Art History essay written by Serena. Chapter 5 was underpinned by the notion that writers create impressions of themselves through the, often momentary and subconscious, discursal choices they make. Through carrying out a close analysis of some of the most interesting linguistic features of Serena's essay, I aimed to show how Serena was positioned in a variety of different but interrelated ways – as a writer of academic texts, as a writer of Art History discourse, and as a second language writer. I also looked at Serena's authorial self and explored how her voice became entwined with the voices of her source texts. I discussed how certain discursive and non discursive features of her text seemed to reflect a different side of her, and finally looked at the relationship with the reader that mattered – the marker.

The fourth research question related to the socially constructed possibilities for selfhood afforded by the social or institutional context in which the participants were writing. In Chapter 4, I commented briefly on one aspect of Juliet's essay in terms of how she made use of the possibilities available to her in writing for Anthropology. I also addressed this aspect of writer identity incidentally but in more detail in Chapter 5, positioning myself as one reader and also reflecting on the marker's responses to her text. Here I looked at areas in which Serena's essay did meet expectations and areas where it did not. The former tended to be at the textual level of global structure, organisation of text, cohesive devices, and certain lexical items; the latter included some technical flaws related to referencing and some formatting issues, but more importantly to ideational considerations, where the meaning was obscured because of Serena's difficulties with using the words of others and her still developing control of English grammar.

Implications for teaching and learning

Helping students to take on an identity as a person who writes

(Ivanič 1998: 85)

As noted in the Literature Review, research carried out in the field of second language learning is generally intended, at least in part, to enhance the teaching and learning experiences and outcomes for teachers and students. In carrying out this study, then, I have intended to add to the pedagogy of second language writing and I would suggest to teachers – whether specifically teachers of second language academic writing, concerned content teachers, or learning advisors – that at the very least some consciousness-raising around issues in writer identity would be beneficial to student writers. Students could be given the opportunity to reflect on the impressions they hold about themselves as second language learners, as writers in

their first language and then as writers in their second language. Such consciousness-raising could include encouraging students to think about the different voices they can “hear” in a text, and think about what kind of voice might be appropriate for them to use in a piece of writing and how they could create that voice. (For example, see Brick, 2007: 97-120). Students could be encouraged to think about how they want to “sound” in their various texts, about how this might change from context to context, and how they might create particular impressions through the use of specific linguistic features. This idea of consciousness-raising is also relevant to the marking of student essays. While lectures and tutors could never be expected to read a student’s work in the kind of detail I have done here, as markers they could find it constructive to reflect on what it is they respond to, either positively or negatively, in a writer’s academic text, and what it is that goes to make up the elusive quality of good writing.

Areas for future research

This dissertation posits that there is a good argument for more research which combines information on second language students’ backgrounds with a discussion of the discursial construction of identity in their actual texts. Added to this, insights from text-based interviews with the writers themselves would provide extra weight and depth. During such interviews the students themselves should be given the opportunity to reflect and comment on aspects of their writing and why they wrote particular texts, or even parts thereof, the way they did. In respect of the present study for example, the opportunity to speak more fully with Serena about her actual essay, and probe in greater detail the reason behind her particular linguistic choices, would have enhanced the discussion in Chapter 5.

Second, while the research strongly suggests that there is no such thing as a neutral text and that all writing does convey some kind of impression of the writer, the question “So what? Does identity really matter?” is still worthy of attention. Given all the other considerations faced by second language writers in academic contexts, would they really benefit from more overt attention being paid to the notion of the writerly self? As Cherry (1988: 252) puts it, ‘self-representation in writing is a subtle and complex multidimensional phenomenon that skilled writers control and manipulate to their rhetorical advantage.’ If writers like Serena, are simply keeping their heads above water; making sense of the reading, controlling the ideas and coping with grammar and syntax, might this not be challenging enough without worrying about the added burden of nuances of self-representation? This question was explored in the emerging debates between Stapleton & Helms-Park and Matsuda & Tardy. Further discussion of the issues raised by this debate and in this dissertation would be timely. In particular there is a need for research which incorporates a methodology specifically designed to explore the relationship between consciousness-raising of identity issues and the effectiveness of second language student writing.

Final reflections

*And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

(T.S Eliot)⁵

These well known lines seem a good place to end; as I write the final draft of this dissertation, it seems that I am now in a good place to begin research into the complex, subtle and multi-dimensional area of writer identity. I end here, however, with two reflections. The first is that researching and writing this dissertation has made me think much more deliberately about the question of academic writing and identity both in terms of the writing of the students with whom I work, and in relation to my own writing. With regard to the latter, for example, I paid more attention to using active rather than passive verbs, thought carefully about where I should foreground the students as the actors, became more deliberately aware of where I should use modal verbs and where I might be permitted to make more overt claims. I was also very conscious of the way I wanted the dissertation to look; I did not want to write it using numbered paragraphs and I wanted the students' comments to be obviously different from my own text, but not completely separated off from it by quotation marks. I also spent quite a bit of time finding the right font, and at one stage in response to this had a subheading, *Font does matter*. This was not intended to be flippant; it was an acknowledgement that all aspects of a text say something about the writer. And in addition to all of these considerations, I had to keep in mind that, as a student writing in a particular social context I was not free to do exactly what I wanted in terms of the discursal decisions I made; there were certain conventions to which I had to adhere.

⁵ From *The Four Quartets*. Little Gidding .

The second observation is that this study has allowed me to reflect on all the different factors a writer has to manage simultaneously as he or she writes. These include organising and structuring the text, constructing sentences and choosing the right words and phrases. It also includes deciding when to use overtly the voice of another writer and when to try to turn another writer's words into one's own. This can be difficult enough for native speakers of English. Working with Isaac, Maya and Juliet, and in particular with Serena, has allowed me to see something more of the intricate and sometimes profoundly unsettling world of writing for academic purposes in a second language; a language that one might not have permission to play with but is required to work within.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Interview Questions

The initial questions were designed to elicit demographic information about the participants, and sought information about:

- Country of origin
- First language
- Other languages
- Length of time learning English
- Length of time in New Zealand
- Previous tertiary study before coming to Victoria University
- Intended course of Study
- Age

The rest of the interview questions were semi-structured and designed to facilitate conversation between the participants and myself. They included guiding questions such as:

- What impression do you have of yourself as a writer in your first language?
- What impression do you have of yourself as a second language learner?
- What impression do you have of yourself as a second language writer?
- Have these impressions changed during the time you have been studying here at Victoria University?
- What do you think are your strongest points in your English academic writing?

- What aspects of writing academic English do you find most difficult?
- Thinking about a piece of writing you are working on at the moment, what impression do you want the reader / marker to get of you?
- How do you think you could create that impression? Can you point to any items of language that help to create the impression you want?

Appendix B:

An extract from an interview

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Serena conducted on 25 May 2007. As noted on page 29 of this dissertation, these are the transcription symbols:

<i>Italics</i>	comments made by the students. (I do not use speech marks as I find them disruptive to the flow of the text as a whole.)
---	pause
(...)	student's words omitted if not necessary to that part of the interview
Bold	point emphasised by student
(? Unclear)	difficult to hear or understand word or phrase

As I transcribed the interviews, I also added notes and comments as appropriate.

File 001_A_003: Serena's Renaissance essay on perspective

K: How did you feel about the essay by the end?

S: *A little bit upset, I got C*

K: Before you handed it in, how did you feel about it?

S: *I always feel regret about my essay --- I said to myself spend more time to read and should understand what they say, but I didn't. In here my tutor also point out for me I didn't exactly know who is who and when I read books I felt a bit confused..*

K: Where you confused when doing the readings or just when you were trying to write about them?

S: *I did confuse with who is who --- just a little bit*

K: I see here that you've got quite a long quote at the start of paragraph two.

Is this something you typically do? Use long quotes like this?

- S: *Not normally, I don't remember why.* [she laughs] *Actually --- sometimes I use long quotation for limitation of the words.*
- K: You mean? What do you mean.
[There is a long pause]
- S: *Using quotation makes more quantity of words --- sometimes I make long quotation for --- for extension of the words*
- K: To make up the word count?
- S: *Yeab*
- K: Because your essay is too short?
- S: *Yeab*
- K: Do you think that's a good idea?
- S: *No --- [laugh] --- definitely not --- Sometimes I do like that not a good idea*