Negotiating Multilingual Writer Identity in the Dissertation: International Perspectives on Language and Writing Practices

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Negotiating Multilingual Writer Identity in the Dissertation:

International Perspectives on Language and Writing Practices

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Abstract

Globalization and internationalization of higher education have perpetuated the dominance of English as the language of production and reproduction in doctoral education. English dominance considers the status of English as a lingua franca in academia. Multilingual students for whom English is not the first language must engage in complex language and writing practices to meet university and publication standards, globally. As writing is identity work, students must negotiate thought and writing in two or more languages to achieve meaningful self-expression and to represent authentic, authoritative voices in English. Data representing students from 17 different countries and speaking 14 different languages provides insight to understanding multilingual language practices, students’ perceptions of using English to write, and how language and perception influence identity negotiation. Further, the study considers why students write dissertations in English. Findings suggest that multilingual students have little choice in the language of production in doctoral education and engage in complex, often culturally-situated writing practices to construct meaningful writing in English while navigating and negotiating between native and target languages and identities. Rich survey and interview data highlighted diverse experiences to support an international comparative study.

Keywords: Academic writing, language, culture, identity, discourse identity, English as a lingua franca, multilingualism, globalization, Englishization
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the people who supported my doctoral journey:

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**Levi**, your name is to live.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Internationally, academic writing issues challenge doctoral students (Langum & Sullivan, 2017; Ma, 2018; Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015), and many begin doctoral study underprepared for the skills and writing rigor necessary to persist toward completion (Carter & Kumar, 2017). Adopting a scholarly written identity is unnatural, thus sometimes difficult for novice doctoral students (Guo, 2019). Further, students must develop an authorial voice and position themselves in the discourse, which may pose challenges for multilingual students expected to write and publish in English (Morton & Storch, 2018). Doctoral enculturation varies across countries, yet most programs identify dissertation writing, publishing, and joining scholarly communities as academic hallmarks (Guo, 2019; Langum & Sullivan, 2017; Lei & Hu, 2019). To prepare students for prolific scholarship, a rigorous writing curriculum and scholarly engagement embedded in international doctoral programs should support academic literacy development across cultures.

Doctoral Education: A Global Enterprise

On a global scale, higher education reform continues to reshape the nature of academic work, what it means to be an academic, and what constitutes “good academic writing” (Katila et al., 2020, p. 3; Mantai, 2017; Prasad, 2016; Wedlin, 2008; Wegener et al., 2016). To be an academic has shifted from collegial to competitive (Kallio et al., 2020), and internationally, the pressure to write and publish in English spurs competition (Luo & Hyland, 2019). To be recognized as an academic carries the assumption that doctoral students are competent writers (Cloutier, 2016) and publishers (Lund & Tienari, 2019). Internationally, novice doctoral students exist at the periphery of academic communities (Prasad, 2013), and writing and publishing in English help establish the self within scholarly communities (Nejad et al., 2019). Doctoral
education has become a global enterprise where international institutions aim to produce doctoral scholars prepared to compete, collaborate, and network on a global scale (Guo, 2019). English language is the standard of production and symbolizes the most valuable linguistic capital; however, it is debatable whether writing in English is a choice in doctoral programs that attract multilingual students.

Doctoral programs establish different curricular requirements, but the outcomes of a dissertation and publication remain consistent, as do the expectations of academic writing standards (Katila et al., 2020). Consensus suggests doctoral researchers must prepare to work between university, industry, government, and community, and on a global scale (as cited in Jones, 2013). Approaches to reaching these goals, however, remain a concern (Manathunga et al., 2012). For many, academic writing and publishing in English means securing international recognition (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016), thus implications exist for students who may struggle to develop written literacy, authorial voice, and scholarly identities in English.

Authorial voice and scholarly identity development complexify the literature on doctoral education, outcomes, and expectations (Morton & Storch, 2018). Writing and identity share an intimate connection, and Starke-Meyerring (2011) calls for doctoral writing to be understood as “a culturally specific knowledge-making practice” (p. 85). Li (2005) expresses “ways of writing” and “ways of being” (p. 166). Doctoral education prepares students to be scholars as part of identity formation, and as Ma (2018) proclaims, “academic writing is the most crucial skill in doctoral education” (p. 3). Native English-speaking doctoral students struggle with writing competency (Holmes et al., 2018; Ma, 2018), thus developing scholarly identity could be a challenge. For multilingual speakers expected to write and publish in English throughout doctoral study, the challenge amplifies. Yet, as Nejad et al. (2019) note, “academic English is no
one’s first language” (p. 3). Pressure to write and publish in English stems from the internationalization and massification of higher education (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019), and to be successful and participate in the international academic community, scholarly English written literacy is paramount for both native and multilingual speakers (Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015).

**An International Perspective**

Doctoral education trains future experts, educators, and researchers (Guo, 2019) who possess valuable skills for national and international advancement (OECD, 2019). Worldwide, doctoral programs should assure consistent quality and to produce scholars and professionals prepared to participate in global society (Barnett et al., 2017). Programs achieve some consistency through prescribed course study, successful dissertation defense, and a culminating body of work that contains original research; these elements establish the foundation for doctoral training worldwide (Barnett et al., 2017). Further, to broaden international perspectives and prevent the perpetuation of (neo)colonial, historical traditions, international programs must remain flexibility on national, regional, and local levels (Barnett et al. 2017).

As writing remains consistent among doctoral programs, international approaches to doctoral writing practice and pedagogy are important to consider. Writing competency and the dissertation remain barriers to completion (Holmes et al., 2018; Inouye & McAlpine, 2019), and students expected to write using academic English to develop an authorial voice and scholarly identity face many challenges. In a review of 40 years of doctoral publication, Jones (2013) found that doctoral students should be able to write well and publish, and programs should address issues around writing and publishing early in programs. Issues with writing and publication link to program design (Jones, 2013), and if graduation is contingent upon dissertations and scholarly publication (Lei & Chang, 2009), programs are responsible for
addressing academic writing standards. A divide in the literature on writing pedagogy and practice complicates how institutions approach scholarly writing development, thus no consistent approach exists across doctoral programs (Burford, 2017).

Postgraduate students participate in a variety of interdisciplinary doctoral programs and are among the highest achieving, yet few students are literate in academic writing (Carter & Kumar, 2017), and writing skill acquisition remains a concern (Holmes et al., 2018). Writing is essential to completing the dissertation and securing postgraduate careers (Guo, 2019), but 17 percent of doctoral students attrit in writing stages prior to and during dissertation (Carter-Veale et al., 2016). Thirty-four percent of doctoral students cite writing skills as a barrier to completion (Hwang et al., 2015). Though developing proficient written literacy skills improves efficacy (Klocko et al., 2015), postsecondary institutions take different approaches to effective writing pedagogy. Further, social-political issues stem from the need to write in English, a result of educolonialism, the internationalization of higher education, and Englishization (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019; Nejad et al., 2019). With writing as a common barrier and English established as a lingua franca, the global language for scholarly writing (Nejad et al., 2019; Van Weijen, 2013), many multilingual students may experience linguistic and cultural disenfranchisement and identity regulation. Internationally, English is both barrier and access to mobility (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this international comparative qualitative study is to explore academic writing practices, language perceptions, and identity negotiation among international doctoral students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Further, the study employs constructivist grounded theory methodology to understand whether doctoral students perceive
writing in English as a choice and considers why and how doctoral students write dissertations in English.

**Statement of the Problem**

Globally, students enter dissertation phase underprepared for academic writing rigor and academic English competency necessary to persist toward completion (Carter & Kumar, 2017). Some research suggests the pressure to write in English perpetuates Western (neo)colonial dominance, especially in countries where doctoral programs do not or cannot provide sufficient training in English (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Toprak, 2019). Further, Englishization propagates linguistic and cultural homogenization, which threaten to regulate otherwise authentic written and scholarly identities (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). Worldwide, however, students produce dissertations in English. Current literature, from the perspective of English as a lingua franca, does not compare the writing practices, attitudes, and choices that influence doctoral student identity negotiation internationally.

**Background of the Problem**

Over two decades, conceptions of scholarly writing shifted from a skills-based approach, which emphasizes grammar and linguistic acquisition (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; Kamler & Thompson, 2014; Lea & Street, 1998), to social practice, which involves interaction with texts and disciplinary relationships (Fairclough, 1992; Ivanič, 1998). This shift spawned a discussion around scholarly identity, and research continues to support the symbiotic relationship between academic writing and scholarly identity formation (Kamler & Thompson, 2014). Yet, writing competency gaps remain as students transition from master’s to doctoral study (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019; Joint Qualities Initiative, 2004), and doctoral faculty cite guiding quality writing as critical to competency (Roberts et al., 2019).
Rigorous enculturation into scholarly communities is responsible for shaping novice doctoral students into experts (Guo, 2019). To develop research identities, students acquire writing skills and language to communicate within their disciplines and to develop authorial stance to position research in the field (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019). Doctoral programs define the expectations of a scholar, but the shift away from a skills-based, tacit knowledge approach to writing leaves students struggling to acquire academic writing competency, which never fully developed in undergraduate and graduate studies (Jalongo et al., 2014).

“Acquiring the skills of scholarly writing presents an interesting paradox” (Jalongo, 2014, p. 242). Doctoral study requires students to write a culminating body of work, the dissertation, and should prepare students for scholarly publication; however, students continue to demonstrate lack of confidence in writing skills, and institutional structures do not sustain nor support scholarly writing and publication (McGrail et al., 2006). Academic writing is complex disciplinary and identity work, and novice scholars require explicit, strategic written literacy support (Kamler, 2008, p. 284, 292). Only then to institutions graduate confident students prepared to do the work of a scholar (Kamler, 2008).

**Writing: A Skills Based Approach**

Academic writing is a facet of the academic skills novice scholars develop throughout doctoral study, yet the dissertation writing process remains a challenge (Jeyaraj, 2020). Often, however, novice doctoral students participate in curriculum that fails to teach the skills of academic writing, raising issues of inclusivity (Jalongo et al., 2014). For multilingual students, linguistic demands exacerbate the challenge (as cited in Jeyaraj, 2020). In some international programs, solutions to writing challenges approach writing as skills-based, which may include writing skills courses, workshops, and “how to” programs (Badenhorst et al., 2015; as cited in
Jeyaraj, 2020, p. 7). Lea and Street (1998) relate study skills to academic writing, defining these skills as:

a conceptualization of literacy based on the belief that there is a body of knowledge and a set of skills for academic literacy which can be taught independently of context, and transferred to the different contexts in which students need to write, and […] students need to be taught generic, technical aspects of writing (as cited in Ivanič, 2004, p. 222).

Langum and Sullivan (2020) note the perception of a skills deficit—disadvantages related to language and writing—among multilingual writers. Non-Anglophone countries, when they can, provide writing and language support to address the deficit, if it exists. In Nordic countries, such as Finland, skills-based academic writing instruction is embedded into courses that teach English for Academic Purposes, and students develop language and communication skills necessary for international academic participation (Tuomainen, 2016). In Malaysia, the need for skills-based writing support improves completion rates and time to completion in doctoral study, as writing as social practice is not always effective (Jeyarja, 2020).

When skills-based courses are not available for doctoral students, additional resources that teach grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills are another option (Stoilescu & McDougall, 2010). Depending on a students’ location geographically, however, sufficient resources may not be available, which perpetuates issues of agency and mobility in academic writing development. Jalongo et al. (2014) call for academic writing instruction to be a core element of the doctoral curriculum and to avoid the tacit knowledge approach that only supports students with preexisting knowledge or skill sets.
Writing: A Social Practice

Peer support, mentorships, and writing groups are examples of writing as a social practice. In these environments, students learn to write through socialization, which requires social skills (Stoilescu & McDougall, 2010). Jeyarja (2020) writes, “to address the social aspect of writing, peer writing groups have been set up so that students can gather to give and receive feedback on their writing” (p. 6). Social writing contexts focus more broadly on writing process and development and less on the linguistic, syntactic, or discipline-specific aspects of writing. When working with mentors, such as coauthors who are established scholars or writing experts, novice researchers learn from collaboration, review, and editing processes (Stoilescu & McDougall, 2010). Lea and Street (1998) use the term “academic socialization” when referring to writing as social practice, which indicates that different literacies apply to different context. For writing, “students need to learn the specific characteristics of academic writing, and of the disciplinary culture into which they are entering” (as cited in Ivanič, 2004, p. 222).

Among multilingual writers, however, issues with social practice emerge from varying to degrees of English proficiency among mentors and students or among student peer groups (Calikoglu, 2018). Hu et al. (2014) consider student and teacher language competency and how inadequacy may impede student success in English-medium instruction environments, which are increasingly more common in global academia. As the link between writing and publishing in English and competitive global scholarship tightens, writing norms and standards dictated by top journals, for example, determine writing experiences for students. To participate, students would need access to scholars, mentors, or peer groups familiar and with access to the accepted writing practices of English-controlled publishing. For students in countries where English is not an official language nor the language of higher education, or who enroll in international doctoral
programs but do not have near-native English competency, language opportunities and training may be limited, which creates issues of access and mobility.

**Academic Writing in English: An International Perspective**

Ames et al. (2018) write, “there is not a common methodology or accepted protocol across all international [doctoral] programs” (p. 83), and differences in doctoral programs make comparisons difficult. Though program structures, expectations, and rigor vary worldwide, the dissertation, publication, and effective academic writing (in English) remain problematic and consistent across many counties. The expectation to write and publish in English appears in much of the literature devoted to completion barriers, protocol, and other doctoral student issues. Students unable to develop academic writing competency may struggle to develop scholarly identities and authorial voices, which restrict academic and social mobility and international competition (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Ha & Barnawi, 2015; Nejad et al., 2019).

As the number of multilingual doctoral students increases globally, so does the requirement to write dissertations and publish in English (Guo, 2019). Many universities are responding by “Englishizing” in order to “internationalize” (Rose & McKinley, 2018, p. 2). Thus, to internationalize is synonymous with Englishization—the favored use of English over other languages (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Multilingual doctoral students, especially in countries whose programs lack English-medium instruction or language support, suffer the disadvantage of underrepresentation (Toprak, 2019). Further, Hyland (2016) purports that native English speakers have an advantage in academic writing but notes that “academic English is no one’s first language” (as cited in Nejad et al., 2019). The pervasiveness of English, therefore, extends Western (neo)colonial dominance to the point of academic homogenization (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019; Murphy & Zhu, 2012).
English has been argued to be the *lingua franca* of academia (ELFA), and as literacy competence and English-medium doctoral instruction vary globally, language becomes a source of contention among academic communities (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). In general, academic writing competency and the dissertation remain barriers to completion (Holmes et al., 2018); however, when students lack the resources and instruction necessary to be successful in doctoral programs, especially when success is defined by a non-native and homogenizing language, the issue becomes one of inequity (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016). For doctoral students, writing is more than a dissertation or publications—it is identity work (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016), which further complicates the issue. What and how students write forms academic reputations and identities (Cloutier, 2016). To develop a scholarly identity and authorial voice in a non-native language poses an even greater challenge (Katila et al., 2020; Ursin et al., 2020).

**Elite to Universal: An Overview of Higher Education**

Martin Trow (1974) identifies three phases of higher education development: the elite university phase (15 percent participation); mass higher education (15 to less than 50 percent participation); and the universal phase (greater than 50 percent participation). Currently, higher education is in the massification phase (Kivinen et al., 2007); to reach the universal phase, participation in higher education would become a civic duty (Trow, 1974). Calderon (2018) predicted 250 million students would be enrolled in higher education by 2020, which jumps to nearly 600 million by 2040.

Collins (1979) argues against education as means to employment, and D’Agostino (2014) claims the purpose of higher education is not economic. As enrollment in higher education grows, and as the global economy continues to expand, however, ignoring the correlations between the education, career, and economic gain is difficult. English has become the language
of mobility, of workplaces, and of higher education (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Kivinen et al., 2007). Should higher education reach the universal stage, English-medium communication will threaten to homogenize beyond global education sectors (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). Already, English maintains instrumental value and linguistic capital that benefit career development, including higher education (Pan & Block, 2011).

Education credentials lay claim to the world of work (Bills, 2004; Kiviven et al., 2007). Thus, to compete internationally as a researcher, scholar, or academic, and to represent one’s nation effectively within global society, English competency is required (Guo, 2019). English dominance threatens and replaces indigenous languages within universities worldwide (Hultgren et al., 2014) and is a “key means of internationalizing, competing, and becoming ‘world class’” (Altbach, 2007, p. 3608). Ultimately, the pervasiveness of English threatens to regulate the identities of doctoral students who work to develop authentic scholarly identities through writing and contribution to research fields. Academic recognition implies competence in written literacy (Cloutier, 2016)—increasingly, competence refers to English.

**The Intersection of Internationalization and Englishization**

International programs, instruction, and mobility comprise some of the internationalization activities in higher education (Toprak, 2019). In many cases, “English” has become synonymous with “international”. The volume of institutions worldwide that have shifted to teaching in English, as opposed to the country’s native language, signifies a global phenomenon (Mitchell, 2016). Across 700 cities, 1,000 universities, and over 200 disciplines, 72,500 full-degree options are available in English (Neghina, 2016). With English as the primary language of delivery, English language literacy becomes the means of mobility. Thus, the connection between English language and internationalization is clear, and countries benefiting
the most from internationalization are native-English speaking (Rose & McKinley, 2017). Anglophone countries, including the UK, the USA, Australia, and Canada, benefit from internationalization and English dominance because “early-career scholars are intellectually born and grown as Anglo-academics via English-language PhD-programmes and other means aimed at making them Anglophone academics” (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Lund & Tienari, 2019; as cited in Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019, p. 10).

Benefits extend to native English-speaking students via language proficiency in writing and comprehension, while the influx of multilingual students in Anglophone countries marks substantial monetary gain (Acquaye et al., 2017). Further, students familiar with writing in English as their first language and with the knowledge culture of English-speaking institutions afford the benefit of exposure to writing standards and norms. Boussebaa and Tienari (2019) note, “Meeting expectations is by no means straightforward given the difficulty of learning a second language, let alone using it to write and publish academic work, which typically requires very high levels of linguistic competence” (p. 10). Horn (2017) adds, “[s]cholars who wish to be taken seriously must develop an Anglophone fluency, and this at an exceptionally high level” (p. 3; as cited in Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019).

The most successful institutions offer English-medium instruction and programs marketed as “international”, and universities practice Englishization to attract international students, which is to “internationalize” (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Rose & McKinley, 2017). As more languages come into contact in higher education settings deemed to be international, the more English will be required to bridge communication—the need for English will continue to grow (de Swaan, 2001; Toprak, 2019). To “internationalize,” then, is to conform to monolingual language policies, which is especially common in graduate programs where the pressure to write
and publish in English grants access to international recognition (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Risager, 2012).

**Global English: An Overview**

Crystal (2003) identified 1.5 billion English speakers of varying proficiency in the Anglosphere—the English-speaking world. Of these, approximately 750 million use English as a first or second language, while the remaining half constitute English as a Foreign Language (EFL) users (Crystal, 2003). Bolton (2008) estimated 800 million speakers of English in Asia alone (as cited in Walkinshaw & Oahn, 2014). In 2003, the ratio of native versus non-native speakers was 1:3 (Crystal, 2003). In 118 countries, English is an established language (Yadav, 2018), and in 59 countries, English has official language status (Florida Atlantic University, 2018). Within these 59 countries, 54 also designate English as the language of instruction in higher education (Florida Atlantic University, 2018). Compared with the growing number of international institutions offering programs in English where English is not the official language, and as the varieties of English used globally increase, doctoral students face complications in the standards, norms, and expectations of writing in English.

**Perceptions of Native and Non-Native Standards**

Though many countries have claimed ownership of English and perceive its use as a language of identification in inter- and intracultural contexts (Proshina, 2014), high standards of writing expectations continue to stigmatize and disadvantage multilingual writers labeled “non-native” (Huang, 2010). Native proficiency, however, is a “myth” (Huang, 2010, p.41), a “convenient fiction” (Walkinshaw & Oahn, 2014, p. 2), that thwarts multilingual student mobility. Kramsch (1997) notes standard forms of English are not the norm, and multilingual communities must abandon the perception that native English speakers are the “gold standard” of correctness (Walkinshaw & Oahn, 2014, p. 1). While resources exist for multilingual writers to “improve their writing”, the additional time, effort, and resources required may not be feasible nor available, and regardless, it impedes mobility (Ho, 2017; Luo & Hyland, 2019).

**Doctoral Program Goals**

Most academic institutions perceive the doctoral degree as the highest honor of educational achievement (Jairam & Kahl, 2012). Doctoral programs prepare future faculty and leaders of commerce and industry, and students mediate idea exchange between institutions and business (Nettles & Millett, 2006; Thune, 2009). Variations in doctoral training exist between countries, though research evidences attempts to standardize quality control among doctoral programs (Barnett et al., 2017). Doctoral education is multidisciplinary (Goodchild, 2014), and in some regards, multilingual, yet Card et al. (2016) find that multiculturalism is an increasing trend but remains absent from core curriculum in doctoral programs. Further, Calderon (2018) calls for increased, targeted support for the growing population of culturally and ethnically diverse students. As English language continues to dominate doctoral expectations, homogenization could affect more than language; English threatens the multiculturalism that already struggles for representation in tertiary education (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019).
One philosophy of education is “to produce skilled and responsible citizens for social transformation” (as cited in Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016, p. 81). This philosophy holds true especially for doctoral students worldwide who participate in academically rigorous environments with the goal of adding to bodies of knowledge across diverse fields. Davis et al. (2006) write that doctoral students “[create] the new ideas and knowledge upon which future educational activities can be built, sustained and nourished” (p. 236). The dissertation, a global standard of doctoral program completion (Card et al., 2016), represents new ideas and knowledge contribution. As doctoral programs expand and internationalize, English-medium instruction and the pressure to write and publish in English follow. In doctoral programs, Englishization creates inequities in knowledge production, which Boussebaa and Tienari (2019) describe as “quasi-colonial forms of identity work by those being Englishized” (p. 2).

Doctoral students experience a transformation from student to scholar, an identity shift which the dissertation should complement and refine. Scholarly writing is at the core of developing scholarly identities; for non-native English speakers, however, the identity shift is more complicated (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). To develop a scholarly identity in English is to deny emerging multilingual scholars the right to full authentic selves and to achieve the authorial voice that should emerge in academic writing (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). The dominance of English is already a global issue that threatens multilingual, multicultural education, touting itself as international. If English serves higher education in the same capacity that Latin serves science (as the standard), issues with English competency, written literacy, and access branch from the overarching reach of Englishization (Mortensen & Haberland, 2012).
Written Literacy and English Competence

Many students begin doctoral programs underprepared for the rigor of academic writing (Carter & Kumar, 2017). Dissertation and publication pedagogy are uncommon practices in higher education (Ferguson, 2009), and varying levels exposure to academic writing prior to program admission (Ondrusek, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014) means doctoral students commence study at different competency levels. Further, doctoral programs admit students from interdisciplinary backgrounds of which writing may not have been a major component. Beyond common issues of written literacy, writing from a scholarly perspective (Ondrusek, 2012) and formulating thoughts (O’Connor, 2017) challenge doctoral students, as the doctoral identity developed through writing is a personal and vulnerable endeavor (Marshall et al., 2017).

Academic writing in a first language is challenging enough, but for students writing and publishing doctoral work in English as a non-native language poses additional challenges native speakers may not encounter. Interaction in academic communities supports scholarly identity development, as well as academic oral and written literacy (Seloni, 2012). Students also learn the expectations of producing an academic text in English (Seloni, 2012). However, in countries where there is limited access to English-medium instruction and resources, students are marginalized (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016).

Studies from Nordic countries (Katila et al., 2020), Pakistan (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Sadij & Siddiqui, 2015), France (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016), Iran (Nejad et al., 2019), Saudi Arabia (Ha & Barnawi, 2015), China (Huang, 2010), and Japan (Rose & McKinley, 2018), among others, represent countries where Englishization and access pose social, economic, and international consequences for doctoral students. Not only is English a barrier to completing the dissertation, publications, and graduation, it restricts access to competitive international
representation where English has become a requirement for mobility and success (Toprak, 2019).
Furthermore, studies suggest that the pressure to develop scholarly written identities in English implies a loss of identity, expressing “sadness and even disgust and embarrassment” as they struggle to define identities across academic settings (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016, p. 13).

**Englishization as Identity Regulation in Doctoral Programs**

Aitchison et al. (2012) write that doctoral students “must work hard to identify and master complex linguistic practices and position themselves as independent scholars in their discourse communities” (p. 446). Starke-Meyerring (2011) positions doctoral writing as “transformative of writers themselves” (p. 80) and a “culturally specific knowledge-making practice” (p. 85). Thus, situating doctoral writing in the context of affective political practice “encourages greater curiosity about the neoliberal transformations to doctoral education and the consequences these have had in reshaping the emotional subjectivities of doctoral writers” (Burford, 2017, p. 24). Burford (2017) recognizes the emotional identity work of doctoral writers as historically constructed (Cvetcovich, 2012) and culturally generated. To be affective is to embody meaning making (Burford, 2017; Wetherell, 2012).

As burgeoning scholars, doctoral students participate in identity work to establish desired academic versions of themselves (Brown & Coupland, 2015). Thus, students should have the freedom to “craft preferred versions of their selves” (as cited in Boussebaa & Brown, 2016, p. 4). Power and organizational practice, however, regulate identity formation (Foucault, 1979).

Organizational Englishization, the “world-societal discourse of English as a global language”, emerges as a form of identity regulation (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016, p. 5). While numerous studies focus on issues with doctoral student writing, Englishization, and identity politics, further research is needed to understand the writing practices and choices of students who choose to
write and publish in English as a non-native language. Additionally, it is important to explore the identity transformations such individuals may perceive as they choose to abandon their native languages, cultures, and countries to pursue doctoral study.

**Research Questions**

(1) Why do students write dissertations in English?

(2) How do doctoral students perceive identity negotiation while writing dissertations in English?

(3) How do doctoral students perceive authorial voice development while writing dissertations in English?

(4) What are students’ attitudes toward using English to write dissertations?

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic Writing*: Academic writing is a mental and cognitive activity that addresses an intellectual community and evidences competence in accessing, evaluating, and synthesizing words, ideas, and opinions (Al Fadda, 2012). Additionally, strong academic writing demonstrates the ability to develop authorial voice (Al Fadda, 2012; Cotterall, 2011).

*Advanced Academic Literacy (AAL)*: Advanced academic literacy includes acquiring writing skills and knowledge transfer (Belcher, 1994). Learning to function as a research member in social-cultural communities is another component of AAL. Wang (2009) defines AAL in three sub-abilities: academic research, professional knowledge, and academic norms. For non-native writers, AAL extends beyond being able to read and write, thus encompasses professional knowledge acquisition, academic writing skills, and identity transformation (Ma, 2018). Academic literacy has foundations in education, Marxism, critical linguistics, and critical education (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).
**Authorial Voice**: Voice development links directly to the writing process. Because texts are social interactions, constructing recognizable and authoritative identity in academic writing involves students negotiating between individual creativity knowledge and the discipline-specific values, attitudes toward knowledge, and linguistic forms (Morton & Storch, 2018). Successful authorial voice development marks the transition from a doctoral student writing to a researcher positioned authoritatively within the discipline (Morton & Storch, 2018).

**Doctoral Writing**: The literature on doctoral writing presents two definitions. The first defines doctoral writing as a skills-based approach (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Curry, 2006), an act that is mechanical, predictable, and straightforward (White, 2013), and as a set of straightforward techniques (grammar and mechanics) (Burford, 2017). Further, this definition frames writing as “individual, neutral, cognitive” (Badenhorst et al., 2015, p. 3). The second definition situates doctoral writing as a complex social action (Kamler & Thompson, 2014), a rhetorical event shaped by power relations (Lee & Aitchison, 2009), and as a “culturally specific knowledge-making practice” (Starke-Meyerring, 2011, p. 85). Additionally, this definition perceives doctoral writing as grounded in disciplinary epistemic practices (Starke-Meyerring, 2011).

**English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**: English for academic purposes facilitates study and research in English and emerged from the field of English for specific purposes (ESP) (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) define EAP as “language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communication needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts” (p. 2). EAP also addresses cognitive, social, and linguistic requirements for specific academic disciplines (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).
**English as an International Language (EIL):** As an international language, English performs a function in multilingual contexts and expresses linguistic varieties at local and global levels (Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010). The multiple linguistic varieties possess rules and conventions defined and negotiated both locally and internationally, and they do not conform to native speaker standards (Friedrich & Matsuda, 2010). EIL recognizes global varieties of English and their development, and EIL practitioner-scholars aim to move away from native standard norms in global English pedagogy (Vodopija-Krstanović & Marine, 2019).

**English as a Lingua Franca (ELF):** ELF implies that English is an international language, spoken among users who do not share a common linguistic background. ELF may represent global varieties of English based on where the version of English develops geographically (Kachru, 1996). Two basic approaches to ELF exist. One is supported by Phillipson (1992), who perceives ELF as linguistic imperialism, while Pölzl (2003) sees ELF as lacking a cultural code, meaning it is a neutral, vehicular language serving communication needs. Jenkins (2015) provides three current definitions of ELF:

- English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages (Jenkins, 2009).
- Any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option (Seidlhofer, 2011).
- The use of English in a lingua franca language scenario (Mortensen, 2012).

The issue in defining ELF is that some scholars see it as a neutral language, not belonging to any one group (such as native speakers), whereas others see it as a global threat to linguistic diversity (Gobbo, 2015).
**English as a Lingua Franca in Academia (ELFA):** Mauranen (2010) distinguishes ELFA from ELF by arguing its use for academic purposes, such as research, education, and communication, as opposed to representing linguistic or cultural identification. This definition of ELFA accounts for the globalization and internationalization of higher education, where English dominates as the medium of instruction, production, and reproduction.

**Englishization:** In higher education, the term Englishization has evolved to represent the language’s global dominance (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016). Specifically, Englishization refers to the increasing presence and status of English language as the medium of instruction (Hultgren et al., 2015), as a taught subject (Eurostat, 2016), and as the preferred language of pedagogical models and immersion programs (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018). Some literature on Englishization recognizes English dominance as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2009) that threatens to homogenize and regulate identity (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016).

**Intercultural (Contrastive) Rhetoric:** Kaplan (1966) introduced the concept of contrastive rhetoric as a cultural phenomenon, proposing that different cultures have different rhetorical approaches to writing. Connor (2004) revised contrastive rhetoric to consider the greater influence of culture, and coined the term *intercultural rhetoric*, defined as “study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds (Connor, 2011, p. 2).

**Internationalization:** In the context of higher education, internationalization refers to activities, procedures, and services that define international and intercultural dimensions to institutional instruction, research, and service functions (Knight, 1994). Internationalization also includes a global dimension to the purpose and delivery of education (Knight, 2003); thus the term *globalization* may also be used. Regarding English, internationalization represents English
language competency, instruction-medium, and publication as the academic standard in higher
education worldwide (Toprak, 2019).

**Multilingual Writer:** Individual with the ability to write in two or more languages
(Langum & Sullivan, 2020).

**Voice:** Writing voice may be individualized and social. Individual voice connotes
personal style whereas social voice is socially-constructed, engaging writers and readers with
specific contexts (Langum & Sullivan, 2020).

**Significance of the Study**

This study will supplement the existing body of literature on doctoral writing, authorial
voice, and identity development, and address gaps in writing practice and in power and identity
dynamics related to English language. Discussion from this study will also add to the growing
researcher related to writing in English as a lingua franca of academic. Additionally, it will focus
on these concepts in relation to doctoral students writing in English as a non-native language.

While much literature exists on these topics, writing practice remains relatively
unexplored (Burford, 2017), and Boussebaa and Brown (2019) call for additional research that
brings awareness to the role of English in knowledge production. Thus, this study aims to
address attitudes, perceptions, and choices of doctoral students who write dissertations in English
and to compare experiences among international students. The study is significant because it
applies constructivist grounded theory to ask *what* and *how* questions to explore *why* doctoral
students make choices about language and writing practices.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter One introduces the dissertation topic and state’s the study’s purpose, frames the
study within the context of current literature, addresses a problem and provides background to
the problem, and identifies the study’s significance. Research questions indicate what the study
intends to explore. Additionally, a list of defined terms assists the reader’s understanding of
those terms within the context of the study. Chapter Two synthesizes a comprehensive literature
review, providing an overview of identity, language, and culture. Chapter Three comprises the
methodology, research procedures, the researcher’s role, as well as ethical and professional
considerations. Chapter Four presents a report and analysis of survey and interview data, while
Chapter Five begins with an overview and data summary, reports findings, discusses emergent
themes and theory, and closes with a reflection from the researcher.
Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study and current research that supports and frames the purpose of the study as well as the problems it intends to address. Recent literature also reported background to the problem. Content from Chapter One focuses on general issues with academic writing at the doctoral level, writing and language competency, and the global spread of English that could potentially disrupt diverse linguistic and cultural practices in higher education, as they relate to identity negotiation. The current chapter includes historical theory and philosophy and expands upon recent literature to situate the study in the contexts of identity, language, and linguistic and cultural theories and concepts. Later in this study, this literature review will critically support the methodology, establish rigor, and frame emergent themes.

Humboldt (1836) and Whorf (2012) both explore the relationships between language and thought. Bakhtin (1986a) perceives language and thought as a unified entity, suggesting that language may embody unique ways of thinking, which echoes the same concepts Whorf and Humboldt proposed years prior. Doctoral students around the world, who represent multilingual, interdisciplinary, and transcultural individuals, commence doctoral study with the intent to become scholars. Each student represents a wealth of identities, a complex amalgamation of selves influenced by cultural histories and traditions, and of course, by the language or languages that shape their thoughts.

To begin, Whorf (2012) addresses the “thought world”, the microcosm each individual experiences within the self, employed to measure and understand the macrocosm of broader experience (p. 189). Language, in the thought world, represents more than linguistic patterns, yet the thought world is also linguistically determined (Whorf, 2012). Humboldt (1836) defines
language as “the formative organ of thought” and the goal of language is to express thought (p. 13; emphasis in original), arguing that language and thought are one and thus inseparable. Whorf (2012) states directly that language is “expression of the thought” (p. 328) and suggests that thinking follows particular organization patterns, which influence reality and intelligence. Similar to Wittgenstein’s statement regarding the limitations of language, before him, Whorf (2012) claimed that a language user is “constrained completely within its [language’s organization] unbreakable bonds” (p. 328), which implies that language structural patterns control how language and thought produce. The act of production, for Humboldt (1836), purposes understanding, for which language is the instrument.

For Whorf and Humboldt, language is a system that forms connections between culture and linguistic patterns and exudes both individual and collective spiritual connections among users. The mother-tongue, or primary language’s purpose is to express feelings (Humboldt, 1836), and each language’s system (including linguistic patterns) shapes thought. As Whorf (2012) writes:

thinking itself is in a language […] And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also […] channels reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness (p. 322-323).

Humboldt (1836) explains that languages structures (pattern systems) differ because the nations they represent also differ, which supports his claim of language as world-view—how thoughts connect. For Whorf (2012), “lge itself is culture” (p. 364). Language, culture, thought, and worldview thus share intimate interconnectedness that arguably shapes identity at individual and national levels. Language, in speaking and writing, produces thought in culturally-specific,
linguistically-patterned, and meaningful ways for the user to achieve authentic expression. Humboldt (1836) questions the power of using a non-native language, attributing strength and intimacy to one’s native language, and arguing that in our native language, we perceive “a portion of ourselves” (p. 15).

To consider Humboldt, Whorf, and Bakhtin’s approaches to language and thought is to consider the cultural, traditional, linguistic, social, and communal influences that comprise the dissertation writing process. Bakhtin (1986a) recognizes language as the realized form of written utterances that “reflect the specific conditions and goal of each” through content, style, and compositional structure (p. 60). Thus, the present literature review considers ways of thinking related to writing, identity, and language, and reviews research and perceptions of negotiation, voice construction, and authorship in language, writing, and identity practices, as they may relate to multilingual doctoral students participating in an era of globalized, international higher education.

**Cultural and Linguistic Capital**

Doctoral students enter study possessing various forms of capital, such as cultural and linguistic. Bourdieu (1986) defines three forms of cultural capital; however, most relevant to the current study is the existence of cultural capital in the form of the institutionalized state, as it relates to educational qualifications. Cultural capital moves beyond financial investments in education to consider how time and cultural capital influence ability (Bourdieu, 1986). Gerhards (2014) regards institutionalized cultural capital as “education or education qualifications awarded to a person by society’s educational institutions” (p. 65). Over time, doctoral students accumulate cultural capital based on the time they invest in education. However, the cultural capital one possesses upon entering doctoral study may depend on cultural capital invested by one’s family,
in terms of prior educational experience, which has social implications (Bourdieu, 1986). Where a student attends university and the medium of instruction and production also carry social capital in some cultures.

Learning a foreign language has cultural value, and the cost of learning a language, such as English, is relevant to the time investment necessary (Gerhards, 2014). When language systems are similar, such as sharing characters, a student invests less time and effort into learning the language. Gerhards (2014) refers to “linguistic distance”, which defines the proximity of a native language to English as a foreign language (p. 66). Individuals whose native language is proximal to English invest less time and effort into learning the language, which provides greater opportunities for linguistic capital gain. Time and investment as cultural capital, therefore, depend on linguistic capital and native language, which are socially and geographically defined.

Bourdieu (1977) perceives language as an “instrument of power” (p. 648) and claims that “language is worth what those who speak it are worth” (p. 652). Access to social and cultural capital is often dependent upon English proficiency; access to English proficiency is, in turn, determined by access to education, which are socially and culturally determined. Bourdieu’s (1977) term for proficiency is competence, which he defines as “the right to speech […] to the legitimate language, the authorized language […] the language of authority” (p. 648). Thus, linguistic competence “functions as linguistic capital” when related to a particular market—in this case, higher education and competitive, international publication in English (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 651).

Bourdieu (1977) establishes education systems as objects of struggle, wherein they control production and reproduction—English competency and its value depend on maintaining this control. Production, defined in terms of this study, is cultural capital, the doctoral degree one
intends to earn, but also the dissertation, which must be produced in English. Reproduction thus symbolizes publication in English as well as the reproduction of existing knowledge, through which doctoral students position themselves within the discourse, shape their voices, and refine their authorship. By participating in international doctoral programs, administered in English, students join “the same linguistic community” and abstractly recognize English as the dominant language and participate in adding to its value, even if this is not their intent (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 652). English has become the norm through its dominance; further, the standards and norms of English determine legitimate competence, and the competence necessary for multilingual students writing in English as a non-native language may only be accessed through cultural and social capital.

For individuals whose access to English is restricted based on social status, which impacts access to education resources, the value of English increases. Klapwijk and Van der Walt (2016) note that in South Africa, for example, English directly affects access to higher education, which allows for social mobility. As Bourdieu (1977) writes, “to acquire the dominant usage is a function of the chances of access to the markets on which that usage has a value, and the chances succeeding in them” (p. 656). And dominance usage “is the usage of the dominant class” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 659). The competency required to meet university standards if only achieved socially, through “early familiarization”—and as Bourdieu (1977) explains:

Having acquired the dominant usage by early familiarization, the only pedagogy capable of infusing that manner of using language which constitutes the most inimitable aspect of linguistic performance, and having reinforced this practical training by a theoretical training organized by the school, aimed at transforming practical mastery into explicit, self-conscious mastery and extending its range while ensuring the internalization of the
scholarly norm in the form of a bodily disposition, they [users] are able to produce, continuously and apparently without effort, the most correct language, not only as regards syntax but also pronunciation and diction, which provide the surest indices for social placing.

To open the literature review with an overview of Bourdieu and how he positions dominant language and its relevance to cultural and linguistic capital is essential for this study. Bourdieu’s philosophies of language and capital frame the experiences of multilingual students who must participate in English-dominant higher education systems, producing and reproducing, negotiating and compromising their own identities in another language, while navigating cultural and linguistic standards in a non-native language. Finally, Bourdieu highlights the disadvantages inherent for non-native speakers of a dominant language, considering that mobility, time, and investment are contingent upon access, which is socially derived. In this way, native English speakers will always maintain the advantage, so long as production and the value of English remain high.

**Language and Text**

_In language, there are only potential possibilities for relations._

—*Bakhtin, 1986b, p. 122*

As “unmediated reality”, the text represents authentic thought and experience of the individual (*Bakhtin, 1986b, p. 103*). Language as thought and writing as the construction of meaning work together to create unique expressions. For doctoral students, the dissertation is the culmination of meaning-making, executed via the creation of a written text. Bakhtin (1986b) writes that “something created is always created out of something given,” such as language, observed reality, the self, or world view (p. 120). In the process of constructing meaning and
creating the dissertation using what is given, the doctoral student as scholar is also created. Thus, the linguistics of language serve as a means to an end (Bakhtin, 1986) in the process of becoming a scholar.

While language has the power “to reflect the individuality of the speaker” and to possess individual style (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 63), it also has the power to restrict, control, and constrain (Canagarajah, 2015). The role of the doctoral student also requires negotiation and choices, often involving language, which is true especially for multilingual students aspiring to complete on the global academic stage. To Canagarajah (2015), role refers to various subject positions available in institutions, such as schools and professional communities. Students may negotiate and renegotiate power related to their roles in higher education and scholarly communities, yet constraint remains a factor (Canagarajah, 2015).

Language as the vehicle of thought and English as a vehicular language present challenges unique to multilingual students who must write in English as a non-native language. Lee and Canagarajah (2018) find that “monolingual bias shapes the dominant cultural group as one with semiotic legitimacy, and therefore, positions minoritized groups as one responsible for negotiating linguistic and rhetorical difference by conforming to the dominant social norms” (p. 12). Language choice, if it exists, regulates how doctoral students reshape identity, subjectivity, and role, which ultimately affect how students represent authorial voice (Canagarajah, 2015). Further, language is “creative and polysemous” and offers “resources for writers to rise above historical, social, and ideological impositions, register a reflexive awareness of their constraints, and adopt a strategic footing in relation to them” (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 124-125). Identity for multilingual doctoral students, therefore, requires more complex negotiation, as the scholarly expectation is to write and publish in English. Ultimately, identity studies related to writing and
language in doctoral study, should consider the student’s social role, agency, and desire for the self in the process of becoming. To recall Bakhtin’s (1986a) claim that concrete utterances manifest language, and that life and language share a symbiotic relationship, suggests that language will always reflect the writer’s individuality, thus possess the style and identity of the writer.

**Identity**

*Identity is simultaneously a personal, relational, and collective phenomenon; it is stable in some ways and fluid in others; and identity is formed and revised throughout the lifespan of individuals and the histories of social groups and categories, through an interplay of processes of self-discovery, personal construction, and social construction, some of which are relatively deliberate and explicit, whereas others are more automatic and implicit* (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 8).

Identity is a complex, powerful construct that diverges along two major spectrums of content and processes (Vignoles et al., 2011). Sedikides and Brewer (2001) define three levels of identity as individual, relational, and collective, while Ivanič (1998) divides “self” into four categories: possibilities, autobiographical, discoursal, and authorial. Both Sedikides and Brewer (2001) and Ivanič’s (1998) approaches to identity and selfhood are important to consider in the context of doctoral student identity negotiation, thus the literature of identity begins with multiple perspectives of how to define identity. Foucault and Bakhtin’s contributions to understanding discourse and identity provide context for situating writer identity within discourse. As the literature on identity is extensive, the research intends to utilize theories and definitions of identity as they are defined by and apply to discoursal/discursive, academic, writing, and language contexts.
Selfhood

In the act of writing, writers have three possibilities for self-hood, shaped within a socio-cultural context: autobiographical, discoursal, and authorial (Ivanič, 1998). Writer identity includes various forms of self, such as the self that begins the act of writing, the self constructed through writing, and the self the audience perceives through writing (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). The dissertation is an act of writing that occurs across time, thus the writer identity that begins the dissertation exists and constructs in flux. Writing the dissertation serves as the vehicle for scholarly identity construction, and the identity of a student who has finished a dissertation is not the same as the identity of the student who began. Evidence of the transformation is in the writing, and as writing is an iterative process, as the scholarly self and authorial voice construct, so does the audience’s perception of the writer. A finished dissertation should demonstrate scholarly identity and authorial voice—both evidence of a newly negotiated and socially accepted identity transformation. Ivanič’s (1998) definitions of self help explain the phenomenon.

Possibilities for selfhood. Available resources situated in socio-cultural contexts inform possibilities for selfhood, thus, limited available resources or access constrains selfhood (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). Many doctoral students aspire to join the global academic community, and writing in English has been established as the means by which students achieve this goal and acceptance. If a doctoral student’s possibility for selfhood—that self being an internationally competitive scholar—relies on limited or unavailable access to English medium instruction in doctoral programs, resources in English, and language and writing practice specifically related to academic English, then the student’s possibilities are restricted. Further, the requirement of English academic writing not only controls possibilities for selfhood, it also manipulates the
student’s writer identity. The student must conform, when possible, to global standards of scholarship to be accepted as a scholar. Thus, language constraints conflict with the writer’s autobiographical self.

**Autobiographical self.** Ivanič’s (1998) definition of the autobiographic self is important to consider in the context of doctoral students because all students bring with them a “prior social history” (p. 24). Both life events and ways individuals portray experiences contribute to the current autobiographical self (Ivanič, 1998). Discrepancy in writer identity occurs when considering how one portrays the self. The self produces a text, such as a dissertation; however, the self portrayed may be different. For multilingual students, prior writing experiences in English, English medium instruction, and access to English language resources constitute aspects of the autobiographical self, as the student brings these experiences (or lack of) to the production of the dissertation. Prior experience and exposure to English symbolize power and privilege or oppression, and students become aware of advantages and disadvantages from the past and present. The identity doctoral students construct while writing a dissertation in English becomes a negotiation of the self producing the text and the self portrayed in the text. A new identity emerges from the dissertation process as students devote time to representing themselves in a non-native language; thus the autobiographical self that enters dissertation and completes dissertation are different.

**Discoursal self.** The discoursal self constructs in relation to values, beliefs, and power within a particular social, written context (Ivanič, 1998). Representation of the discoursal self may be conscious or unconscious (Ivanič, 1998) and concerns how the reader of a text perceives the writer. For doctoral students, situating the self within certain discourse characteristics impresses upon the reader a sense of the writer’s identity, whether or not the writer intended such
an identity to be portrayed. Writing in English, for example, instead of in one’s native language, establishes the writer’s identity within the values, beliefs, and power related to that choice and language—even if the writer does not intend to be associated with those values, beliefs, and power. Ivanič (1998) questions the social and ideological consequences of discoursal characteristics for writer identities and the ways in which writers position themselves through the choices they make.

**Authorial self.** Ivanič (1998) and Foucault (1969) consider the author as self, relating a sense of authority to writing content and the writer’s presence. As with the autobiographical self, the authorial self also draws from previous experience, and in the case of doctoral students, English exposure and proficiency influence the writer’s ability to present authority. The self as author is significant when discussing academic writing, since writers “differ considerably in how far they claim authority as the source of the content of the text, and in how far they establish an authorial presence in their writing” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 26).

“How far they claim authority” and “establish an authorial presence” applies to multilingual doctoral students’ proficiency in writing English, confidence in language skills, and the ability to represent an authentic self in a non-native language. Further, Ivanič (1998) refers to the “source of content of the text” (p. 26), and as a research-based text, the dissertation must demonstrate knowledge and synthesis of literature. Limited access to English language resources and general competency may inhibit multilingual doctoral students’ possibilities to achieve the authorial self they desire, in English.

**Identity: Individual, Relational, Collective, and Contextual**

motivates the primary self. Considered together, Ivanič (1998) and Sedikides and Brewer (2001) propose opportunities of self concepts that include the individual as well and external, social, and cultural influences. Self-construction and negotiation, therefore, rely on the context of a situation, relationship, or group. Sedikides and Brewer’s (2001) tripartite self includes the individual, relational, and collective, but also considers context and culture. Understanding what motivates identity and how individuals navigate the primary self is important to exploring doctoral identity transformation, especially among writers for whom English is not their native language.

**Individual self.** The concept of the individual self is similar to Ivanič’s (1998) autobiographical self in that it highlights individuality, personal attributes such as experiences, interests, aspirations, and behaviors (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001; Sedikides & Gaertner, 2011). An individual self exists separate from relational bonds or groups, though the self may be influenced by these experiences. Sedikides and Brewer’s (2001) concepts of selves also express different motivation; for the individual, this is the desire to maintain or elevate self image. Though students pursue doctoral study for many reasons, physical and intellectual stimulation are common motivating factors—they are the pursuits of self-improvement (Mujtaba et al., 2008). From the perspective of advancing the self, situated within the context of identity negotiation, doctoral students aim to transform self into scholar, which means making choices to spur that advancement. While a student who chooses to write the dissertation in a non-native language may compromise a sense of the individual self (traits, experiences, behaviors), it is a choice that “elevates their self image” along the scholarly trajectory (Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 99).
**Relational self.** The relational self deviates from individual traits to encompass interpersonal traits, such as the attributes shared with others or the roles within relationships (Sedikides et al., 2011). Interpreted as an act of socialization, developing and maintaining the relational self in a doctoral program influences identity transformation. Relationships with peers and professors, for example, “influence perceptions, affective reactions, and behaviors […] as well as goal pursuit” (as cited in Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 99). Relationships with mentors and professors that lead to co-authored and published research positively progress doctoral student scholarly identity development, thus the desire (and pressure) for students to develop and protect those relationships concerns the motivation of the relational self. It may also encourage students to write and produce in a non-native language as a means to scholarly identity attainment.

**Collective self.** To perceive the doctoral student experience as joining a “valued social group” would be to consider the collective self, which consists of attributes shared among members (Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 98). Self-representation within the collective reflects membership within that group. In doctoral study, the group begins as a cohort (doctoral students who share a common goal and may exhibit similar intellectual, motivational, and behavioral traits, among other characteristics), for example, which expands to the larger academic community. Ultimately, the goal is acceptance into the internationally competitive scholarly community. The dissertation, written in English, symbolizes acceptance into the scholarly community, along with recognition by others who are already members. Identity negotiation at the level of collective self is “simultaneously meeting competing needs for assimilation through intergroup comparisons and differentiation through intragroup comparisons” (as cited in Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 99). For doctoral students writing in a non-native language, socialization into the international scholarly community may also mean assimilation.
**Contextual self.** The contextual self-concept may best represent identity transformation and primacy for doctoral students in that it considers the context within which the self functions. Contextual self suggests that neither the individual self, nor the relational, nor the collective, is the primary self; instead, context determines importance (Sedikides et al., 2011). Thus, how doctoral students define themselves may fluctuate between contexts of the individual and the collective selves. Further, the contextual self “demonstrates shifts in self-definition as a function of norm salience, role importance, or fleeting social circumstances” (as cited in Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 99). As with code switching, context may determine the language a student employs, depending on the social nature, intra-, and intergroup contexts; thus, switches in language and context calls for a conscious identity shift from individual to collective, or vice versa.

The tripartite self-system explores motivational potential, and Sedikides et al. (2011) define three self-concepts to understand which self is most pivotal to determining a desired future. For Ivanič (1998), this would be the possibility for selfhood. Further, culture strongly influences motivation, thus motivational primacy fluctuates with culture (Sedikides et al., 2011, p. 102). From an international perspective, doctoral students’ native cultural practices determine primary motivational selves. Western culture, and especially English-speaking cultures such as the USA, Canada, the UK, and Australia, value personal success (Sedikides et al., 2011). To become a competitive international scholar, doctoral students must assume the language of a culture that may not share the same values. Doctoral study and writing a dissertation are both collective and individual. A student must value personal success (completing the dissertation) to assume the collective identity of scholar. This requires negotiating values, culture, language, and identity.
Discourse and Identity

Bakhtin, Foucault, and Ivanič consider discourse in identity construction. Discourse may refer to physical forms of language representation, such as a spoken or written text. More abstractly, discourse encompasses “social practices associated with a particular set of values, beliefs and power relations” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 18). The ‘self’ manifests itself in discourse (Shotter & Gergen, 1989, as cited in Ivanič, 1998), and discourses have the power to constrain individuals based on available access and choices and the privilege among them (Ivanič, 1998). Considering these literal and abstract definitions of discourse, doctoral students writing in a non-native language negotiate identity in the forms of physical language representation via the dissertation; further, students subscribe to certain values and beliefs and submit to power relations by writing in English, the dominant, global language of higher education.

As a “mediating mechanism in the social construction of identity,” discourse refers to how individuals assume identities through “producing and receiving culturally recognized, ideologically shaped representation of identity” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 17). Ivanič’s (1998) interpretation of discourse defines the process of representing reality as opposed to the product. For multilingual doctoral students, writing in English demonstrates the process of signifying the self, the process of constructing a scholarly identity and being accepted into (thus confirmed by) the academic community. Ivanič’s take on discourse does not determine what the student will be become, in that writing in English will not inherently produce a different identity product; the dissertation, however, is a product of the student’s efforts; thus Ivanič (1998) does encompass both the process and product of discoursal identity.

Writing a dissertation is a discursive practice. It is a process during which “identity is done or made”—in other words, constructed (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). As doctoral students
negotiate identities while participating in discursive practice, which Foucault would determine “social practice” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108), the process is also navigation. Negotiation and navigation demonstrate how students manage conflicting identity positions, which Bamberg et al. (2011) deem “dilemmas” (p. 178). Establishing a discoursal identity and understanding how doctoral students interact with discourse at the levels of noun, verb, and social practice, further define the identity transformation in doctoral study.

A discursive approach to identity unites language, text, and context, to explore the dilemmas and confrontations individuals encounter as part of identity construction (Bamberg et al., 2011). Dilemmas such as agency and control, difference and sameness, and constancy and change broadly outline the challenges doctoral students face when navigating and negotiating identity (Bamberg et al., 2011). Eventually, language becomes a contentious aspect of discursive identity, relating both to authenticity (authorial voice) and issues of power, further defined by Foucault and others. For the doctoral student, discourse as an action, a practice, and a relationship to language position one within a discourse community. Linguistic choices influence acceptance into the community.

Gee (1989) describes Discourse as an “identity kit”, which contains, for example, the ways of writing one must acquire to be recognized as serving in a specific role (p. 7). For the doctoral student, this role is a scholar. Thus, according to Gee (1989), the doctoral student learns how to be a scholar through the social process of enculturation, and writing is part of the practice—part of becoming. Doctoral students practice becoming scholars through scholarly writing and publication in the language of the academic community—English. As Gee (1989) notes, however, individuals participate in different levels of discourse, such as primary and secondary discourse. Primary discourse includes native language, for example, the language an
individual uses to make sense of the world (Gee, 1989). A secondary discourse for the doctoral student would be integration into doctoral study, and eventually, the global academic community (discourse community). For non-native English speakers, the primary and secondary discourses experience tension and conflict with each other (Gee, 1989). Gee (1989) uses the example of two languages being in conflict, which manifests as truth for multilingual doctoral students.

As the language of academia, English is a gate that symbolizes power of the dominant Discourse. Gee (1989) writes “Very often dominant groups in society apply rather constant ‘tests’ of the fluency of the dominant Discourses in which their power is symbolized” (p. 8). The ability to write using academic English is a test for both fluent users of the discourse (native-English speakers) and non-native English speakers. If discourses are “displays of identity”, a student unable to fully display the identity of scholar, defined by how to use language, the student cannot assume the identity (Gee, 1989). The process of becoming a scholar, however, relies on social practice (Discourse), where the “growing ability to say, do, value, believe” is also a process of demonstrating mastery (Gee, 1989, p. 11). Throughout socialization, doctoral students learn “ways of writing” and “ways of being” (Li, 2005), and language (speaking and writing) becomes a demonstration of the values inherent to the institution or the master teaching apprentice. If ways of writing and ways of being restrict students to using English, possibilities for selfhood, the secondary discourse of scholar, and the scholarly identity are all restricted.

Foucault’s approach to discourse informs how Gee, Ivanič, and others interpret discourse and identity. For Foucault, discourse refers to “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning” (as cited in Weedon, 1987, p. 108). While the doctoral student does produce a dissertation, which
represents constituting knowledge and evidences thinking and meaning production, the linguistic choices the text represents define subjectivity and mark the influence of power and privilege. The writing itself is social practice. When Foucault states that discourses are more than thinking and producing meaning, he refers to the many variables that influence production.

Foucault’s “culture of the self” locates the self “within the network of values and social practices that characterize a culture at a particular time, since these practices and relations change” (as cited in Besley, 2014, p. 11). Burgess and Ivanič (2010) also plot the importance of time to identity development, thus as doctoral students participate in academia, experience socialization into academic culture, and transform their identities by participating in social writing practice, they experience the social interchange that is discourse (Killingsworth, 1992). The self changes and situates to conform to the culture of the discourse community to which one seeks to ascribe, and though writing, doctoral students initiate into “communities whose beliefs, concerns, and practices both instigate and constrain, at least in part, the sorts of things we [they] can say” (Harris, 1989, p. 12; as cited in Killingsworth, 1992).

As Gee (1989) explains, Discourse and discourse are connected, as writers rely on the linguistic practice of discourse to participate in Discourse. A closer examination of language in relation to discourse reveals deeper association with authorship and identity. Language and linguistic choices tie closely to writer identity in the dissertation because doctoral students must create a text acceptable for entrance into the scholarly community. Norms and traditions associated with the academy and with academic writing may constrain the individual identity as needing to represent the institutional identity, which is also constrained (Bamberg et al., 2011). Thus, students write within the boundaries of available (or appropriate) linguistic choices, and
the dissertation attests to the writer’s ability to appear as an author within this context (Bamberg et al., 2011).

**Power Relations and Scholarly Identity Formation**

A natural transition from discourse is to power relations, as discourse shapes humans as subjects; power, through discourse, “subjects us to the rule of the dominant disciplines that are empowered in our society and that regulate its possibilities for human freedom” (Danisch, 2006, p. 294). Discourses, housed within disciplines and institutions, are “functions of power” and “distribute the effects of power” by producing scholars equipped, as Gee (1999) would state, with the “identity kit of the discourse” (Danisch, 2006, p. 294). Marshall (1996) refers to Foucault’s critique of educational institutions when he writes, “complex power relations that pervade educational institutions, which shape our identity, and which make us governable by masking the reality that our identities are being constituted” (as cited in Besley, 2014, p. 14).

Foucault references loss of identity by suggesting that the discourse from which an individual writes is more important than the individual writer; thus, the discourse claims the identity of the writer (Danisch, 2006). As actors, doctoral students bring many selves and discourses into play within the institution, the social structure that contains these preexisting identities. Foucault states that the relationship between the self and the structure will not produce new power relations (Danisch, 2006). Higher education as an institution, while regulating self-creation for doctoral students and limiting their possibilities for selfhood, simultaneously provides opportunities to develop other identities (Danisch, 2006). Only through resistance does an individual produce new power relations, and for multilingual doctoral students, resistance translates into reliance on the individual’s primary discourse (native language), which rejects the possibility of fluency in a secondary discourse (non-native language). In other words, resisting
English and refusing to participate in dominant academic culture. Resistance is not without repercussions, however. Namely, students will not be able to achieve scholarly identity, recognized and affirmed by the broader academic discourse community.

Identity in higher education is both power and power struggle. Ivanič (1998) writes, “These issues of power and power struggle are relevant to all aspects of the social construction of identity, among which language, literacy and writing exist alongside other forms of social action and semiosis” (p. 13). In Finland, for example, students write and publish in Finnish as an act of resistance (Katila et al., 2020), refusing to conform to the dominant expectation to write and publish in English. For the Finnish people, especially, to be denied the right to write and publish in Finnish is to conjure centuries of language oppression and to devalue the process by which Finns established identity through language in the mid-1800s to early 1900s. A similar resistance culture exists in France where knowledge traditions and generating knowledge French are highly valued (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019). Boussebaa and Brown (2016) found that “Resistance to working in English often meant questioning the appropriateness of this language for scholars concerned that it implied a loss of their identity as uniquely ‘French’ scholars” (p. 12). The growing resistance to English internationally could highlight critical identity and cultural implications and risks related to language dominance and homogenization.

A student’s autobiographical self—the self the writer brings to the dissertation—encompasses the student’s linguistic, social, cultural, and educational histories, which include access. Limited access to English, English-medium instruction, English resources, and English for academic purposes thereby restricts options available for students to develop the discoursal self and to participate in the broader Discourse community. When distilled to how writers
present a sense of who they are, limited knowledge of linguistics, language, and style barricade non-native English-speaking students.

The dilemmas of integration and differentiation are that they afford doctoral students the opportunity to join a Discourse community but require discourse to establish authority. Writers make choices to integrate themselves into communities to which they aspire to belong, thus transforming their personal, individual, and community identities (Bamberg et al., 2011). By conforming to the expectations to write in English and to develop writer and scholarly identities using academic English, students make a choice to situate themselves within the global academic community. The choice, however, is complicated, and a question of power.

To achieve acceptance, to belong, and to compete internationally, doctoral students must write and publish in English. Bamberg et al. (2011) state, “speakers can either conform to, or deviate from, established standards” (p. 184) and explain that linguistic choices place writers within specific membership categories. English language as the standard and academic writing as the expectation for doctoral students highlight the abuse of power in discourse as they directly shape the identities that doctoral students are able to achieve. English is the barrier and the process. In Discourse, identities exist as “power spaces” where the voice is “repressed” (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 185). Discourse and discourse pose positioning challenges for students who do not speak or write English as a native language.

**Scholarly Identity**

A scholarly identity culminates the various identities students bring to doctoral study and to dissertation writing. Doctoral students manifest scholarly identity through writing, as it epitomizes the process of becoming a scholar, yet academic writing remains a source of stress and attrition for doctoral students (Pyhältö et al., 2012). “[E]ducation as a practice and as a
discipline is often described as finding oneself, a process of self-definition and self-transformation that takes place through reading, writing, and thinking about the works of others (Besley, 2014, p. 4). The development of a scholarly or academic identity reflects self-definition and self-transformation.

Doctoral students developing scholarly identities participate in training, which engages learning, aspirations, desires, and views of the self (Cotterall, 2015). Ursin et al. (2020) define academic identity as a constellation of perceptions, including work interests, values, ambitions, commitments, and identifications. Though students individually construct academic identities, socialization influences the process, as do daily practices, and construction is always in a state of negotiation (Ursin et al., 2020). Thus, students continue to shape, define, and redefine scholarly identity throughout doctoral coursework (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013).

Community and scholarly identity relate in two ways: socialization during doctoral study and acceptance into the scholarly community (Pappa et al., 2019; Ursin et al., 2020), both through various processes. Henkel (2005) considers scholarly identity a “function of community membership” grounded in discipline and the institution (as cited in Ursin et al. 2020, p. 312). Further, Cotterall (2015) argues that intellectual and institutional networks must validate and recognize a student’s identity as scholar, which the student achieves by exhibits of competence, such as writing and publication. Institutions, authority figures, and the broader academic community comprise communities of practice, which affect students’ perceptions of their scholarly identity (Pappa et al., 2019); therefore, students may need to negotiate identity to achieve the role of scholar. The scholarly identity development process, thus, requires students to consider agency and its relationship to academic goals.
Ursin et al. (2020) include in the definition of academic identity, the negotiation and actualization of interests, ambitions, and goals evidenced in common academic practices. Agency is the ability to set goals directed toward action and negotiated toward achievement (McAlpine et al., 2014), and includes the “efforts and chances to influence individual and shared work practices” (Ursin et al., 2020, p. 313). Representing agency socially, Hopwood (2010) identifies four themes: meeting authentic needs, cultivating and nurturing relationships, influencing learning, emotion, and behavior, and resistance. Doctoral students’ possibilities for self-hood depend on individual backgrounds and future ambitions, the influence of social conditions, awareness of personal agency, community engagement, and participation in scholarly practices. Thus, to become scholars, doctoral students must fully engage with the academic community (Ursin et al., 2020) and will confront unforeseen conflicts and tensions between their many identities.

Part of resolving conflict and tension is purpose and understanding (Yan & Lee, 2016); agency impacts practice, which helps student meet and satisfy goals and needs (Ursin et al., 2020), and students must identify who they desire to become (Pappa et al., 2019). Students’ reasons for pursuing doctoral study connect with the purposes of doing research, which both direct and help actualize the ultimate goal (a scholarly identity) for doctoral students (Pappa et al., 2019). Who students desire to become is crucial to identity developmental (Lee & Boud, 2003), and emotional insecurity may impact this desire (Knight & Clarke, 2014). If agency represents “opportunities and action” (as cited in Ursin et al., 2020), and a scholarly identity is an opportunity that requires action, doctoral student must decide how to approach the academic practices that fulfill the scholar role. How doctoral students approach practices, such as writing and, more specifically, choosing to write in English, represents an exercise in individual control,
but a control guided by desire (Knight & Clarke, 2014; Ursin et al., 2020). If a student achieves scholar status—is actualized as a scholar by acceptance from other scholars—this always includes writing a dissertation, and often requires writing in English.

Writing is a meaning-making process, and for doctoral students, is the product of research. Pappa et al. (2019) write, “Trying to find meaning in one’s research work and making sense of what doing research entails is part of scholarly identity negotiation” (p. 183). Viewed as a journey or process, doctoral research and writing require skill development and a deeper sense of self awareness, which include learning how to think like a researcher (Pappa et al., 2019). Writing, conducting research, and meaning-making relate closely to language, and for students writing in English as a non-native language, emotional insecurity related to writing skills is a stress factor that may affect selfhood trajectory (Pappa et al., 2019).

Resistance identities are another important consideration for understanding how doctoral students construct academic identities. As the dominant language of higher education, English is the expected language of choice for doctoral students who aim to participate in and be accepted into the global academic community. Using English may create tension and conflict between students’ primary and secondary discourse, and these tensions and conflicts are part of the identity navigation and negotiation process. Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) attest to students as active agents with personal backgrounds, which influence scholarly identity construction, but institutional and cultural contexts define specific associations for identity negotiation within those contexts. One choice for students is resistance.

Castells (1997) suggests three types of identity building that doctoral students may choose between. The first offers students the choice to legitimize the identity that the dominant institution represents, which justifies its domination (as cited in Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013, p. 1137).
For multilingual students, the identity choice would be to write in English. Castells’ (1997) second characterization is resistance identity, which opposes dominant social trends, while the third identity grows from resistance to form a new identity, which contests dominance with the aim to transform the dominant social structure.

Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) debate the essence of academic identity as it relates to active research. In many non-English speaking countries, doctoral programs require students to write and publish in English to graduate, and postdoctoral work demands rigorous publication to secure funding and a position within the university. Students whose first language is not English recognize that to fulfill the “traditional notion of a true academic” as one who gains merit and prestige through publication, English is necessary (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013, p. 1141). To resist to write in English could result in an incomplete doctoral journey and an unfulfilled identity, which disrupts the scholarly identity trajectory and possibilities for self-hood. To resist, however, could be the most important decision a student makes because of the potential to transform dominant social hierarchy (Castells, 1997).

Power, Process, and Content

Vignoles et al. (2011) state “any perspective on identity implicitly or explicitly engages with multiple aspects of identity that might be viewed at different levels of content and in terms of different levels of processes” (p. 10). Individual, relational, and collective identities are distinct in terms of identity content and identity processes (Vignoles et al., 2011). Identity refers to a single individual; however, the individual’s identity constructs personally and socially in content and processes differently and simultaneously (Vignoles et al., 2011). In doctoral programs, an individual’s identity process may refer to an “expected future self” (Markus & Nurius, 1986; as cited in Vignoles et al., p. 3) and to the role the individual plays within the
education system (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). The researcher supports a constructivist view of identity but agrees that the individual is active in identity construction. As adult learners, doctoral students maintain aspects of stable identities, and the doctoral experience constitutes “short-term contextual fluctuations” in identity (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 10).

The goal of doctoral students is to complete the transformation from practitioner or student to scholar; writing a dissertation and publishing are part of the identity transformation; and to achieve acceptance into the global academic community—“claims to a particular identity need to be recognized by a social audience if they are to be secure” (Swann, 2005; as cited in Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 3). To secure the scholarly identity, doctoral students participate in identity construction on the levels of individual, relational, and collective, and negotiate identity through choice. Doctoral students also recognize that multifarious identities, even more characteristic of adult learners (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Ivanič, 1998), could conflict or contradict, especially in negotiating language, thus students may struggle to achieve a unitary sense of self (Vignoles et al., 2011). The question of choice becomes an issue of power and relates more to social construction. While the doctoral student plays an active role in identity construction and negotiation, in broader social and cultural contexts of global higher education, these contexts may constrain or oppress what Ivanič (1998) refers to as “possibilities for self-hood” (p. 10).

The phrase “possibilities for self-hood” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 10) implies that because identity is socially constructed, it is not a choice, nor is it static. Identity is complex because of the many socially available resources for identity construction; therefore, the term “identities” is more appropriate because it captures the essence of identifying with various social groups simultaneously (Ivanič, 1998, p. 11). Doctoral students have a sense of identity (who they bring
to doctoral study), and as a singular noun, the term implies a fixed position of existence (Ivanič, 1998). To identify, a verb, suggests a process, action, and suits the transformative experience of doctoral study—the movement from student to scholar, the repositioning of the self and acceptance into a new community. The doctoral student identity as scholar is “the process whereby individuals align themselves with groups, communities, and/or sets of interests, values, beliefs and practices” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 11). A critical aspect of practice, in this regard, is the writing practices in which doctoral students engage.

**Writer Identity: Authorship and Voice**

“Writing is an act of identity” (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010, p. 228), both a social act and the product of a social context. A piece of writing draws on multiple traditions (Ivanič, 1998) and iterations of the writer’s self, which develops and changes over time (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). “In the academic community writing is the dominant form of social action for giving evidence to our selves” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 101). The writer’s relationship to writing constitutes a process of balance between representation of the self, the author, and of the other, the evidence and knowledge the writer represents. Foucault (1969) defines the function of an author as one who characterizes the “existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society” (p. 305). To understand writer identity and author as an aspect of identity, it is essential to define the discourse community to which the writer achieves to belong or represent.

Foucault (1969) and Ivanič (1998) both question attribution of ideas to the other, an other writer. To develop a writer identity, the self within writing, doctoral students engage in self-attribution by aligning themselves with certain traditions, values, and language choices (such as English) (Ivanič, 1998). In a sense, self-attribution is also identity masking, or as Foucault (1969) writes “cancel[ing] out signs of his particular individuality” (p. 301).
For doctoral students, part of transdiscursive (Foucault, 1969) scholarly identity developmental is identifying to the institution (Ivanič, 1998) and adopting the rules and expectations of scholarly academic communities. Students’ who feel their identities are threatened either adapt to and accommodate or question and challenge dominance (Ivanič, 1998). When non-native English speaking students choose whether to write a dissertation in English, they are making a choice of identity, and they are choosing to adapt or to resist the dominant expectation of global academia. The students’ identities either conform or resist.

Parker (1989) advises “to ask how the self is implicated moment by moment, through the medium of discourse, of power” (as cited in Ivanič, 1998, p. 68). Foucault (1988) refers to technologies of power, which determine individual conduct and submission to domination (as cited in Ivanič, 1998). Ivanič (1998) suggests that in writer identity construction, writers position the self between competing technologies of power and technologies of the self. Considering language in writer identity, social construction of identity in a doctoral program is subject to the influence of dominant ideologies (e.g., English is the language of higher education), which control and constrain sense of self (Ivanič, 1998). The struggle, however, also affords alternative definitions of self. To compete and achieve success as a doctoral student, and to transition one’s identity from student to scholar, students must adopt English as the language of scholarship. To resist writing and publishing in English may impair students’ scholarly trajectories temporarily, though over time, consistent global resistance to producing in English could produce change. Ivanič (1998) writes, “without […] contesting dominant structures of reality […] the prospect for humanity would be extremely bleak” (p. 13).
Author

The function of an author is “to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society” (Foucault, 1969, p. 305). Thus, the author’s function is to do more than represent sources of reliable evidence—it is to attribute value, meaning, and authority to writing (Foucault, 1969). For a doctoral student to identify as an author of a text (the dissertation), according to Foucault (1969), the author-function is the result of rational entity construction.

Projections, comparisons, important traits, continuities, and choice exclusions all comprise the perception of the writer as author (Foucault, 1969). Viewing the writer as a “plurality of egos”, seeing the self split in the ways Ivanič (1998) and Sedikides et al. (2001) have described, makes sense. Within the text itself, such as the dissertation, different selves may author different portions, as in the introduction or results portions, which may use “I”, versus a literature review, which represents the author through outside references. In Foucault’s (1969) terms, the author is a “complex and variable function of discourse”, stripped of any creative role (p. 314).

Bakhtin (1986a) approaches authorship as a manifestation of individual style, worldview, and design. The definition includes “predecessors on whom the author relies”, which, for doctoral students, may mean influences from faculty and a review of the literature, which help doctoral students shape and make meaning and position themselves within certain schools of thought (Bakhtin, 1986a, p. 75). These also cultivate the student’s discoursal identity. Bakhtin (1986b) writes, “even direct authorial speech is filled with recognized words of others” (p. 115), which suggests that authorship is a culmination of linguistic exposure and aptitude and access to available resources, both of which may be restricted for certain doctoral students.
Voice

Voice is polyphonous (Bakhtin, 1981; as cited in Canagarajah, 2015, p. 125). As doctoral students write, the voice or voices that emerge from their writing transition from potential means of expression to realized expression (Bakhtin, 1986b). Just as the doctoral student exercises layers of fluid and in flux identities throughout the dissertation writing process, as author of the text, the student writes in voices that convey layers of meaning, strengthening and emerging to alter, augment, and represent understanding (Bakhtin, 1986b). While negotiating identity, role, subjectivity, and awareness to produce voice, students also negotiate these different and conflicting layers, which measure coherence (Canagarajah, 2015).

When developing voice, writers may negotiate constraint and agency, determinism and autonomy, and ascribed and acquired identity (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 125). For a writer to establish credibility in the Aristotelian sense of ethos, stance and voice become “objects of scholarly inquiry” (Gross & Chesley, 2012, p. 86). Ethos and voice share a connection in the conversation of writer identity and developed parallel throughout the 1900s, but the meanings are not the same, nor is voice a result of ethos (Matsuda, 2015). Historically, voice represented personal knowledge, while ethos applied to academic, professional, and public contexts, but the meaning of voice continues to evolve (Matsuda, 2015). For writers using their native language, voice may communicate individual qualities, a projected self, or authentic self-representation (Matsuda, 2015). In this definition, a writer’s identity existed outside of discourse, and in the act of writing, became evident through discourse (Matsuda, 2015).

Authentic self-representation and the presence or absence of a writer’s identity contribute to understanding a writer’s voice and become problematic when considering students for whom English is a non-native language (Matsuda, 2015; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). The
individualism associated with written voice coincides with the individualism touted in Western ideology, which is problematic for students whose first language is not English and who must write and develop voice in English (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). Further, in this context, voice is culturally constrained and inaccessible for students writing in a culture (represented by English) language, that is not their own (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996).

Eventually, voice and writing merged under the shared umbrella of social construction, carrying aspects of individual and social contexts (Ivanič, 1998; Matsuda, 2015). This understanding of voice does not alter nor improve the reality for students developing voice in another language, however, but it does illuminate a strong connection to identity, relevant to doctoral students in the act of constructing both scholarly identities and authorial voices. In dissertation writing, the authorial voices students develop communicate ethos. Research questions posed in the dissertation are the hallmark of scholarly inquiry, while voice, communicated in part through positioning, demonstrates knowledge and stance. Doctoral students’ authorial voices and identities, the self as author (Ivanič, 1998) and the author-function (Foucault, 1969), demonstrate “the level of confidence and authority that is projected by the writer and perceived by the reader” (Matsuda, 2015, p. 144). Thus, Matsuda (2001) provides the most relevant definition of voice for writing in academic contexts, “the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from social available yet ever-changing repertoire” (p. 40).

**Authorial Voice**

Part of constructing and negotiating written and scholarly identities is the development of authorial voice. Research across writing and education pedagogy addresses voice as a contested term whose meaning and importance are difficult to define (Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016). In the
context of academic writing and academic literacy, voice connotes issues of power relations related to identity construction (Ivanič, 1998; Stock & Eik-Nes, 2016). Voice “refers to the ways writers express their personal views, authoritativeness, and presence” and “conveys a representation of the writer” (Hyland, 2008, p. 5). As with identity, voice is a social construct (Hyland, 2008; Matsuda & Tardy, 2008) that reflects how students position themselves in relation to scholarly, discipline, and discourse communities (Hyland, 2008). As doctoral students construct identities through writing, authorial voice is a means by which scholarly identity may develop. Further, students must acknowledge the boundaries academic writing imposes, which both constrain and give meaning to voice development (Hyland, 2008).

Ivanič and Camps (2001) propose that identity negotiation is integral to writing, and voice serves the self through representation. A common misconception views academic writing as “impersonal”, marking the loss of national or social identity through its “commonality” (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 3). Instead, writing conveys identity differently, through lexical, semantic, and syntactic choices, but also through culturally available resources (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). Thus, the authorial voice a doctoral student constructs represents access, social influence, discoursal positioning, and choices. Further, authorship demonstrates confidence with language and the ability to make meaning and construct knowledge from available resources. For students writing in English, authorial voice construction features the influences of power, privilege, and dominance (Canagarajah, 2014). Just as students’ possibilities for self-hood have social roots, so do the voices available to multilingual doctoral students.

To fuse the relationship between identity and voice, Ivanič and Camps (2001) offer three “interrelated resources which offer the individual freedom and power over their self-representation” (p. 7). Using the term “voice-types”, they encompass language implications in
genre (social) and discourse (values and beliefs) and highlight the consequences of available linguistic resources (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 5). The three features are:

(1) Many voice-types coexist in cultural settings; academic discourse is not monolithic.

(2) Self-representation is unique; individuals draw from historical voice encounters and may select from available voice-types and express voice-types in their own ways, which depend on constraints of access to voice-types, assertiveness, and degree of institutional freedom.

(3) Possibilities for self-hood are not restricted to social determination; powers of privileging exist in institutional settings, but the individual has the choice to conform or resist the dominant voice-type (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 7).

The dominant voice in global higher education is English, and in some countries, doctoral students cannot access the choices defined by Ivanič and Camps. To complete doctoral study, students must publish in English language journals, which limits their possibilities for selfhood while simultaneously affirming them as part of the global scholarly community.

Institutional freedoms, constraints, and culturally-available resources clearly influence doctoral students opportunities to develop identities and voices, and identity and voice share a semiotic relationship through social construction, developed prior to and within the institutional setting. The writer’s authority that emerges in the act of dissertation writing reflects the self and the voice that result from this positioning. Authorial voice, however, assumes different meaning based on how students use language and the choice to write in English or their native language. Authority expresses discoursal confidence and language fluency (Cheung et al., 2016). Though academic writing is no one’s first language (Nejad et al., 2019), to develop academic writing
skills that demonstrate confidence, fluency, and authority in a non-native language presents greater challenges for multilingual students.

Cheung et al. (2016) find that confidence links closely with writing ability and authorial writer identity. Writing ability is necessary for success in higher education, and authorial goals such as a dissertation instill value in the act of writing, which encourages authorship (Cheung et al., 2016). A writer’s ownership of thought is another hallmark of authorial writer identity. Writing reflects thought processes and evidences meaning-making of the resources with which a student chooses to position one’s self (Cheung et al., 2016). Canagarajah (2015) considers language, ethnic, and national affiliations related to an individual’s history, and a student may take pride in representing heritage in voice construction. A writer’s fluency producing thought and demonstrating understanding may also be a source of pride and ownership for the writer (Cheung et al., 2016).

For multilingual students, author- and ownership-processes in writing relate to agency, the ability to act (Bhowmik, 2016). Norton and Toohey (2011) note that non-native English-speaking students function in “highly inequitable social contexts” (as cited in Bhowmik, 2016, p. 276). Agency, however, would allow students to choose a best course of action (Bhowmik, 2016), to “make choices, take control, self-regulate, and […] pursue goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation” (Duff, 2012, p. 414). Doctoral students writing in English must understand the various social contexts in which they operate and consider agency and identity in the act of writing—the choices students make recognize the ownership of what they write (Bhowmik, 2016). Ultimately, doctoral students negotiate identity through writing, language, and voice to shape a learning experience conducive to their needs and desires for selfhood (Bhowmik, 2016; Ivanič, 1998).
Students writing dissertations in English as their non-dominant language struggle to meet the demands of academic writing (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), and the challenges students experience vary based on culturally-available resources, such as journals and medium of instruction. Part of constructing authorial voice and scholarly identity is “displaying knowledge and understanding of a particular topic”, demonstrating skills, and establishing credibility—in this way, the dissertation becomes a student’s admission into the wider scholarly community (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 4). Doctoral students are “novices writing for experts” and positioning the self as author between the text and the readers impacts the writing choices students make (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 5). As authors, students must align with research and express the relationship between their own research topic and the prior research. How students position themselves and demonstrate knowledge through writing depends on accessibility of resources and on their ability to demonstrate confident writing skills that own the knowledge they produce.

The ways students make meaning in writing varies across cultures. For students familiar with writing traditions that may have cultural underpinnings, migrating to English for the dissertation presents challenges unique to the language and practice of writing in English, as disseminated from pedagogical approaches in Anglophone countries. To better understand the relationship between language, writing, and identity, an examination of English’s spread via higher education’s status as a global enterprise and the way English evolved to become a lingua franca in academia are essential to the current study.

**Doctoral Education on a Global Scale**

Globally, higher education has evolved, and the number of international doctoral programs continues to increase (Ames et al., 2018; Sampson et al., 2015). Doctoral program
structures differ internationally, and no universal methodology exists across all programs (Ames et al., 2018). Common threads, however, such as a research-based dissertation, monograph, or thesis; the roles, values, and expectations of doctoral students (Ames et al., 2018); and the pressure to write and publish in English (Guo, 2019), distinguish the doctoral experience internationally.

Doctoral students “undertake a significant and largely independent research project that implicates their future career trajectories” (as cited in Inouye & McAlpine, 2019, p. 3). This project demonstrates students’ mastery of research; knowledge synthesis; ability to promote technological, social, or cultural advancement; communication skills within the international scholarly community; and successful adaptation of the research process (Joint Qualitative Initiative, 2004).

For all students, the dissertation itself is a rite of passage for scholarly recognition (Pare, 2019). As novice researchers, students use the dissertation to make an “original contribution” to their field, display “comprehensive knowledge” in the literature, and demonstrate “expertise” in methodology (Pare, 2019, p. 80). Further, doctoral students experience scrutiny through review, practice the iterative revision process, and face evaluation from scholars, the gatekeepers of earning a doctorate (Pare, 2019). Pare (2019) describes writing the dissertation as “a profound rhetorical, linguistic, intellectual, emotional, and psychological challenge” and argues that it results in “educational, ethical, rhetorical, epistemological, economic, and psychological” problems (p. 81).

The transition from novice to scholar that occurs during doctoral study, therefore, is challenging, as students feel the pressure to enter a scholarly community and contribute new knowledge to local and global economies (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019). Unfortunately, many
students attrit while writing the dissertation (Ames et al., 2018; Torrance et al., 1994), thus doctoral completion rates are low, and the dissertation remains a barrier (Carter & Kumar, 2017). Scholarly writing, the style of the dissertation, is a complex feature of doctoral study (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019) and a challenging, complicated act for native language speakers—the complexity of this act exacerbates for students expected to write in English as a non-native language.

As global participation in doctoral study increases, so does the number of multilingual doctoral students (Guo, 2019). The expectation to write a dissertation in English follows this trend (Guo, 2019; Starfield & Paltridge, 2018). For non-native English-speaking students, writing a dissertation in English poses unique challenges, and identity negotiation “in and through” writing remains constant (Starfield & Paltridge, 2018, p. 1). Phelps (2016) connotes doctoral study as “a changing landscape” for multilingual students, which becomes “more complex, market-driven, and globally contextual” (p. 1). Thus, identity transformations contextually associated with writing and knowledge affect multilingual writers differently than native English speakers (Starfield & Paltridge, 2018).

Higher education, and doctoral study specifically, provides opportunities for global competition and collaboration among international scholars. To participate in the global scholarly community, students must produce a dissertation and be accepted into the community by academics. Further, students must write dissertations in English, regardless of their language and national backgrounds (Starfield & Paltridge, 2018), to truly participate and be recognized, and thus accepted, into the global academic community. Thus, as a result of the globalization of higher education, and of the internationalization of doctoral programs, Englishization exists as a global phenomenon.
Internationalization & Englishization

Local and global changes to doctoral education influence how doctoral students participate in academic work, and writing is a critical component of these changes (Katila et al., 2020). Defining what constitutes “good academic writing” alongside the internationalization of doctoral programs, bring English language into focus (Al Fadda, 2013; Katila et al., 2018; Rose & McKinley, 2018). In countries such as Iran, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Japan, and Finland, to name a few, English-medium instruction and the pressure to write and publish in English has become the nature of doctoral programs that tout “internationalization”. Rose and McKinley (2018) note that the nations benefiting most from internationalization are countries whose native language is English; thus, countries lacking resources and access to English-medium instruction and “good academic writing” practices remain pressed under the thumb of neocolonialism that pressures Western-oriented thought (Singh, 2005; as cited in Rose & McKinley, 2018).

Interpreting the function of internationalized higher education yields positive and negative definitions. Giddens (1990) introduced a positive concept for globalization, noting it as an opportunity to create new identities (as cited in Hopkyns, 2016). Knight (2003) defines internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2). Delgado-Marquez et al. (2013) approach internationalization as beneficial for a university’s reputation, research and teaching quality, and employability (as cited in Rose & McKinley, 2018, p. 113). Jenkins (2011) offers an important view on language, stating that “while many universities claim to be deeply international, they are, in essence, deeply national at the linguistic level” (p. 927).
Thus, for institutions, and for doctoral programs specifically, to be “international” is a complex and loaded term related to how the institution and program identify.

Saarinen (2014) delineates important distinctions about the historic role of universities as both “fundamentally international and essentially national” (p. 2). Universities may consider themselves international to the degree that they represent international knowledge but remain national in the sense of nation building and producing local scholars (Saarinen, 2014). Saarinen (2014) notes, however, that increased demand for internationalization challenges the concept of higher education being traditionally national. Graddol (2006) perceives internationalization as a global industry, as students recognize the benefits of an English-medium education and pay excessively to attend university in English-speaking countries (as cited in Saarinen, 2014, p. 21). In Finland, for example, English-medium programs have become an “export product”, branding a Finnish education with the stamp of English approval as English becomes synonymous with “foreign” (Saarinen, 2014, p. 24).

In the name of economic advancement and global competition, internationalization threatens cultural integrity and language identity in other countries as well. Phan and Barnawi (2015) identify that internationalization of higher education is a platform where neoliberalism plays a dominant role, exploiting the terms “English” and “international” (p. 545). In Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States in the Middle East, internationalization practices have yielded “undesirable education outcomes”, which include low participation in local workforce, intellectual dependency, unethical practices in commercializing English and higher education, and a decline in local languages (Phan & Barnawi, 2015, p. 546). In Pakistan, globalization and the political and social “need” for English drives a deeper wedge between education, economy, and social classes, and knowledge of English is the “main competition factor” in schools (Ashraf
For many of these countries, including the United Arab Emirates, internationalization and Englishization are problematic because they threaten language and identity (Hopkyns, 2016).

Saarinen (2014) purports that the importance of language is missing in higher education policy, aside from the devastating cultural, economic, and social impacts English dominance continues to have on countries as a result of its presence in higher education. Thus, the concept of “Englishization” has clear global and international relevance, implications, and consequences. Meidani et al. (2013) note the strong ties between globalization and English language, referring to English as the language of global communication and modern sciences. Jalali et al. (2014) recognize that English language penetrates nearly every aspect of human life. Ultimately, for many non-English speaking countries, English language symbolizes and remains a barrier to power, access, and equity in higher education (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016).

English as “linguistic imperialism” dominates the research on Englishization in higher education (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Lanvers & Hultgren, 2016). Lanvers and Hultgen (2016) identify the spread of English as “inextricably embedded in the hegemony of major English-speaking nations exemplified by British imperialist expansion in the nineteenth century and, more recently, US globalist expansion” (p. 3). Boussebaa and Brown (2016) argue that Englishization “‘remakes’ locals as Anglophones in line with a US-dominated era of ‘globalization’ and ‘global English’ and may be understood as a quasi-voluntary process of imperialism” (p. 2). Though some perceive the presence of English as a means for opportunity, research evidences the exacerbation of global inequalities (Pennycook, 2014), the threat to identity (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Hopkyns, 2016), the impact on local language
(Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Boussebaa & Brown, 2016; Hopkyns, 2016), and the regulation of knowledge production (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019).

A focus on language, its relationship to identity, and how these culminate within the power relations of the doctoral experience is critical for establishing connections between language, the dissertation, authorial voice, and scholarly identity and acceptance. Boussebaa and Brown (2016), among others, cite the recent process of English replacing indigenous and native language in the education sector. English is clearly the key to internationalizing doctoral education and for competitive participation in the global enterprise of scholarship, which, for many, requires “linguistic adoption or imposition”, which Boussebaa and Brown (2016) argue is a “managerially-defined process of identity change” (p. 3).

Language and writing are a doctoral student’s means for creating scholarly identity and becoming. English as the dominant language of higher education, thus, regulates identity for native and non-native speakers. Foucault (1979) establishes that “identity regulation is accomplished through ‘disciplinary power’”, which Boussebaa and Brown (2016) explain as “power […] which is enforced through entwined organizational practices and people’s identity work processes” (p. 4). Disciplinary power is productive and promotes “desirable behaviors” while “prohibiting or marginalizing others” through “regimes of normalization” (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016, p. 4). Normalization, adhering to standards, breeds homogenization, and the internationalization (Englishization) of doctoral programs does just that—holds doctoral students to writing standards in the form of language, voice, and style, which both limit and secure their potential identities (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016).

Saarinen (2014) recognizes “language as construing the functions of the university” as one purpose for language in higher education and relates this to the trend of internationalization
As the language of operation and instruction in international programs, English increases the effects of linguistic homogenization (Saarinen, 2012), which trickles down to affect how students develop and negotiate identity. Student access to English resources and instruction influence the type of English they speak as well as their proficiency, which creates hierarchies between varieties of English (Saarinen, 2014). Hierarchization privileges students based on language skill and nationality (Saarinen, 2014). A student’s English proficiency translates into academic writing production—the dissertation—and access to English-language resources dictates their already-compromised authorial voices and positioning within the scholarly community. Further, a doctoral student’s identity hinges on the ability to construct knowledge and produce “good academic writing” in English, regardless of native language. In the name of internationalization, Englishization has systematically defined what it means to be a scholar by homogenizing standards and expectations, stripping global scholarship of individual cultural, linguistic, national diversity. Academic writing in English offers voice and identity only to those natively fluent in the discourse (Gee, 1989).

**Massification of Higher Education**

Martin Trow (1974) approached issues of the movement from elite to the massification of higher education, concluding that “growth has an impact on every form of activity and manifestation of higher education” (p. 1). Growth of student population, the institution, and the system all bear unique challenges for higher education, including how these aspects of growth shape norms, standards, and practice (Trow, 1974). A rapid increase in student population yields local issues, such as an increase in demand of services from faculty, which negatively influence apprenticeships between professor and student (Trow, 1974). Trow (1974) notes that while in
this era, growth happens quickly, the norms of academic life do not change, and expectations remain the same.

The movement from elite to mass education has three phases. First is the elite university phrase, wherein less than 15 percent of the population participates in higher education (Trow, 1974). In the second phase, mass education, between 15 and 50 percent of students participate, and in the final phase, universal education, more than 50 percent of students enter higher education (Trow, 1974). Trow (1974) describes mass education as a right of the middle class while the universal state indicates higher education as a civic duty. An increase in the number of institutions and the size of existing institutions implies greater access; however, access remains contentious.

Aside from local issues within individual institutions, national growth results in other challenges. Trow (1974) cites political and economic issues, particularly related to access:

Differences in access to higher education, which are not reduced but rather increased during the early stages of expansion, become a sharp political issue in the context of the democratic and egalitarian values that are increasingly strong in Western European countries, and these values create strong pressures for reducing these differences in group rates of enrollment (p. 5).

As higher education expands, in every regard, it no longer serves an exclusively elite population. Elite institutions with restricted access may only expand so much and remain elite, while mass higher education differs qualitatively and quantitatively (Trow, 1974). With elite institutions existing alongside institutions that serve “the masses”, access becomes an issue of privilege. Elite institutions serve fewer students and have limited access, reserving them for “privileged” students—those who meet or exceed standards and expectations, or those who can afford to
Mass higher education offers greater access, and entrance into higher education is viewed as a right—something all students should do who possess the proper qualifications (Trow, 1974).

Since 1970, students have taken advantage of greater access to higher education, as Calderon (2018) measures the increase of students from 32.6 million in 1970 to 250.8 million in 2020. With this increase, however, the meaning and purpose of obtaining an advanced degree have changed, and access is an important qualifier. Kivinen et al. (2008) refer to mass education as a means to serve the transition from education into the labor market and note that institutional strategies reflect the intent to “tighten the bond between educational systems and the labour market” (p. 232). Further, Kivinen et al. (2008) recognize a “mismatch between intelligence […] and productive ability”, defining ability as “successful steps in the transition path from the home via education to the labor market” (p. 232). If higher education is a civic duty, it becomes an obligation (Calderon, 2018), and with a saturated market, competition becomes the goal, not equality, (Kivinen et al., 2008), and globally, doctoral students feel the pressure to represent their countries internationally as competitors. Broader access to higher education does not solve the issues of access, inequity, and inequality for students, especially when, as a result of the massification and globalization of higher education, a common language was required in academia. This is how English became the lingua franca of higher education (Boussebaa & Brown, 2016).

As higher education expanded, Trow (1973) noted that greater diversification may exist within the mass system as opposed to the elite system. In part, this is true, as higher education institutions have spawned at incredible rates over the last 50 years (Calderon, 2018). Within this expansion, however, 34 percent of institutions have reached “universal” education status, and these institutions are in North America and Western Europe, where access to English language,
resources, and English-medium instruction are most common (Calderon, 2018). In Sub-Saharan African, for example, nearly 35 percent of institutions remain elite (Calderon, 2018). Even in Arab Gulf states where massification of higher education has occurred, research cites limited access to English resources and instruction, and the divide English proficiency creates within societies is devastating (Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Ha & Barnwai, 2015; Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015).

Wildy et al. (2015) consider doctoral education in response to massification, stating that massification has “splintered the doctoral field” (p. 3). Barnett et al. (2017) note the failed attempts at doctoral education to “standardize and quality control” on a global scale (p. 3). Yet, the expectation to write and publish in English is both standard and expectation. It has become the norm. As Trow (1974) warned, “large size affects the norms of higher education” (p. 3), and the result of English dominance is homogenization and identity regulation among non-native English-speaking students.

English is “the language of science and predominant language of many academic disciplines due to the legacy of British colonialism and the current U.S. neocolonialism” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 287). Further, it is the process of internationalization that elevated English to the language of higher education (Toprak, 2019). The massification, globalization, and internationalization of higher education and programs, thus, continue to reinforce an imperialist, colonialist mindset, perpetuating the need to write and publish in English (Toprak, 2019). Pedersen (2010) writes, “EAL writers often have no choice but to write and publish in English, as English has become the lingua franca of international scholarship” (p. 285). English dominates at the expense of other cultures and languages, therefore, identities (Pederson, 2010).

Multilingual writers experience discrimination based on the variety of world English they use (or have access) to write (Flowerdew, 2015; Pedersen, 2010). Phillipson (1992) writes “the
dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structure and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (p. 47). As the expectations to write and publish in English persist, so does the need for English-medium instruction, which ensures the “standard” of English remains consistent; however, disparities still exist because of the access students have to instruction and resources. Though students may accept English as “a means to economic and professional end” they must attempt to resist its “overbearing influence on their home language and culture” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 286). Regardless of how students approach or accept the power of English, they must reconcile, compromise, and negotiate identity in ways native English speaking students never will.

The pervasiveness of English-medium instruction is a result of early-20th century imperialism and colonialism, and access to English-medium instruction remains a privilege in higher education today (Pedersen, 2010). On a global scale, English-medium instruction has adopted a standard form of English; for doctoral students, this translates as academic writing, which has “negative implications for English users around the world” (Pedersen, 2010, p. 284). For multilingual students, the disempowerment they experience compromises intellectual authority, as student writing must be edited to fit the style of Standard English (Lillis & Curry, 2006; Pedersen, 2010).

As an effect of globalization and internationalization, English programs and English-medium instruction pose challenges for students who lack English proficiency. Challenges include understanding lectures, writing, and building knowledge (Toprak, 2019). Though English operates under the guise of an international, academic language whose purpose is to unite the global scholarly community, the advantages English offers, such as collaboration and mobility, remain reserved for students who have the privilege of access, and who speak, write, and employ
standard forms of English (Toprak, 2019). If students are unable to speak, write, and understand English, not only is their mobility limited—their ability to construct disciplinary knowledge and demonstrate competitive academic performance are compromised (Toprak, 2019).

Boussebaa and Tienari (2019) identify that “levels of competence in English are uneven across countries” and the “act of writing” creates anxiety and tension among academic communities (p. 1). Writing is clearly the foundation of academic scholarship, identity development, and scholarly identity, and “how and what” academics write determines their reputations as scholars (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019; Cloutier, 2016, p. 69). Language policy (Saarinen, 2014 & 2016) and politics (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019) that favor English result in “language-based inequalities in knowledge production”, which affect identity (p. 2).

The academic writing requirements of doctoral education “have a fundamental impact on learners’ progress in a second language” (Abdulkareen, 2013; as cited in Al Badi, 2015, p. 65). Al Fadda (2012) defines academic writing as “a mental and cognitive activity […] a product of the mind” (p. 124). To be successful, students must “access, evaluate, and synthesize the words, ideas, and opinions of others in order to develop their own academic voice” (Al Fadda, 2012, p. 124), a task that is challenging for native language speakers as they attempt to construct knowledge and make original contributions to the field. Lack of proficiency in English, therefore, obstructs students’ access to successful academic writing and impedes students’ access to value participation in discourse (Al Badi, 2015).

Every student’s experience with English is different, however, and students should never be considered passive subjects of dominant forces (Pedersen, 2010). For example, a majority of international students choose (if they can) to attend university in Anglophone countries that offer English-medium instruction and where English is used frequently (Toprak, 2019). Hyland (2016)
argues that a polarization between native and non-native English speakers “demoralizes EAL scholars”, and while recognizing that native English speakers have an advantage of learning English through natural acquisition, confirms that academic English is “no one’s first language” (as cited in Nejad et al., 2019, p. 3). Boussebaa and Tienari (2019) justify publishing in English as a way to raise “awareness about the role of English in the politics of knowledge production” and argue that “a degree of unfair distribution of power and prestige in academic knowledge production on a global scale is perhaps unavoidable” (p. 7).

To approach equality and equity of access, non-native English speakers should not be expected to write at the same level as native speakers, thus expectations for writing and publishing should be relaxed (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019). As researchers continue to challenge what makes higher education a global enterprise, academics may resolve questions such as “does the global spread of one particular scholarly tradition and language benefit local systems and allow for nondependent, autonomous development? Are there any possibilities for change in their hierarchical, increasingly homogenous, and Englishizing global system of knowledge production?” (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019, p. 7).

Saarinen (2016) defines language as both a formal, symbolic communication system and as a functional, societal practice used to construct knowledge. Language allows students to make meaning in social and cultural contexts (Pedersen, 2010). Doctoral students use language to demonstrate academic writing proficiency, to construct knowledge, and to contribute new research to their chosen fields. In the process, students construct or negotiate identities based on socialization practices, access to resources, and authorial voice. Language is the vehicle through which accepted scholarly identity is possible. Research confirms that a form of standard English is the language of higher education, which restricts how students make meaning, achieve writing
proficiency, construct knowledge, and, ultimately, gain acceptance into the global, scholarly community. The importance of the awareness of English dominance are the inequities in access and opportunities that exist and persist within higher education.

**English as Lingua Franca in Academia**

Englishization connects many critical components of identity negotiation for doctoral students, including voice, agency, access, and homogenization. As the *lingua franca* of higher education, written and spoken English proficiency are necessary for scholarly participation on a global scale; however, English may threaten to homogenize identities, and much research highlights neoliberal associations with Englishization (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019). In doctoral writing, English as *lingua franca* (ELF) requires multiple contextual definitions to situate its relevance to the current study. First, how English has entered the position of lingua franca in the context of globalization. Second, ELF in education, specifically higher education, where non-native English speakers may identify themselves as users of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). And finally, attitudes toward English and the influence on culture and identity, as they pertain to the doctoral student and the writing process.

Firth (1996) defines *lingua franca* as a common language used between persons who do not share a common language. Mauranen (2003) refers to ELF as a “vehicular language” (p. 513), to which Fiedler (2011) adds, is used for “international cooperation” (p. 80). English, in many situations, has become this language, and the focus of ELF in context is among non-Anglophone countries. Seidlhofer (2004) positions ELF as a “linguistic resource or tool of communication”, a definition that connects closely with Kachru’s (1986) varieties of World Englishes (as cited in McIntosh et al., 2017, p. 13). Kachru (1996) represents world Englishes in terms of pluricentricity, as each variety of English contains diverse identities, norms, and
histories. Kachru’s (1986) three expanding, concentric circles present the pluracentric concept and illustrate the global spread of English. As English continues to permeate the globe to achieve universal language status, users experience the effects of altered linguistic behavior and are subject to issues of diversification, identity, power, and ideology (Kachru, 1996).

Bolton (2006) notes the “exponential spread” of English since 1985. From the 1960s to the end of the twentieth century, English-speaking countries adopted English to expand education systems, thus, simultaneously, English became the most-taught language in Kachru’s Expanding Circle (e.g., China, Japan, Korea). Phillipson (2009) comments on the propagation of the English language, “English is the most widely learned foreign language and other foreign languages are in retreat”, a reality that threatens multilingualism (p. 336). As of 2020, nearly 800 million people use English as a second or additional language, which is nearly double the number of native speakers (Ethnologue, 2020).

In higher education, the internationalization and Englishization of academic programs touts diversification and multilingualism, as students congregate from across the globe to participate in English-medium programs. As Bolton (2006) notes, one aspect of the globalization of English is the reality that many students begin education in their birth country but pursue higher education elsewhere, in Anglophone countries. Many students come from families in Kachru’s Expanding Circle who seek elite education (Bolton, 2006). Further, Phillipson (2009) alludes to the neocolonial role of English, echoing its use for “elite formation purposes” (p. 336). Kachru (1996) and Bolton (2006), a decade apart, both cite the “unprecedented” rate of English’s growth.

Attitudes toward English are a critical consideration in the discussion of how students position themselves in academia. Researchers continue to explore perspectives on the use of
English in higher education, ranging from the threat of homogenization and monolingualism, coupled with the lasting implications of the threats to other languages and cultures (Boussebaa & Brown, 2019), to the role of agency (McIntosh et al., 2017) and ownership of a particular variety of English. How an individual, a group, and a country perceive the role and effects of English is not beyond the researcher in this current study, and as the study seeks, in part, to understand why students write in English, multiple sides of the attitudes toward English are relevant.

Kachru (1996) cites an “often repeated question”: why write in English? (p. 144). Regarding the ideological power of English, Kachru (1996) writes, “The symbolization of power depends on how one sees the medium and its message,”; the identity one intends to establish with the language determines the symbolic label (p. 142). Indian novelist Raja Rao purports that it is the “authenticity of experience” that should be important to the writer, not the language (as cited in Kachru, 1996, p. 144). Thus, while a strong argument exists against English, perspectives from those who choose to write in English demonstrate that the writer makes the language her own, uses it to her own chosen objectives, and may even write in her own variety of English, which carries distinct cultural imperatives. Kachru (1996) says it best, proclaiming “What is viewed as deficit by one group of English users indicates pragmatic success to other users. What causes linguistic agony to one group is the cause of ecstasy for the other” (p. 150).

A strong argument against English, and ELF specifically, leans into the side of agony, warning of linguistic imperialism, neoliberal economy, culture, and education (Phillipson, 2009). Phillipson (2009) recognizes the misconception of English as a choice, one reserved for postcolonial elites. In many Expanding Circle countries, publication in competitive English language journals is a requirement for graduation from doctoral programs. English is not a choice for students in these institutions. Knowing the power and possession of English, students
study abroad in countries where doctoral programs have been internationalized, meaning programs are available in English. That is, if they have and make that choice. Thus, a consequence of English’s dominance in higher education is:

users of English accumulate linguistic capital and others are dispossessed of their languages, their territory, and their functions. […] Linguistic capital dispossession, which subtractive language learning uses or promotes, means that English takes over space that as earlier occupied by the national language or the mother tongue (Phillipson, 2009, p. 338).

For these students, English use impacts more than the linguistic perspective of the dissertation writing process. Another component of Kachru’s (1996) “agony” is English’s effects on culture and identity.

**Language, Culture, and Identity**

The relationship between language and identity is complex, as “identity is expressed in and through language” (Fiedler, 2011, p.84-85). Doctoral students use language to create meaning, to process logic, to translate thoughts into writing, and to imbue writing with a sense of authorship. An important connection to establish here is Humboldt’s (1836) proclamation that language is the vehicle of thought, alongside Bakhtin’s (1986) perception of language and thought as unified. When students write in a non-native language, such as English, meaning, logic, thoughts, and identity develop through new linguistic and sociolinguistic processes, which encompass culture, negotiation, and agency.

Kaplan’s (1966) study on contrastive rhetoric, more recently referred to as “intercultural rhetoric” (Connor, 2004), considers the cultural components of language and the writing process. Kaplan (1966) cites Deufrenne (1963), who writes that language is “the effect […] and
expression of a certain world view that is manifested in the culture” (p. 12). Kaplan (1966) argues that thought patterns evolve “out of the Anglo-European cultural pattern” (p. 12) and suggests that a mastery of syntax, for example, does not equate adequate writing. “Foreign students who have mastered syntactic structure have still demonstrated inability to compose adequate themes, term papers, theses, and dissertations” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 13). Ultimately, Kaplan (1966) argues that students who produce strong writing in a native language may not produce writing of the same standard in a second language, and in part, this relates to how students organize thoughts, which is culturally grounded. Though Kaplan’s approach to writing and culture received much critical response over the decades, his work and the discussion it spawned are important to the current study.

Intercultural rhetoric claims that writers express logic through the organization of content, whose patterns are culture-specific (Kaplan, 1988). Thus, writers who use different languages organize reality in different ways (Kaplan, 1988). Linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism highlight the role of language in experiencing and conceiving reality, and language must be understood “in its use functions […] sensitive to the social contexts in which it occurs” (Kaplan, 1976, p. 14). To perceive rhetoric as a “mode of thinking” cultivated by cultural preparation (Oliver, 1965, p. 224), and to recognize that language and thought patterns assume cultural and social significance, doctoral students writing in English and engaging in scholarly socialization experience the identity effects related to English and the academic environment. As students already bring a variety of “selves” to the doctoral experience, the cultural and social conditions of language among non-native English speakers, as they affect identity and meaning-making, are critical considerations.
Kaplan’s (1966) seminal study inspired decades-long debates, calling for greater understanding of culture in the context of written discourse. Kaplan (1976) attributes the logical differences of native and non-native English writers to “‘phenomenological’ differences between the cultures involved” (p. 17). Honko (1996) notes that “culture is not in things but in people’s way of seeing, using, and thinking about things” (p. 19), which requires language and may include language as a unifying factor of identity. Further, Honko (1996) suggests that culture is a function, as opposed to content, which has analytic value in its systemic application. When students construct meaning in a non-native language, they employ rhetorical strategies and thought sequences that reflect native cultural patterns (Kaplan, 1966). When considering Honko’s (1996) approach to culture, its functions and application, and Kaplan’s (1966) identification of writing organization and its cultural implications, language becomes a contest of identity.


For doctoral students, the dissertation as a “product” of doctoral culture is still relevant. Bakhtin (1986a) views an object, the text, as created—a product of a particular cultural sphere. To create, the student embarks on a process, a journey that encompasses the culture and linguistic capital they possess, and the cultural and linguistic capital they achieve. Identity and culture as process assume a “postmodern, decentered, disunified individual”, both subject to
multiple and contradictory influences, and able to manipulate those influences via agency (Atkinson, 2004, p. 282). Thus, doctoral students become social agents through available resources and their responses to constraints, language, access, or otherwise. The process of becoming a scholar, therefore, is a culmination of multifarious sub-processes related to culture, language, writing, and identity development. How students engage with and navigate these processes reflect their agency.

Kaplan (1967) warns that to teach a student to manipulate language (English), is to teach a student to “see the world through English-colored glasses”, which he relates to brainwashing (p. 16). To see the world in English, to internalize logic in English, and to construct identity in English through writing could be interpreted as academic cultural assimilation. Using English to think, process, and organize thoughts to construct meaning implies a relinquishment of previous cultural thought and language patterns—essentially, reconstructing how students perceive reality. For the dissertation, as Bakhtin (1986b) writes, “the text is the primary given reality […] the aggregate of methods and knowledge” (p. 113). As many researchers cite English as the lingua franca of academia, to succeed as a student and scholar is to meet the expectations of using English to communicate, to become.

**Varieties of English**

Kachru (1986) identifies significant variations of English in Inner, Outer, and Expanding circles, which represent the spread, acquisition patterns, and functional domains of English, worldwide. As one language of many among multilingual users, English has evolved into institutionalized varieties (Bolton, 2006). Acquisition, proficiency, and “knowingness” are concerns that stem from the notion of English varieties, and with them, the argument of standards and norms as they relate to doctoral student identity. Further, community of practice,
in the Saussurean context, reduces linguistic diversity to zero, and students are expected to use academic English (Bolton, 2006; Harris, 1998). Harris (1998) writes, “Any system of signs […] had to be the property of a collectivity or community, not of an individual” (p. 92). In doctoral education contexts, to apply Connor’s (1996) definition of culture as communal and Carson and Nelson’s (1996) contrasting individual and collectivist cultures, English use, variety, and agency become more complex as they consider the individual versus the social communities of programs and the broader, global academic community.

While students may learn and take ownership of English, speaking one of the world’s Englishes—in academic writing, students face writing expectations, standards, and norms. Students attempt to adhere to these expectations, standards, and norms to become “accepted members of their respected discourse communities (Li, 2016; as cited in Ho, 2017, p. 2). Schneider (2007) purports that language users refine and express linguistic and social identities iteratively, and such changes accommodate the language behaviors of those with whom the users wish to “associate and be associated with” (as cited in Seidlhofer, 2009, p. 243). Bakhtin (1986a) writes:

We know our native language […] not from dictionaries and grammars but from concrete utterances that we hear and that we ourselves reproduce […] in communication with the people around us. We assimilate forms of language only in forms of utterances in conjunction with these forms. The forms of language […] enter our experience and our consciousness together, an in close conjunction with one another (p. 78).

When applied to English as a non-native language, Bakhtin’s statements assume new meaning. In the social and writing contexts of doctoral experience, students acquire English in new ways as part of new identity communities—they become the products, the objects, through process,
assimilation, and enculturation of language and the scholarly identity. Bakhtin (1986b) states, “by objectifying myself (placing myself outside of language) I gain the opportunity to have an authentically dialogic relationship with myself. […] In language, there are only potential possibilities for relations” (p. 122). In other words, the possibilities of selfhood (Ivanič, 1998).

As actors on the stage of global doctoral enterprise, students appear to have little choice but to conform to the accepted standards of academic writing, depending on their motivations, available options, and access for pursuing an advanced degree. Yet, students are not always denied negotiation, agency, and choice. The meaning of value of Kachru’s (1996) declaration of the agony and the ecstasy of English continue to evolve.

**ELF in Academic Contexts: Communication and Identity**

An important branch of ELF in academic contexts is the argument for or against English as a language of communication, not of identity, which is critical for the current study. Applied to academia, English as a lingua franca becomes “ELFA”: English as a lingua franca in academia. When debating the use of English in higher education, the language’s function is clear—it is, as Mauranen (2003) states, a vehicle for communication. Further, Hüllen (1992) argues that English as an international language does not relate to identity—it is not a language of identification (as cited in Fiedler, 2011). Hüllen’s (1992) definition regards a language of identification as “a language which is learnt in order to be integrated into and identify with the respective speech community” (as cited in Fiedler, 2011, p. 82). For doctoral students, this community is the global, academic community, for which ELFA has been established. Mauranen’s (2010) distinction of ELFA is that a lingua franca “is used for achieving common goals in research and education, not used or learned for the purpose of linguistic or cultural identification with a community that uses it for a national language” (p. 9).
Though Bakhtin (1986a) does not mention specific languages, he considers language and its semantic components (words and sentences) as “devoid of expression and neutral” (p. 90). For Bakhtin, it is not the language itself that determines a user’s identity, but how the language expresses style and individuality through composition. Virkkula and Nikula (2010) assert that ELF is both a language of communication and of identity. English cannot be restricted to a communicative function, nor can it exist isolated from culture (Fiedler, 2011). As products of social interaction, identity and writing connect to create a unified sociolinguistic reality where the written text, such as a dissertation, represents a process and a “repertoire of various identities” (Fiedler, 2011, p. 84). As ELF is the vehicle of communication for global scholars and novice researchers, so is the dissertation a vehicle of mobility, composed in the language of mobility—English (Mauranen, 2010).

**Writing Standards and Norms**

The approach to academic writing in higher education oscillates between two approaches: writing as an autonomous cognitive skill and writing as a skill acquired through the academic socialization process (McCambridge, 2015). Enculturation into “dominant practices of an academic discourse community”, which may reinforce power relations and normalize expectations in these communities, further complicates academic writing (McCambridge, 2015, p. 185). In ELF contexts, and especially in those institutions that tout “international programs”, normative standards of English writing jeopardize student agency while supporting and idealizing Anglo-centric practices on a global scale (McCambridge, 2015).

Apparent from intercultural rhetorical studies is that student’s cultural traditions shape thought processes, which impact the way they write. University traditions also shape how students approach research and writing (personal communication, Lightfoot, 2021). In “super
diverse” international programs, students from various linguistic, cultural, and academic backgrounds, and across disciplines, find themselves oriented toward two, or more, contexts: global academia and institutional contexts (local) (McCambridge, 2015, p. 186). To approach academic writing within such diverse student populations seems to require normative English writing standards to which all students must conform. Diverse students will produce diverse writing, marked with the distinctions of their unique cultural traditions. As students already face a difficult “choice” to write in English, so do they face an even greater barrier of unclear writing expectations, especially when communication and proficiency among professors and students is strained by the lingua franca status of English (Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörndóttir, 2013).

If students must write in English, cultural and identity markers, such as how they convey voice, must remain intact (Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörndóttir, 2013). Since writing style preferences are culturally determined (Lillis & Curry, 2010; Mauranen, 2010) and discipline specific (Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörndóttir, 2013), how writing transfers into another language will vary. Writing in ELF contexts, thus, will deviate from American or British norms, since those cultural traditions are different. Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörndóttir (2013) argue for the “written accent” and assert that diverse writing conventions shall not compromise essence (p. 141, emphasis in original).

**ELF in Academic Writing Contexts**

As Nejad et al. (2019) cite academic writing as “no one’s first language” (p. 3), Mauranen et al. (2010) claim that there are “no native speakers of academic English” (p. 184). Both of these claims suggest that academic writing and academic English share a set of standards and expectations beyond native knowledge or usage, though native speakers are perceived to have the advantage in written contexts. Saraceni (2008) discusses the phenomenon of EFL in
academia as a debate of form or function. As multilingual doctoral students may speak varieties of World Englishes (WE), which is one function for communication and socialization in doctoral education, the form and function of writing are different.

Proshina (2014) argues that successful implementation of English as a communicative function is more important than form, as in, the correctness or native standards of English usage. World English varieties also suggest that international English speakers claim English language, imbuing each variety of English with a distinct, culturally specific identity (Proshina, 2014). Thus, doctoral students using English for the function of writing a dissertation may develop a writer identity via the usage and form of spoken English they employ. Writing and publishing in English, however, and the associated identity construction, further complicate arguments around English usage in higher education.

A further argument contends that English in higher education may be a language of communication and not a language of identification (Fiedler, 2011). Hüllen (1992) perceives ELF as a language of communication that bears no cultural symbol, implying that there is no identity connection between the user and the language (as cited in Fiedler, 2011). Pölzl (2003) coined the phrase “native-culture-free-code” to describe ELF, explaining that “culture-free” connotes “native culture normally associated with language” (p. 4-5). Further, Pölzl (2003) writes, “a language selected for communication only expresses a communication and primary referential function, i.e., the culture associated with this natural language is not activated by its users” (p. 5).

When perceived as a choice, using English to write a dissertation, for example, offers students the opportunity to create “temporary culture”, to export L1 or “primary culture” into their writing, or to “reinvent” cultural identities (Pölzl, 2003, p. 4-5). Communicative inequality,
however, still exists (Fiedler, 2011). Non-native English users who aim to participate competitively in global higher education recognize that English as a lingua franca is required for “international cooperation” (Fiedler, 2011, p. 80). The prevalence of English in written discourse homogenizes and asserts normative research patterns (Fiedler, 2011), thus it seems difficult to separate language from culture from writing from identity. Pölzl’s (2003) suggestion that ELF grants users the “freedom” to exist in a temporal culture seems counterintuitive for doctoral students tasked with knowledge construction and esteemed participation in written discourse, and who seek membership in a global scholarly community—that is, a “self-contained culture” (p. 5).

Identity Construction in ELFA Contexts

It is no mystery that the ability to communicate in English is necessary for success in higher education, for postgraduate students and in academic research (Hyland, 2018). Education and scholarly writing in English have the potential to grant students access to resources, careers, knowledge, and communication (Saraceni, 2008). This reality holds true especially for students in Expanding Circle countries, many with limited access to resources that support academic mobility (Mauranen, 2010; Saraceni, 2008). Novice scholars, such as doctoral students, rely on education and writing to gain acceptance into academic communities and to mobilize on an international scale. To identify with an academic community or discipline, and to enter into discourse, doctoral students must perceive themselves as members of these groups and identify with them (Mauranen, 2010). ELFA has the power to grant this access and shape this identity. Comparative to Latin in medieval history, ELFA helps students and scholars achieve common goals; its purpose is not to represent or to usurp linguistic and cultural identities with communities that use English as a national language (Mauranen, 2010). To support this concept, Wildavasky (2013) writes:
The ubiquity of English, like Latin before it, makes the spread of ideas – and the mobility of individuals – vastly easier. There’s a strong case for viewing a linguistic common currency as empowering, whether to native speaker or to non-English-speaking teachers or students who want to participate in the global academic marketplace (as cited in Curry & Lillis, 2014, p. 4).

If the academic community, at large, participates in using ELFA as the medium of communication in speaking and writing, and if novice scholars intend to become a part of this community, the roles of identity and culture complexify. The argument is not as simple as seeing English as culture-free and as a medium to which all eager participants have equal access and thus, equal opportunity.

While important differences exist between spoken and written language, academic language, however it is used, yields great normative power on standard language (Mauranen, 2010). Ingvars dóttir and Arnbjöns dóttir (2013) note than in the ELF context, read and written English in global academia is important and requires additional research. Extensive research on multilingual scholars publishing in English (e.g., Curry & Lillis, 2004, 2010, 2013, 2014), bridges culture, identity, language, and writing, and illuminates the standards and expectations for writers to be granted access to global scholarly communities. The dissertation writing process unites these concerns, as doctoral students use education and writing as a process of becoming and must navigate difficult decisions throughout their academic socialization process.

Curry and Lillis (2004) reflect on writing as a social practice, rooted in knowledge construction as it relates to cultural traditions—reminiscent of intercultural rhetorical practices. Writing is situated in power relations and questions identity for the novice and the expert. English has the power to grant advantage and a competitive edge, in university and beyond. For
the native English speaker, academic writing is still a challenge, as it requires a learned register and skill set (Ingvarsóttir & Arnbjönsdóttir, 2013). Non-native English speakers, however, “must learn the appropriate conventions, rhetorical structures, and syntactic and lexical features of standard academic written English, whether it be British, American, Canadian, or other accepted ENL standards” (Hyland 2003; Matsuda & Silva, 2005; as cited in Ingvarsóttir & Arnbjönsdóttir, 2013, p. 126).

Fløttum et al. (2006) regard English academic discourse as language, culture, and discipline specific (as cited in Ingvarsóttir & Arnbjönsdóttir, 2013, p. 130). To participate in scholarly international writing communities, validly, students must acquire and master proficient, appropriate, and current English writing conventions (Ingvarsóttir & Arnbjönsdóttir, 2013). Exposure and access to English, whether via medium of instruction, speaking, writing, or resources, varies globally. To proclaim that English is a “utility language” is to assume that doctoral students using this language are not affecting nor affected by cultural, identity, and power relations related to the language. With clear expectations of writing usage delineated, though varied across disciplines, non-native speakers of English composing doctoral theses in English are subject to immense pressure and restraint when producing knowledge, reporting findings, and attempting to gain access to an international discourse community. As Ingvarsóttir and Arnbjönsdóttir (2013) assert, “Non-native users of English are at a disadvantage in the pursuit of the rhetorical conventions of Standard English” (p. 131).

Fluency in the conventions of standardized written English enables doctoral students to understand disciplines, navigate learning, and establish careers (Hyland, 2018). English proficiency, in both reading and writing, allows students access to new forms of knowledge construction (Hyland, 2018) and deeper levels of engagement in international academic study,
where English has become *the* medium of communication. Further, academic experiences, whether socialization process or writing, influence how students understand themselves (Hyland, 2012). Hyland (2018) writes, “engagement in academic writing […] involves new ways of behaving, interacting and thinking about the world. It is a social practice rather than a skill in that it is related both to what people do and to the wider social structures in which they do it” (p. 384-385). While students may choose to write in a language other than English, and thus participate in knowledge construction, disciplines, and scholarly communities, choosing *not* to use English will limit their international competitiveness and mobility. How students choose and choose to use language ultimately reflects and alters their identities, how they perceive and construct reality, and dictates their opportunities. Language is, or is not, their future.

Virkkula and Nikula (2013) bring the arguments around language, identity, discourse, and culture full circle when they regard discourse as “takes” on the world, “manifested through language” (p. 2). To use language is to invoke pre-existing discourses to conceive of and thus represent the world and the self (Virkkula & Nikula, 2013). In any situation where people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together, questions and issues of identity will surface. In academic contexts, students may or may not have the option to choose the language that will situate their scholarly identities. If students use ELFA or EAP, according to Pölzl (2003), they have the “*freedom*” to create a “shared, temporary culture”, to “export primary culture” into English, or to “reinvent cultural identities” through blending with other linguistic and cultural groups (emphasis added; as cited in Virkkula & Nikula, 2013, p. 5). Pölzl’s (2003) word choice, “freedom”, fails to consider those students with restricted access to English, and assumes that non-native English speakers wish to participate in one of these identity-shaping
options. Important to consider is that native English-speaking students never have to ponder such a choice for their identities; thus, no aspect of the self is compromised.

Identities may be assumed, imposed, or negotiated (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; as cited in Virkkula & Nikula, 2013). In their study, Virkkula and Nikula (2013) draw many conclusions related to identity construction in ELF contexts, namely, that lingua franca usage is both a matter of identification and communication. Location of language usage is also important. While native-speaker norms have power, lingua franca usage abroad in non-Anglophone countries affords users the opportunity for identity negotiation (Virkkula & Nikula, 2013). When students must ask “who am I when I speak this language”, the same may be applied to writing. Language proficiency profoundly affects discursive identity construction, and thus, it seems conclusive to state that “there is indeed a relationship between identity and ELF and that this relationship is complex” (Virkkula & Nikula, 2013, p. 17).

Canagarajah (2013) asserts that native-English speakers do not “own the language” (as cited in Atkinson, 2015, p. 426). Multilingual writers negotiate communication norms and, asserting agency, to shift rhetoric to satisfy diverse writing contexts. Thus, linguistic and rhetorical conventions are also negotiable, and multilingual writers participate in changing rules and conventions “to suit their values, interests, and identities” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 603; as cited in Atkinson, 2015, p. 426). Culture and identity are not fixed nor static—they are negotiated and emergent (Atkinson, 2015), and the student possess the power of negotiation. Herein lies the ecstasy. Shen (1989) notes that to be himself in an English writing classroom, he had to cease to be his Chinese self, create an English self, and “accept himself the way a Westerner accepts himself in relation to the universe and society” (p. 461; as cited Atkinson, 2015, p. 420). Ultimately, however, Shen perceived the experience as one of growth, which
suggests that native language and culture are resources, not problems, and that students may maintain control and power over their experiences.

**Voice and Self**

Academia’s socialization process fosters the development of academic writing, which possesses its own sets of standards and expectations. Just as doctoral students participate in scholarly enculturation, either at the local level of the university’s tradition or on a global scale, so do they adopt and adapt to writing practices. Intercultural rhetoric and explorations of culture inform the complex relationships between language, identity, and writing. The writer’s voice connects to these concepts when interpreted as a social practice (Gee, 1990; as cited in Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). The cultural implications of voice inherent to the Anglophone writing process problematize the non-native English-speaking students’ perception of voice, thus hindering its development (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). For some students, voice and self demonstrate a deeper level of identity negotiation L2 writers navigate throughout doctoral education.

If identity is multifarious and in flux, then language follows, and heteroglossia provides a foundation for interpreting language-voice-identity relationships. The term *heteroglossia* encompasses Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) concepts of diversity in speechness, languageness, and voicedness. Though the term remains highly debated among linguistic researchers, some of its many interpretations may be employed to clarify the experiences of L2 writers composing dissertations in English. Whereas Foucault (1980) notes the multi- vs unitary personalities of the individual, Bakhtin (1986) suggests that a writer’s voice may be “multiple and intertextual” (as cited in Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, p. 50). Bakhtin (1986b) writes of the author’s transformation and acquisition of a second voice. Further, the authenticity of the autonomous
individual, the authorial voice which expresses the self, always distinguishes the individual (as cited in Atkinson, 2015).

Two contrasting notions of self help situate the doctoral student as an independent entity who transitions (perhaps) to become an interdependent entity within the social strata of global academia. Markus and Kitayama (1991) address the concept of the independent self as a western cultural phenomenon, where one seeks to become an individual whose “behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one’s own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and action, rather than by the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others” (as cited in Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, p. 51). The contrasting notion of selfhood is interdependent, where the self is part of a larger social relationship and “behavior is determined, contingent on, and to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227; as cited in Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, p. 51).

When non-English speaking students become socialized into western, Anglo-centric writing practices and seek to participate, competitively, within global academia, voice is contested. Through a multicultural lens, culture and language, which influence voice, are also sites of power and contestation (Atkinson, 2015). Considering the contrasting views of selfhood, academia seems to occupy both positions. Students and their many identities enter doctoral study, expecting to join a milieu of new social, academic groups, thus assuming new identities as scholars. By joining these communities, they exercise the interdependent selfhood. Each, however, remains the independent self, the singular scholar, who, alone, writes a dissertation and completes doctoral study. For multilingual students, this is the solitude of writing in a language “not one’s own”.
Not only do multilingual students struggle to write academically in a non-native language—they also struggle to adopt the culture of writing practice in Anglophone institutions. Different languages and cultural writing traditions push students further from the goal of scholar and deeply compromise their identities through multiple levels of negotiation. This is not to say that students lack agency, but instead, the point is to bring awareness to the extra and excessive compromises and challenges that multilingual, multicultural students must experience to participate in the same academic world as native English-speaking students. In part, the disparities and inequalities that divide native- and non-native English users include the additional time and expenses required to achieve the proficiency necessary for publication or completion of a doctoral program (Fiedler, 2011). Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) pose the difficult question: How realistic is it to regularly expect or demand of our NNS students that they basically become someone else?” (emphasis in original; p. 56).

Summary

The literature reviewed and synthesized in this chapter only begins to approach the deeply complex topics of identity, language, culture, and thought, as independent subjects and as they pertain to writing. Two major arguments to consider are that academic English and writing are native to no individual, yet native English speakers are unequivocally advantaged. While all novice researchers and doctoral students experience identity, writing, and language challenges, the intent of this literature review was to highlight the social, political, and cultural underpinnings that may perpetuate neocolonialism in higher education, via linguistic imperialism. Further, the focus of this study is students for whom English is not a native language. To support this focus, the literature must apply to multilingual, multicultural perspectives, which illuminate arguments around English as a communication tool, a language of
identity, or both. The literature suggests the ongoing on complex debates around both the “agony” and “ecstasy” of English as a lingua franca in academia, and the forthcoming chapters intend to add to the body of knowledge concerning these debates.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives and Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the research study’s design, development, process, and analysis. The purpose of this qualitative international comparative study was to explore why multilingual doctoral students choose to write dissertations in English and how this choice influenced their perceptions of identity negotiation and knowledge construction. Further, the study intended to explore how access to English-medium resources may highlight disparities and influence scholarly opportunities among international countries. Most important to the study were students’ experiences with, perceptions of, and access to English language and their perspective of its relationship to identity regulation and linguistic homogenization in higher education. Ultimately, the researcher aimed to understand resistance, acceptance, mobility, choice, and identity as they relate to language in doctoral student writing.

Interest in comparing international doctoral student experiences derived from the researcher’s long-standing fascination with international education systems, identity construction, and meaning-making related to language, especially among multilingual speakers. From graduate work as a poet and translator, the researcher’s interest in writing and language formed a deeper connection, and as an English writing instructor working with students for whom English is not the first language, the researcher became curious as to the experiences of students writing in English as an additional language. Upon entering doctoral study and observing first-hand the challenges academic writing posed for native English-speaking students, the researcher turned her attention to international doctoral students tasked with the magnumiumous undertaking of producing a dissertation and constructing an identity in a non-native language.
Research Design

A qualitative international comparative study offers research opportunities to gather rich, thick descriptions of participant experiences across a variety of international contexts. Further, the research design of constructivist grounded theory maintains three requirements:

1. The creation of a sense of reciprocity between participants and the research in the co-construction of meaning and, ultimately, a theory that is grounded in the participants’ and researcher’s experiences.

2. The establishment of relationships with participants that explicate power imbalances and attempts to modify these imbalances.

3. Clarification of the position the author takes in the text, the relevance of biography and how one renders participants’ stories into theory through writing (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 9).

Thus, the design of a constructivist grounded theory approach relies on data generation as the researcher remains actively engaged with the data to identify and fill gaps in an iterative cycle of generation and analysis. The design is fluid and reflexive and calls upon the researcher to remain open and active. So while the constructivist design may not appear prescriptive, it is rigorous, and in an international, culturally-sensitive research environment, the design best represents the multiple realities of participants and highlights the important role of the researcher in a non-hierarchical relationship with participants (Mills et al., 2006b).

Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction

Employing grounded theory in an international comparative study in the education field affords the researcher an approach to explore, explain, and understand phenomena with the
potential to redefine existing theories (Rupp, 2016). Grounded theory is particularly useful when studying change from participants’ perspectives (Rupp, 2016), a relevant factor in doctoral student identity negotiation and knowledge construction. Additionally, Liebeskind (2012) highlights grounded theory’s potential to increase cultural sensitivity. To promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in the data collection process, the researcher encouraged participants to use the language most comfortable for communication. Grounded theory supports data analysis and translation in a foreign language as a powerful analytical tool (Kruse & Schmieder, 2012; Tarozzi, 2013). As the researcher engaged in iterative data collection and analysis cycles, gathering, integrating, and analyzing a variety of data, grounded theory best suited the many facets of an international comparative study (Rupp, 2016; Troman & Jeffrey, 2007).

Corbin and Strauss (2015) emphasize the emergent process of grounded theory, noting that analysis begins at the onset of data collection, and the cycle continues until the researcher “constructs well-integrated and dense theory” (p. 15). The nature of data analysis in grounded theory is comparative, as Corbin and Strauss (2015) describe, an “analytic process of comparing different pieces of data against each other for similarities and differences” (p. 85). This strengthens the argument that grounded theory is a viable methodological approach for an international comparative study.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as a general methodology, which spawned renewed rigor and appreciation for qualitative research, especially in the social sciences (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The aim of grounded theory is to allow theory to evolve through multi-phased data collection and analysis processes using a constant comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Because of its comparative nature, grounded theory is an
appropriate methodological choice for an international comparative study, as both value the richness and depth of understanding the researcher may derive from the iterative process.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) purport that grounded theory is “interpretive work”, and that interpretation “must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study” (p. 274; emphasis in original). Further, interpretations are necessary to understand participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). An international comparative study that intends to understand doctoral student perspectives and experiences benefits greatly from a methodology focused on authentic representation of participants voices and experiences, which is what the researcher intends to accomplish. As for the data collection and analysis process, grounded theory offers analytic tools that allow the researcher to analyze levels of relevance between data sets. These levels include, for example, international, institutional, group, and individual, all pertaining to the same phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). When studying doctoral student identity development, the researcher must consider multiple variables that influence identity construction, thus grounded theory allows for the analytic depth required for a research process that considers cross-national and cross-cultural borders.

Grounded theory is an attractive choice for international comparative study and identity research because of its open concern with discovery and knowledge. The methodology is also aware of daily relevance and reality, which is useful for practitioner-scholars aiming to take action or apply the research findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1994) write, “Knowledge is, after all, linked closely with time and place. When we carefully and specifically build conditions into our theories, we eschew claims to idealistic versions of knowledge, leaving the way open for further development of our theories” (p. 276). Such an approach keeps participants central to the study.
Constructivist Grounded Theory

Mills et al. (2006a) argue that researchers must employ a research paradigm that corresponds with personal “beliefs about the nature of reality” (p. 26). As the researcher contends that individuals construct their own realities and does not support the perspective of one, objective reality, the constructivist paradigm fits, supports social construction, and recognizes the multitude of constructions available to individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mills et al., 2006a). In denying the existence of an objective reality, the researcher assumes a “relativist ontological position” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; as cited in Mills et al., 2006a, p. 26) and understands that context influences the multiple individual realities that exist (Mills et al., 2006a). Within the constructivist paradigm, the researcher partakes in a subjective interrelationship with participants and in the co-construction of meaning (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Mills et al., 2006a).

Grounded theory research designs are systematic, yet offer flexibility to explain phenomena such as process, action, and interaction at a broad conceptual level (Creswell, 2012). Charmaz (2006) defines grounded theory as “a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data” (p. 187). Constructivist grounded theory is appropriate for researchers who aim to construct a theory that understands a process integral to the area of inquiry (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Strauss’s (1987) constant comparative method encourages iterative data analysis, during which the researcher categorizes and integrates continuous, growing, and transformative data.

Neff (1998) suggests using grounded theory for studying how students develop as writers. Writing is a process and an action; students interact with language, texts, and social environments to develop doctoral identities. Because this study intends to understand how
doctoral student writer identities and voices develop through simultaneous interaction with text and language, a methodology that supports the development of a suggestive theory is appropriate (Clancy & Vince, 2019). Grounded theory considers experiences and meaning derived from research participants, and theories emerge from respondent data (Clancy & Vince, 2019; Creswell, 2012). Thus, the emergent theories are “grounded” in data.

The constructivist design is a philosophical position between positivist and postmodern research that considers the “views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies” of individuals (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Creswell, 2012, p. 429). The design is suitable for studying doctoral student experience because it focuses on the meaning participants ascribe to process, action, and interaction (Creswell, 2012). Thus, grounded theory serves to understand and explain participants’ feelings during a phenomenon or process (Creswell, 2012). Charmaz (1994) applied grounded theory to explore personal identity dilemmas, from which the process of self-preservation emerged (Creswell, 2012). In questioning the conditions that shape identity reconstruction, Charmaz (1994) described findings that were suggestive and questioning rather than conclusive. The method, therefore, is an acceptable approach to understanding identity and voice development processes and construction in doctoral students.

Constructivist grounded theory repositions the researcher as an author to participants’ reconstruction of experience and meaning (Mills et al., 2006). The methodological foundations of constructivist grounded theory focus on how participants construct meaning relative to the area of inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist researchers co-construct experience and meaning with the participants (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011), thus the process lends itself to both defensive and creative emotions, generated by the researcher (Clancy & Vince, 2019). Emotional dimensions of grounded theory transform into ideas and insights, and the emotion and
unconscious dynamics deepen the researcher’s analysis, which enhance theory building (Clancy & Vince, 2019). Clancy & Vince (2019) argue that the emotional, internal, and imagined worlds of the researcher and researched are integral to design, data collection, and analysis. Emotions exist within the data, arise in the researcher, and influence analysis and interpretation, which expand on Charmaz’s “imaginative interpretation” in grounded analysis (Charmaz, 2008, p. 157; Clancy & Vince, 2019).

**Global Perspective, Cultural Awareness**

Though grounded theory originally developed in the US and UK, it has achieved a global reach (Charmaz, 2014). As a monolingual individual studying in the US, the researcher recognizes the potential conflicts of culture, values, languages, and beliefs that may occur in the data collection process when working with international, transcultural, multilingual participants. Charmaz (2014) writes, “Western researchers who enter worlds elsewhere may only glimpse but not grasp how the long hand of history shapes meanings and actions within their studied communities” (p. 6), and the researcher agrees that by using grounded theory, she has chosen a method that accounts for these “worlds”, cultures, and communities, of which she may not be explicitly aware. Further, the researcher is aware of the centrality of language in grounded theory, how it shapes meaning and may clarify or conceal connections between meaning and action in the coding process (Charmaz, 2014). Language, culture, and tradition are meaningful for participants, both in their interpretation of questions and in their responses; they bear meaning for the researcher also, who has, to the best of her ability, represented the authentic voices and interpreted the meanings of participants’ responses.

This study seeks to understand what and how questions related to multilingual doctoral student identity development throughout the dissertation writing process. Additionally, the study
engages why questions that consider doctoral students’ writing and language choices.

Historically, grounded theory utilizes what, how, and why questions, which are uncharacteristic of qualitative research (Charmaz, 2008). Gubrium & Holstein (1997) contend that qualitative research may address why questions by examining the relationship between what and how. Focus on what and how questions establishes the foundation for why questions, which comprise the core of the current study.

**International Comparative Study**

International comparative research is a significant methodological approach in higher education (Kosmützky et al., 2020). The benefits of this approach include broadening horizons, reflecting upon phenomena, deconstructing national perspectives, and considering the future (Kosmützky et al., 2020). The massification of higher education (Calderon, 2018) and the “growing international dimension” have established higher education as a global enterprise worth analyzing (Kosmützky et al., 2020, p. 177). Comparing similarities and differences of education experiences internationally may reveal phenomenological patterns within higher education, society, and policy, simultaneously (Kosmützky et al., 2020).

**Comparative Research**

Kosmützky (2018) defines comparative research as inter-, cross-national or inter- or cross-cultural, empirical in nature, and with the intent to collect data and observations across national, geographical, or cultural boundaries. The result of comparative research is a systematic relation of entities in a comparative analysis (Kosmützky, 2018). Most comparative studies share a similar objective: “combined and simultaneous observation of similarities and differences” (Kosmützky, 2018, p. 1), yet only international comparative studies collect data in and identify various macro-social units, such as countries, cultures, and systems. This study seeks to
understand doctoral student experiences across countries and cultures, and among students whose native language is not English, while considering the implications of massification and globalization in higher education. Thus, comparative international research suits the study methodologically because it helps “foster the analysis of the growing international and global dimension of higher education” (Teichler, 2014; as cited in Kosmützky, 2018, p. 3).

**Research Participants and Sites**

This international comparative study aims to understand the perspectives and explore the experiences of professionals who have completed doctoral study and written a dissertation while competing in the global arena of higher education. Further, the study examines identity and language negotiation as part of the dissertation writing process. To represent an international perspective, the researcher solicited responses from professionals working globally. As it is unreasonable to travel internationally for the current study, research sites assume different meanings. Though the researcher did not visit individual sites, each participant represents a different international space. Sites may also indicate where participants completed doctoral study. Aspects of sites, such as geographical location and national language(s) may suggest a relationship between participant and writing experience.

**Survey and Interview Participants**

With the help of the researcher’s dissertation committee and professional local and international contacts, a Google Forms survey was distributed internationally using email, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The survey was open to any individual who had completed a dissertation. After two weeks of data generation, however, the researcher identified gaps and commenced purposive sampling to attract more multilingual survey participants. After an eight-week period of availability, 29 respondents completed the survey. Of the 29, 17 identified as male and 12
identified as female. A majority of respondents (34.5%) range in age from 40-49. All respondents earned a doctoral degree and completed a dissertation or thesis equivalent. Respondents represent 17 countries and 14 languages, including English. Some respondents completed doctoral study in non-Anglophone countries or countries where English is not considered a native language, yet respondents considered themselves native speakers due to language exposure.

Following completion of the survey, participants had the option to volunteer to participate in an interview. Of the 29 participants, five expressed interest in interviewing. Three interviewees were male and two were female. Interviewees represented five countries, including the United Kingdom, Peru, Argentina, Turkey, and South Korea. Interview participants spoke English, Arabic, Korean, and Spanish.

**Participant Sites**

For this study, sites relate to participants’ geographic locations, including country of birth, country of doctoral study, and location of current occupation. Home country, country of doctoral study, and country of occupation are all meaningful to the current study, as an important element of this study considers where respondents completed doctoral study and whether the location differs from the respondents’ home countries. Of the 29 respondents, 48% live and work in their country of birth. Many of the participants pursued doctoral study outside of their home countries in either Anglophone countries, such as the US, UK, or Canada, or in countries that support strong (English-medium) international programs, such as Denmark and The Netherlands.

**Methods of Data Generation**

This international comparative study included iterative stages of data generation, characteristic of grounded theory research. Two methods of collection included an online digital
survey using Google Forms and interviews. Using email, Linked In, and other social media platforms, the researcher published the survey online to solicit participants. Participants had two weeks to respond to the survey, but as the data collection process in grounded theory is also generative, the researcher completed multiple cycles of generating survey data. To solicit interview participants, the final survey question asked respondents to contact the researcher for a follow-up interview. With this method of contact and by using purposive sampling, the researcher interviewed five participants.

**Sampling**

**Purposive sampling.** Grounded theory research begins with purposive sampling, a sampling technique that ensures the researcher attracts participants that will answer the research question(s) (Chun Tie et al., 2019). As data collection and analysis work together and inform each other, should the researcher recognize gaps in the initial data, she may solicit additional participants (Timonen et al., 2019). In doctoral research, time constraints, reliance on gatekeepers to attract and secure interviews, and participants’ availability may disrupt purposive sampling (Timonen et al., 2019). In the current study, the researcher recognized gaps in the data, and was able to recruit participants to fill those gaps. Though there were challenges securing participants, ultimately the researcher was able to develop a study with high informative power.

**Theoretical sampling.** Theoretical sampling is the ideal for grounded theory research, as it represents the iterative nature of data collection necessary to reach theoretical saturation (Cohen et al., 2007). In theoretical sampling, data collection does not continue for the purpose of representation; instead, it ensures a theory will emerge. The researcher should follow the data’s leads to determine what additional data might be necessary to support emergent theories (Chun
Tie et al., 2019). Though theoretical sampling is part of the analysis process, it is listed here as part of data collection because of its connection to participants.

**Data Collection Phase 1: Survey**

Surveys allow researchers to collect data that express participant views, experiences, or perceptions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). A well-crafted survey instrument aligns with the research study and connects with existing research literature (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The current study employed a cross-sectional survey research design for the first phase of data collection. A cross-sectional survey examines current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices, allowing the researcher to understand how participants think and how cognitive processes may relate to practice (Creswell, 2012). As the study intended to collect and compare responses among international doctoral students, a cross-sectional design satisfied the intent of the study and allowed for group comparisons. An international comparative study required the researcher to deploy the survey instrument in an online environment, thus the survey was adapted to be distributed digitally. Seixas et al. (2018) note that “international comparisons pose demanding data collection challenges” (p. 778), and online qualitative surveys help to curb some of these challenges.

The primary objective of an international comparative study is to “obtain comparable information from a potentially large number of different countries,” (Seixas et al., 2018), so the survey instrument must be designed to capture diverse responses. Further, the instrument must be open enough to elicit varieties of information from participants while remaining structured enough to allow for viable and efficient data reduction and analysis (Seixas et al., 2018). Open-ended survey questions offer participants the opportunity to express themselves, and Wallis (2012) finds that language fluency and other personal characteristics may increase the response
rate of open-ended survey questions (as cited in Miller & Lambert, 2014). As this study considers participants’ native and non-native languages, a survey seemed an appropriate approach for the first phase of data collection. The researcher also used evidence from Miller and Lambert (2014) in designing the survey instrument, placing important questions near the beginning of the survey.

The survey for the current study collected demographic information, as well as questions regarding English language proficiency and usage. Other questions addressed participants’ occupations and doctoral study information. Some questions asked participants to elaborate on responses to multiple choice or Likert scale questions. A final section of the survey asked open-ended questions related to writing identity development, experiences, and details related to the dissertation writing process. An analysis of the data is in Chapter Four of the current study.

**Data Collection Phase 2: Interviews**

The researcher conducted five, hour-long interviews following the completion of the survey. Interviews offered the researcher the opportunity to explore and understand participants’ perceptions and experiences in more detail, as the purpose of the interview was to ask semi-structured, open-ended questions with the opportunity for follow-up questions. Interviews offered participants the chance to elaborate on answers to survey responses and build a narrative, which would support the storyline crafted by the researcher in the interpretation and analysis stage. Additionally, the researcher asked supplemental questions to encourage participants to develop further their stories and to fill gaps she identified in the first round of data generation.

In constructivist grounded theory, interviews intend to explore individual experience, and the researcher situates the data within multiple contexts (Charmaz, 2003). Successful interview practices strike a balance between listening to the participant and asking questions to “define and
explore processes” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 678). The purpose of the interview is to locate important events within a participant’s story, understand the contexts of the events, and uncover and explore the processes that influence events (Charmaz, 2003).

The researcher must also achieve a balance when writing interview questions. Questions must be broad and specific, simultaneously; more generalized questions elicit responses from participants that cover a breadth of experiences, while specific questions speak more directly to the individual participants (Charmaz, 2003). Further, questions must also satisfy the needs of the research topic while addressing the participant’s experience (Charmaz, 2003). Strong interview questions should also inspire reflection in the participant; how the researcher poses the questions allows the participant time to think and reflect before responding (Charmaz, 2003). Overall, the questioning and interview processes should be a comfortable experience with a welcoming atmosphere, which encourages conversation.

For the current study, the importance of process that Charmaz (2003) discusses is critical. As one of the purposes of this study was to explore the writing processes and practices of doctoral students, as well as the broader scope of language experiences in doctoral study, the constructivist grounded theory approach to writing and asking interview questions is appropriate. Charmaz (2016) also considers the role of constructivist grounded theory in critical inquiry. Charmaz (2016) writes, “the questions we ask matter; the perspectives underlying our questions count” (p. 2). To develop questions that encourage participant storytelling and satisfy the aforementioned qualifications of strong, skillful questions, whether at the level of research or the interview, the constructivist grounded theorist must develop methodological self-consciousness, a process that requires, “detecting and dissecting our worldviews, language, and meanings and revealing how they enter our research in ways we had previously not realized” (Charmaz, 2016,
In other words, a heightened self-awareness of the self and the role of the researcher in the research process.

**Role of the Researcher**

Strauss and Corbin (1994) identify the role of the grounded theory researcher as one of interpreter, responsible for the perspectives, viewpoints, and voices of participants. Thus, it is the researcher’s obligation and responsibility to do more than represent or report on participant’s voices or viewpoints. Interpretation of what is “observed, heard, or read” is critical to the grounded theorist researcher’s position (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274). Further, the researcher plays an important role in the theoretical coding process and must recognize the value of theoretical sensitivity. Strauss and Corbin (1994) approach theoretical sensitivity as “disciplinary or professional knowledge […] research and personal experience” as well as specific awareness and sensitivity to “class, gender, race, and power” (p. 280). The role of the researcher in grounded theory, therefore, is more than a passive observer or coder; the researcher remains involved, sensitive, and attentive, and participates in an interplay between herself and participants.

In grounded theory, the researcher, participants, and data share a mutual relationship, and reciprocal shaping occurs as the researcher and data “speak to each other” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280). The reciprocal shaping process results in greater theoretical sensitivity, and the researcher must be open to the affective experiences that develop within the research and analysis process. Strauss and Corbin (1994) note that both analytical experiences and experiences with participants themselves may affect the researcher. A deep level of involvement with the research process and with participants encourages the researcher’s obligation to
participants, to “tell their stories [...] to give them voice”, and to the commitment to provide participants an explanation of interpretations from the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 281).

From the constructivist grounded theory perspective, Charmaz (2006) speaks to the important role of language in the coding process. While data may represent the empirical world, grounded theory researchers experience that world through language. “No researcher is neutral” Charmaz (2006) writes “because language confers form and meaning on observed realities” (p. 47). In grounded theory research, participants’ language choices inspire codes, from which the researcher derives meaning and establishes perspective. The role of the researcher is to define what she sees as significant, to attempt to understand participants’ views and actions, and to engage in meaningful interaction with the data. Ultimately, the researcher’s view arises from the data, which establishes significance of the relationships among the researcher, the data, and the research process (Charmaz, 2006).

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Introduction**

Though data collection, analysis, and interpretation should be concurrent in grounded theory (Cohen et al., 2007), this is not always practicable (Timonen et al., 2018). The researcher has chosen to separate data analysis and interpretation from the data collect methods to represent the unique conditions and nature of her study. The researcher recognizes that data collection and analysis are ongoing and iterative through the research process, and she details her experiences with the process in two sections of the study. The purpose of the data analysis and interpretation section of this study is to expand upon the data collection procedures, detailed previously.

To commence data analysis in grounded theory, the researcher must familiarize herself with the data, remain detached, yet exercise reflexivity (Charmaz, 2006; Timonen et al., 2018).
Timonen et al. (2018) refer to “opening up” the data to begin identifying codes and categories (p. 5). Once the researcher reads and is familiar with the data, she begins the initial coding process, remains open, stays close to the data, moves quickly, and asks questions of the data (Charmaz, 2006). When patterns emerge, over time, the researcher continues to develop codes and identify categories. Developed stages of this iterative reading and coding process employ constant comparative analysis. Memo-writing bridges the space between coding and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2001). Eventually, when the data reaches saturation, the researcher is prepared for the emergence of a theory or framework.

**Coding**

Coding provides the link and defines the process between data collection and constructing or discovering an emergent theory (Charmaz, 2006). Early coding helps the research identify potential gaps in the data and informs the next stage of data collection (Chun Tie et al., 2019). In constructivist grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) outlines two main phases of coding, which include:

1) An initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data

2) A focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amount of data (p. 46).

**In vivo codes.** In vivo codes secure the links between participant, researcher, and the importance of language in the grounded theory research process. When the researcher uses the language of the participant in coding, she is using “symbolic markers of participants’ speech and meanings” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55). Using participants’ own language choices allows the researcher to preserve participants’ meanings, views, and actions. When working with participants for whom English is not the first language, yet English is the researcher’s first
language, it is critical that the researcher interpret the participant’s meaning as accurately as possible. In this study, the researcher used in vivo codes in every coding phase.

**Initial coding.** Initial coding begins with a close reading of the data, during which the researcher remains open to “all possible theoretical directions” the data may suggest (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Questions such as what does the data study, from whose point of view, what does the data suggest characterize the initial coding phase (Charmaz, 2006). “The purpose of initial coding is to start the process of fracturing data to compare incident to incident and to look for similarities and differences in beginning patterns in the data” (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 4). The researcher generates many codes, works quickly, and keeps codes similar to the data (Charmaz, 2006; Chun Tie et al., 2019). How the researcher codes in the initial phase prepares future theoretical emergence.

**Focused coding.** The second phase of coding is focusing coding, during which the researcher identifies and uses frequent and/or significant codes to begin developing categories (Charmaz, 2006). Kenny and Fourie (2015) use the term “re-focused coding” to convey code recurrence and meaning (p. 1279). Focused codes are selective and represent how the researcher has acted upon the data to induce theory emergence (Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing is vital in the focused coding phase, though may occur throughout both coding phases (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Charmaz, 2006; Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Charmaz (2001) writes:

> Through memo-writing, grounded theorists fill out their codes and identify gaps in them. They define the code, delineate and analyze its properties, specify conditions under which it exists and changes, demonstrate its relationship to other codes, and weigh its significance for processes discovered in the field (p. 6398).
Thus, memo-writing propels the researcher toward the final stages of data analysis and prepares her for theory construction.

**The Researcher and the Writing Process**

Constructivist grounded theory highlights the important role of the researcher and her relationship with participants. The researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions shape the grounded theory she performs. Additionally, the researcher’s area of inquiry must reflect her interest (Mills et al., 2006b). Just as the researcher recognizes the multifarious selves of the research participants in the study, so does she recognize her many selves that have worked to carry out the current study. Mills et al. (2006b) note that researchers have several “selves”, and to conduct research imbued with “passion and sustainability,” the research topic must satisfy interest and concern of at least one self (p. 10).

Until this point, the researcher has used the “removed third person voice” (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 11), but as she begins to discuss her *selves* and their relevance to the area of inquiry, to the participants, and to the study, she feels a shift to first person will “present [herself] as a human being, not a disembodied data-gatherer” (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 14). Prior to this study, my education and experience have been in writing and poetry—research was foreign territory—but I have always maintained an interest in language, linguistics, and identity throughout my academic career. My experience as a writer, writing instructor, and poet offer a unique position for studying the writing and identity perspectives and experiences of participants in this study. Having written, edited, and translated poetry for many years, I understand the nuances of language, the importance of word choice and meaning, but also the threat to identity, as both meaning and identity may be lost in translation, literal and figurative.
As a novice researcher, I am also a doctoral student completing my first major research project and writing the findings. Just as the literature alerts me to the many changes and challenges doctoral students experience, so do I experience them simultaneously. Immersed in the process of “becoming”, I feel attuned to the experiences of the participants I am studying. However, I also know my privileges and understand that these separate me from many of the participants in the study. An in-depth review of the literature exposed the dominance of English in higher education and the power language has to shape meaning and identity, affect choices, and grant or deny access. As a monolingual native English speaker, I wanted to use my position to conduct a study that highlights international, multilingual voices and experiences, that continues to bring awareness, and that adds to the developing body of knowledge that is beginning to encompass international multilingual writers and their dissertation experiences.

Backgrounds in writing and poetry have prepared me for the rigor of writing and meaning-making that grounded theory require. I understand voice and how to represent participants and myself throughout the analysis and theory discovery process. Accustomed to creative writing, I chose a storyline approach to write the findings, which I explain below. Though my writing skills are developed, I had much to learn in relation to my topic—a topic that cultivated passion, concern, deep interest, and investment in many related branches of knowledge and inquiry. An intensive review of literature opened me to ways of thinking, ways of being, disparities, privileges, and realities, which have positioned me not as a tabula rasa, typical of classic grounded theory, but as one aware and informed. As Mills et al. (2006b) note, I have “examine[d] where [I] am in relation to the area of interest” so I may connect meaningfully the personal and emotional to the intellectual (p. 10).


**Literature Review**

As a novice researcher, a thorough and continuous examination of the literature was critical to my research and writing process. Engaging with the literature helps the researcher identify areas of focus and justifies research questions (Charmaz, 2014; Timonen et al., 2018). Openness to the literature and data, together, help the research questions evolve to fit the data, and throughout the reading and data generation process, I revised the research questions multiple times. Thornberg (2012) refers to informed grounded theory:

> a product of the research process as well as to the research process itself, in which both the process and the product have been thoroughly grounded in the data by GT methods while being informed by existing research literature and theoretical frameworks (p. 249).

Further, I used the literature as inspiration, to generate “aha!” experiences, to make associations, and to reflect critically (Thornberg, 2012, p. 249). The ongoing nature of the literature review also assists theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006) and guides data collection and analysis (Thornberg, 2012). Ultimately, the literature review is a useful tool for investigating prior knowledge, enhancing theoretical sensitivity, and ensuring that I pursued a study that would contribute to the field (Thornberg, 2012).

**Ethics and Professional Considerations**

The role of the researcher in constructivist grounded theory is important; however, I was mindful of my role, my potential biases, and my identity. As a novice scholar, I was critical of the study I constructed, from the survey to interview questions, to ensure I felt informed and confident when speaking to participants. As a native English speaker working with participants for whom English is a second or additional language, and considering the study is in English, my intent was to be supportive during the interviews. I approached interviews with an open mind,
eager to learn from participants’ experiences. My role in the interview was to listen, to observe, and to check for meaning when appropriate.

As an English writing instructor at the college level, I entered this study with a knowledge of writing in English as a native speaker only. My perceptions of English and English writing relate to my academic training and teaching. I did not have the perspective, nor do I share the experiences nor realities, of multilingual writers. This curbed any potential bias related to preconceived notions I could have had about writing processes and practices, as they are not the same between native and non-native writing. While I have worked with students who speak English as a second or additional language, I do not teach English as a Second Language, nor am I TESOL certified. I believe this worked to my advantage in this study because I commenced unaware of how ESL processes work or how they are taught. Further, I did not provide participants with information about myself—aside from stating that I was a monolingual speaker with some experience with poetry translation, participants did not know that I teach English. I chose not to share this information, as often people react by being self-conscious about their speaking and writing skills. My goal was to have authentic conversations with knowledgeable, experienced participants—more like a dialogue than an interview.

One potential bias I brought to the study is my current position as a doctoral student conducting research. As a doctoral student, I experienced many identity shifts and changes, personally, professionally, and in my writing. Because this study focuses on identity, my perception was that these identity changes in writing and to the individual, were common. As I collected, read, and analyzed data, I remained reflexive of my own experience. I also anticipated that the data I gathered related to identity would be robust and perhaps reflect my own experience. My relationship with writing as my own means of self-expression, as the way I see
and interpret world, and as a method to process reality, may not be the same as others who do not use or feel confident using writing as a mixed-medium for research, expression, and profession.

Finally, my background in creative writing could be perceived as a potential bias or threat to validity. Creative writing, however, should not be confused with imaginative writing or fabrication. I support the contrary, in fact. A background in creative writing supported my ability to create a storyline with richness and depth that captured and highlighted participants’ voices and experiences. My intent was to write a narrative, not just to narrate, to create an experience for the audience so they may live and learn through the data.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the methodology and positioned myself as a constructivist grounded theorist, which is an important distinction to make for this study. The purpose of this chapter was to explain why I chose grounded theory, based on why and how questions related to research-specific inquiry, and because participant voices and experiences are critical to this study. Through a close examination of grounded theory and an international comparative research design, I justified my use of these methods and how they complement my research and each other. Further, I provided an overview of the data collection, generation, and analysis processes, which I discuss and employ in more detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, which report on and discuss data and findings. Chapter Three situates the researcher within the methodology, research design, and data, to justify approaches to interpretation and discussion in the following chapters.
Chapter Four: Voices from the Data

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the data generation process and lets the voices of the data speak. In this stage of grounded theory, I have crafted a narrative, or storyline, that analyzes and interprets participants’ experiences. When appropriate, I cite participants’ voices to capture their unique experiences and perceptions of reality. Further, throughout the narrative, categories and themes emerge from my understanding and interpretation, which have assisted my theory construction. Discussion of themes and theory have been reported in Chapter Five. As a constructivist grounded theorist, my task is to construct a theory grounded in data and informed by authentic representation of participant experiences, in their own words. I recognize, respect, and strive to honor the unique realities of participants in this study, and I do not prescribe to the belief in one objective reality.

Data Generation

Data generation commenced with a collection phase using a Google Forms survey. An ongoing review of the literature informed the development of survey questions, which gathered general information about participants’ language experiences, English abilities, and doctoral education. The survey also included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express themselves in their own words. Open-ended questions asked participants about their dissertation writing practices, identities, and voice development throughout the writing process. At the end of January, 2021, the survey went live internationally, via social media platforms as well as through personal contacts. After three weeks, using email and social media, the survey was sent out again, but this time with a purposive focus and with the intent to recruit interviews.
In March, I continued with two additional cycles of purposive sampling. Having spent weeks analyzing data, I recognized gaps and identified participants whose experiences may fill those gaps and inform theory construction. At the end of March, the final survey was sent out via email to select participants. Meanwhile, interviews were ongoing. The first interview was held in February, and the remaining interviews took place in March and April. I met with participants using Zoom to discuss questions from the survey and to ask questions crafted specifically for the interview process.

The ongoing literature review and iterative data generation process influenced and yielded multiple drafts of interview questions. As I read survey data and continued to engage with the literature, I wrote notes and drafted questions, which I continued to revise throughout this process. These processes also resulted in revised research questions, which underwent multiple revisions. In constructivist grounded theory, iterative cycles of data generation along with deep reading and constant engagement with the data establish the methodology’s rigor. The researcher comes to know participants but also recognizes and attempts to fulfill the needs of the data and theory.

Early in the data generation process, I recognized interviews as critical to addressing my research questions, to writing participants experiences, and to constructing a theory, yet interviews were a challenge to secure. The time between interviews, however, provided an informed perspective I would not have had otherwise. In mid-March, I commenced more focused, purposive sampling to attempt data saturation. As a doctoral student with limited time to collect data, saturation may not be achievable in the current study. The timeline that grounded theory does afford assists the researcher, supports the data, and encourages theory construction.
Interpretation

Cohen et al. (2007) describe interpretation and analysis in grounded theory as “fused” and “concurrent”, stating that they often “merge” (p. 495). Thus, the analysis in this chapter represents my interpretation of the data. Further, the current study relies on the researcher to interpret meaning from participants’ experiences and language choices, which requires abductive reasoning. To apply abductive reasoning, I have moved “between data and pre-existing knowledge or theories” to compare and interpret (Thornberg, 2012, p. 247). Using this practice, I remained open and sensitive to data and pre-existing theories. I support the role of the literature review as a critical aspect of constructivist grounded theory, thus I considered pre-existing theories as inspiration to guide my thinking and interpretation. Throughout the interpretation and analysis process, multiple layers of meaning emerged, which I have captured in the storyline later in this chapter. My approach to interpretation begins with a general analysis of survey data regarding participants’ identities and deepens as the data becomes more complex and representative of participants’ experiences and realities.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the role of the researcher is important to constructivist grounded theory, thus interpretation also involves the researcher as the interpreter of data. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest, however, that the multilayered nature of interpretation could pose issues of validity and reliability. As an act of reflexivity, I addressed potential biases in Chapter Three, under Ethical and Professional Considerations.

Participants’ Voices and Representation

Few participants in the current study are native speakers of English. Quotes from survey data and interviews authentically represent participants’ language choices and English each uses to speak or write. Based on the nature of this study, I made a conscious decision not to alter or
edit participants’ language to show “grammatically correct” standards of spoken English, nor did I use the label [sic]. My intention is not to call attention to perceived errors in speakers’ language but instead to celebrate and represent the natural communication of participants. Thus, all text quoted below captures original language and syntax choices from survey and interview transcripts.

**Data Analysis**

The English language has many acronyms to identify speakers and writers who are considered “non-native” language users. The TESOL International Association (2021) lists nine acronyms to describe English language proficiency and usage among “non-native” speakers, not including NNSE (non-native speaker of English), ELF (English as a lingua franca), and ELFA (English as a lingua franca in academia), which appear frequently in the literature. This totals at least 11, and more exist to express nuances of language proficiency, usage, and application. To begin my data generation, I asked participants to choose an identifying acronym to describe their relationship with the English language.

To avoid overwhelming participants with such a broad list of options, I narrowed the acronym choices to: NNSE (non-native speaker of English), ESL (English as a second language), EAP (English for academic purposes), and EAL (English as an additional language). These acronyms occur most frequently in the literature that considers the dominance of English in higher education, which is why I chose them for this study. How participants explained the acronym they chose provides an insightful introduction to multilingual doctoral student identity development when writing in English.

Twenty of the 29 participants in this study identify having a first language that is not English. Of these 29, 15 recognized English as a second language (ESL), with three learning
English as a second language almost simultaneously with their native languages to achieve native-level competency. More telling is why participants chose the acronym. The term “ESL” seemed to relate more closely to participants’ ability to use language as a form of expression and communication. Educational, professional, personal, and social, contexts influence the ESL acronym.

Participant 6: I chose it [ESL] because I perceive english to be secondary to how I express myself in my native language […] my answer also draws on habit. […] in public schooling, k12 to university, english is often referred to as a “second language”

Participant 9: I consider English as my second language given the main fact that I live and work outside my country of birth. I not only use English in my professional and academic sphere but also at a personal and social spheres. I can affirm that currently I use more the English than actually my native language - most of my day I think, speak and write in English.

Participant 20: It [ESL] fits my reality.

Participant 24: I spent half of my time working and talking in English, but Im Spanish native speaker and only live in an English speaking country for 3 years of my 36.

Participant 25: I am good at academic English on my research topics, but not quite familiar with speaking English.

Participant 26: English is used in outside academia

Participant 28: As an instructor I am able to convey my ideas clearly to the native speaking student body and have not heard any complains from them about my language proficiency. And I understand the language clearly.
Participant 29: All of my education (starting from Kindergarten) has been in English. I learnt my native languages through interaction with family and friends. Because India has a wide variety of languages, the common language has become English.

These responses demonstrate the connection between language and identity. Beyond its academic or professional functions for these participants, language has become part of “reality”, a “habit”, and in some cases supersedes native language use. The ability to “think” and “express myself” characterize an intimacy with language—how one perceives reality and communicates the authentic self.

A participant born in the United States to immigrant parents was raised speaking three languages simultaneously. He said “sometimes I consider myself a native English speaker, but I simultaneously learned two others when I was learning to speak, read, and write”. While he chose the acronym “NSE” (native speaker of English), in his explanation, he clarifies that his identity is woven among many languages; identifying as a native speaker of English, due to his upbringing, is not always the way he chooses to describe himself. The language of his parents, Spanish, attunes to his identity, but in the context of the study, he recognizes that his ability to read, write, and speak in English would be considered “native proficiency”.

As participants use English as a second language, the term ESL becomes part of their identities, how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them. English as a second language appears to represent a secondary identity for participants, even though English is the primary language of communication. Using English in professional, academic, and social spheres influences the ESL acronym choice, as does geographic location. Most participants in the study reside and work in their home countries, which are not Anglophone countries, yet describe the pervasiveness of English in their lives. Participants from Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark,
for example, acquired English as a second language throughout their education. Others used English abroad throughout graduate and doctoral studies. In their processes of becoming professionals and scholars, mobile within global education and professional environments, English became (or has become) part of reality.

**Participant 5**: I use English in any context when I am outside my native country

**Participant 7**: for professional reasons I have to read and speak a lot of English. All papers are produced in English.

**Participant 8**: I did my graduation and post-graduation studies in English medium.

**Participant 9**: I not only use English in my professional and academic sphere but also at a personal and social spheres.

**Participant 25**: I spend half of my time working and talking in English, but […] only live in an English speaking country for 3 years

Most participants completed doctoral study outside of their home countries or in countries with doctoral programs recognized as “international”, which implies programs are offered in English. Whether in Syria, Egypt, India, Portugal, or Sweden, for example, most stated that English was the language of instruction throughout doctoral study, and all participants except for one produced a dissertation in English. Denmark and the Netherlands, currently the countries with the most international programs, offered instruction in English and the countries’ native languages of Danish and Dutch, respectively.

The exploration of how students perceive English labeling acronyms and why they chose certain acronyms to describe themselves supports deeper understanding of participants’ experiences and relationships with English. Though participants represent 14 different native languages, nearly 69 percent reported using English as their primary language of communication.
Data suggests a connection between English language usage (frequency), ability, and professional contexts. Further, the data highlights the global breadth and depth of English dominance, as participants spanning 17 different countries find themselves using English in contexts beyond academia. The label of NSE (Native Speaker of English) seems to pertain only to participants born in Anglophone countries. “Nativeness” to English seems to relate more to geographic location than to fluency.

The survey intended to capture how participants perceive their English abilities, asking them to identify general proficiency, reading, speaking, and writing, as advanced, intermediate, or basic. Participants reported the most proficiency in writing, with 75.9 percent identifying as “advanced” writers in English. Considering nearly all participants wrote a dissertation in English—75.9 percent reported publishing in English (always), and nearly 90 percent use English to write in their occupations—participants’ confidence in writing ability makes sense. However, 13 percent of participants noted writing (language) as a challenge while writing their dissertations. Current confidence in writing in English versus challenges during the dissertation could indicate that participants’ confidence has increased since they complete doctoral study.

Participants’ ability to read in English surpassed their confidence in writing. All participants use English to read in their occupations, 86.2 percent identify as advanced readers in English, and only seven percent reported reading comprehension as a challenge in the dissertation process. Further, all participants reported having sufficient access to English-medium resources while writing their dissertations.

Frequency of English use in reading and writing, throughout doctoral study and professionally, demonstrates that English is a part of life, used more frequently or equally to participants’ first languages. English seems far removed from being used strictly for academic
purposes or as an additional language, considering professional life and careers require frequent English usage. When academic purposes, international language (or lingua franca), and everyday use, interweave in global contexts that encompass academic and professional selves, participants’ voices must speak to their language development and usage. When asked to describe how they used English prior to writing a dissertation, participants’ spoke to communication experiences that reflect their lives.

**Participant 5**: It [English] was a second language use in any context outside my family environment. From simple daily conversation to academic use at university courses.

**Participant 7**: Speaking with non-Swedish colleagues and reading scientific papers and books.

**Participant 9**: I have use English to write my PhD project proposal, grant applications, articles, participate in international conferences, meetings, etc.

**Participant 14**: [I] Use English in every part of my life

**Participant 21**: Scholarly, global communication

Prior to writing a dissertation, many participants had completed education in English and were already writing and publishing in English:

**Participant 6**: I took a bachelor program in English

**Participant 8**: I did my graduation and post-graduation in English medium.

**Participant 16**: would use it [English] […] for most literature assigned during university studies.

**Participant 27**: I wrote my papers in English

**Participant 28**: wrote and published papers before dissertation with guidance from advisors
Participants also mentioned use at “international conferences” or among colleagues who do not share the same first language; others refer to “international travel” and “global communication”, as well as “simple daily conversation”. With such varied use and exposure, English seems to dominate the lives and language behaviors of participants.

While exposure to English in academic, social, and personal contexts may prepare students for more advanced English usage, such as writing a dissertation, the shift to academic writing tells a different story. Participants who identified as native English speakers mentioned challenges and sometimes had markedly different experiences from participants for whom English is not their first language. When explaining her English use prior to writing a dissertation, Participant 26, a native English speaker, said: “Excellent but functional not academic”. This suggests a distinction between the self using English in life and professional contexts and the self using English for a scholarly written project, such as the dissertation. The next section of this chapter explores participants’ identities related to perceptions of language, academic English, and academic writing challenges.

**Language and Writing: Challenges and Practices**

Though most participants report their English communication as “advanced”, dissertation language and writing challenges express new insight to participants’ experiences. Table 1 shows participants’ countries of birth, native languages, and difficulty they expressed writing a dissertation in English, as opposed to in their native languages. Participants were asked to rate the difficulty using a Likert scale. The survey question stated, “Writing a dissertation in English was more challenging than in my native language,” with the numbers 3 and 4 representing “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, respectively.
Comparatively, 13 percent of participants identified writing (language) as a challenge experienced during the dissertation process. Regarding confidence, however, participants’ responses varied. While 10 participants reported that writing in English was more difficult than in their native languages, 58.6 percent (17 participants) reported high levels of confidence writing in English. Participants from Sweden, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Italy reported the lowest feelings of confidence toward writing in English. How participants described their writing practices illuminates unique challenges of writing the dissertation in a non-native language.

*Participant 5: Native Language Italian*

**Participant 5:** I found mainly two strategies: writing directly in English, and translating from Italian into English. It mainly depended on the topic I had to write about. For methodological aspects, research design explanation, ontological or epistemological
questions, I preferred to write directly in English. When I came to the analyses of the case study - I mean political local situation, survey and interviews analyses that I had hold in Italian - I simply couldn't think directly in English. I passed through the translation face and it was a disaster.

Participant 5 notes how different types of writing guided her language use and process. Writing related to methodology and research design, and questions relating to knowledge or culture—topics arguably more direct and objective and that draw heavily from preexisting literature in English—posed less of a challenge. For these parts of the dissertation, Participant 5 “preferred to write directly in English”. When it came to analyzing meaning of data collected in Italian, however, she identifies the struggle to “think directly in English”. The use of a translation program, an experience she calls “a disaster”, shows that when switching between languages and calling upon meaning making and in-depth analysis, native language versus English makes a difference. Further, Participant 5’s comment about thinking in English begins the pattern of “thought” as an emergent theme.

The identities Participant 5’s data contained—political situations, surveys, interview transcripts—are expressive and have cultural relevance not easily translatable nor analyzable in a non-native language. To think about the data and to analyze meaning, moving between two languages, speaks to a challenge more complex than mastering academic writing. To represent her data authentically, and to analyze and convey meaning and voices in a language other than Italian was challenging for this participant. I interpret this an issue of identity, constricted by language. English, in these critical stages of the dissertation process, constricted Participant 5’s identity by forcing her to overcome challenges that would not exist for a native English speaker working with data in English language. Further, English dictated the way she was able to
analyze, authenticate, and express meaning in her data. Using Italian, Participant 5 may have better represented her data, participants, and findings, as she would have felt more confident analyzing meaning in Italian instead of trying to translate between languages.

Participant 7: Native Language Swedish

**Participant 7:** I might be answering the wrong thing here, but I first wrote an English version and then edited it. After that I put it into a translation program to Swedish and continued the editing. When Google translate could translate it to understandable Swedish I was satisfied.

Participant 7 mentions similar challenges working between two languages. Though he does not express the same frustration as Participant 5, Participant 7 used a translation program as part of an iterative writing and editing process. The use of a translation program suggests Participant 5 was checking for meaning, as he describes “understandable Swedish”. Understandable implies the writing “made sense” and made meaning in his native Swedish. For the writing to make him “satisfied”, it needed to be “understandable” in Swedish—he was less concerned with how his voice or meaning were expressed in English, only that, when translated into Swedish, the meaning was evident and similar.

The iterative translating and editing process is also unique to participants writing dissertations in a non-native language. Though editing is always part of the writing process, using a translation program is not. Participant 7 adjusted the writing to fit the meaning he was attempting to convey, using a translator. Google Translate, however effective, still cannot detect the nuances of meaning between languages, nor are all words translatable. In this sense, the participant must find the words to fill in gaps in meaning when words do not convey the same meaning across languages, or simply do not exist.
Participant 9: Native Language Portuguese

Participant 9: I tend to write more freely and then revise several times to make ideas clear, check word meaning in English using dictionary, for example. I try to do as much as correctly as possible, however I still have some gaps in my English use,. E.g. use of adverbs, and bring more a "Portuguese" meaning into wording and phrase construction. Therefore, I always have a language check by a native English speaker.

As with previous participant’s experiences, Participant 9 also references an editing process that involves checking for “word meaning” using a dictionary as opposed to a translation program. A dictionary and a translation program, however, suggest similar motivation—finding words to express meaning most accurate to what the participant is trying to communicate. Participant 9 also refers to “gaps” in English, such as using specific parts of speech and navigating meaning and syntax between English and Portuguese. These comments allude to cultural and linguistic differences in writing construction—how writers construct meaning through language and word order. Meaning is the next theme to emerge from the data.

To help me interpret Participant 9’s response, I will draw from a conversation I had with Dr. Navarro, an interview participant from Peru whose native language is Spanish. Dr. Navarro explained the style of English writing specific to parts of speech and how writers use words. He said:

there is a certain dryness to English […] in order to write in a more kind of flat way […] it requires a conscious effort to use adjectives sparingly […] in English, adjectives are designed to never be used really, but in Spanish, adjectives are decidedly used all the time.
Though the conversation compares Spanish and English, the “ornamentation” of Romance languages, as Dr. Navarro explained, produces stylistically different writing because the emotive expression they communicate is culture and language specific. To make his writing more suitable to the “flat”, “dryness” of the English style, Participant 9 had to adapt to the English sound and style as translated from Portuguese to English. This was to avoid sounding too “Portuguese”.

Interestingly, Participant 9 uses quotation marks around “Portuguese”, which is significant and requires informed interpretation. There are two possible explanations for this usage: emphatic quotes and secure scare quotes with a “so-called” function. Both quotation types are related but with variations in meaning. The use of quotation marks draws attention to the word “Portuguese” and generally suggests emphasis while implying a deviated meaning. The meaning could be one of presupposition, implying tacit knowledge, or a conversational implicature, which is context dependent (Gutzmann & Stei, 2010). Gutzmann and Stei (2011) explain that “the correct interpretation of a sentence containing quotation marks is highly context-dependent” (p. 3). Because Participant 9 and I may interpret the use of the word “Portuguese” in different ways, and because I have no presupposed context for what the word “Portuguese” implies, my interpretation is that the term contains cultural meaning. “Portuguese” suggests meanings, values, style, and contexts specific to Portuguese language and culture.

Quotation marks affect how the writer and reader interpret a word. For the writer, quotations marks indicate “a non-standard interpretation of the quoted expression”, implying various meanings (Gutzmann & Stei, 2011, p. 6). For the reader, quotation marks indicate that to grasp the writer’s intended meaning, one needs additional practical inferences, which may be contextually derived (Gutzmann & Stei, 2011). Without the opportunity to interview Participant 9 and ask about the motivation for using the quotation marks and their meaning (Nacey, 2012), I
will interpret the meaning based on what I have gleaned from the context of Participant 9’s response, as well as information from the literature.

“Portuguese” in this context alludes to the distinct differences in meaning between Portuguese and English language. Portuguese in quotations marks signifies that Participant 9 is addressing a culture-specific connotation. My interpretation of this usage reflects what the previous participants experienced working with Italian and Swedish—the goal of the writers is to convey as closely as possible their intended meaning from their native languages into English.

My final analysis of Participant 9’s narrative regards his translating and revising practices. Participant 9 strives to bring more “‘Portuguese’ meaning” into his writing. As the narrative of this chapter progresses, I focus on the emergent theme, meaning, which is important and challenging for participants writing in English. Participant 9’s statement is valuable to this discussion. Along with Participants 5 and 7, Participant 9 provides another example of the importance of meaning-making in writing and what is lost in translation between languages. The themes of meaning and thought connect to show the common reality among participants who do not perceive thinking in English as an automatic process. Being unable to think automatically in English strains and inhibits the meaning-making process.

Participants’ experiences working between two languages, translating, and editing, connotes a challenge to represent the authentic self. The challenge also appears to be unique to writers for whom English is not their native language, a disadvantage in an increasingly English-centric, increasingly homogenized global education system. Native languages communicate participants’ true meanings, their authentic expressions, whereas English is the vehicle required to convey meaning. English, however, does not fulfill each writer’s sense of self. Thus, the
participants’ requirement to use English language restricts their voices and limits their means of expression.

*Participant 16: Native Language Dutch*

**Participant 16:** After analyzing my data, I would first write a paper for a conference that would later be extended to a full article. There would be several review rounds with my supervisor and a final language edit before sending the article to a relevant journal. The introduction, conclusion and summary had no paper stage and fewer review rounds but did include an English language editing round.

Participant 16 focuses on a “final language edit” and “an English language editing round”. As with previous participants, editing is a critical part of writing practices, and in this case, Participant 16 specifically notes language edits. The term “language” in this case could refer to vocabulary, syntax, or grammar, or all of the above. Regardless, attention to correctness is important—the acceptable standards of English writing necessary for publication. Participant 16 mentions “several review rounds” and “fewer review rounds”, implying multiple iterations of the writing process. While editing cycles are common for writers, the extent to which Participant 16 may have engaged in more editing, especially for language, than a native English speaker is unclear. Participants’ experiences highlighted later in this chapter suggest that achieving the standards of writing in English is a barrier, and their processes are more complex and time consuming than for native English speakers.

**Writing Voice and Confidence: Perspectives on Academic Writing**

The next section of this chapter reports on participants’ perspectives of their voices and writing confidence in English. For many, though writing in English was a challenge, positive feedback from supervisors, peers, or colleagues supported voice development. Further, the role
of feedback in the editing and revision process is part of the writing process, thus embedded in writing practices. This section also begins to develop the narrative around language perspectives and the use of academic writing. The responses below show that feedback was important to voice development and confidence, which relate to the forthcoming emergent theme: expression.

**Participant 1:** positive feedback from supervisors encouraged my work

**Participant 14:** I wasn’t very confident in my writing in English but I gained confidence as I received feedback.

**Participant 16:** Feedback from international colleagues was also valuable.

The role of feedback throughout dissertation writing is well documented in the literature. For participants in the current study, feedback supports confidence and voice related to writer identities in English. Participants’ native languages, English or otherwise, and experiences with academic writing, however, tell different stories. Confidence for a native English speaker and for a multilingual speaker suggest different meanings. The following participants are native English speakers and their responses to developing confident writing voices.

**Participant 3:** This didn’t come until after writing my dissertation. I was still pretty hesitant in my own writing voice.

**Participant 18:** My voice always seemed to need to be tamped down, even though I have been told a have a good academic writing voice and sound like an ethnographer. I was always chasing preemptive perfection and never seems to develop beyond that. [...] I often sat at the computer trying to come up with the perfect sentence, followed by the next. This usually meant I got one or two sentences work before deleting them and starting over. As deadlines drew closer, my perfectionism was shelved in a desperate attempt to just get something done. All my output was reviewed by my chair who
provided feedback, which I tried to respond to (sometimes even before it was given) in all drafts.

Participant 23: My struggle was academic writing not the language [...] I probably could have spent, I’m not exaggerating, days crafting a paragraph

Voice development in academic writing poses different challenges for native English speakers. Participants seem to perceive greater expectations of themselves because English is their native language. Participant 18 expresses sincere distress at trying to achieve perfection in writing: “preemptive perfection”, “the perfect sentence”, and “my perfectionism”, which affected writing progress. The pressure and challenge to write perfectly, feeling “hesitant in my writing voice”, or experiencing academic writing as a struggle, not the language itself, suggest that the challenges of writing craft, not meaning-making, highlight barriers for native English speakers.

Most participants, regardless of native language, expressed that the general practice of writing improved their writing skills. Participant 15 commented that “more practice led to stronger voice”, while Participant 20 noted that “Practice improves skills”. A combination of practice and feedback encouraged participants’ voices to develop, though some experienced the push and pull between their native language and English, regarding style, which is an element of voice and the writer’s identity.

Participant 5: I had two predominant voices to take care of: the personal and the researcher's one. I couldn't allow them to get in conflict into the dissertation. So I decided to give different spaces to them. In fact, in some part of the dissertation I wrote in first person as an internal narrator, in some others in third person as an external narrator that gives an objective account of the facts. But I say that I have loved both of them.
Participant 16: a course in 'Writing Academic English' supported that process as it would highlight the main differences in style between writing in Dutch and English. Participant 5 identifies the distinct voices apparent in her writing: the personal voice and the researcher’s voice, which relate to separate perceptions of identity. They are so distinct that she had to ensure they did not conflict in the dissertation. Further, she addressed the conflict by representing herself as a first person narrator and shifted to third person for more objective writing. To represent her two voices, her two selves, she “decided to give different spaces to them”. Attention and awareness to how voices express identity was important to this participant, and she recognized the need for both to be present. To represent her “selves” she needed to use an accommodating style.

Participant 16 also addresses style, commenting on the differences between writing in his native Dutch versus English. A course, he notes, helped build confidence in his voice by “highlighting the main differences in style between Dutch and English”. This statement indicates, however, that the objective of the writer may be to abandon the Dutch style and to assume the English style, a sentiment similar to Participant 9’s experience with “Portuguese” meaning. While Participant 5 navigated representing the personal and the “researcher’s” voices, Participant 16 took recognized the differences in style when writing between two languages. Awareness of style differences between Dutch and English encouraged confidence in his English writing voice (in English). Further, clear style distinctions exist between the languages, which evidence the expectations of writers to adopt the English style. Thus, a new pattern and theme have emerged: culture. I interpret style as being culturally derived, a stance informed by studies of intercultural rhetoric. Participants’ languages, which are nationally and culturally derived, express their own writing styles and meaning-making properties.
The individual and the academic writer seem to embody different voices and to represent participants distinctly. For some participants, this was a discovery. Participant 25, whose native language is Chinese, stated “I am good at academic English on my research topics, but not quite familiar with speaking English. […] I found I could write in English well on computer science”. His passion for his field, Computer Science, and his perception of his ability to write academic English ground his identity as an academic. For others, however, academic writing remained a barrier to fulfilling the identity of a researcher. Participant 18, a native English speaker, said “I never felt I got good enough or fluent enough in academic writing to continue as a researcher”.

Academic writing is no one’s first language, and while native English speakers have the advantage of exposure and use, they still express challenges distinct from those of multilingual participants. Improving academic writing in English seems to connect directly to identity development and confidence, not only in writing, but in the self. Writing and writing confidence, the ability to express oneself in ways one desires, affect how participants developed. English and its use in academic writing have the power to grant participants access to the professions they desire and to the people they want to become. The personal and the academic identity, however, seem to exist separately and simultaneously for some participants, while for others, using English as a second language represents “reality” in all its multifarious contexts.

The next section of this chapter continues to consider academic writing and academic English, which emerges independent from spoken or written English in non-academic contexts. In tandem, the section explores in greater depth participants’ perceptions of English, English as a choice, and continues to develop the narrative surrounding English language and identity negotiation among participants.
English as Lingua Franca: Choice and Identity

Doctoral study is a process of becoming and inducts scholars into global academic communities. Thus, a purpose of this study was to explore and to understand why linguistically diverse doctoral students write and publish in English. Data suggests that participants writing in English as a non-native language experience challenges of self-representation and meaning-making when working between two languages. Writing from the perspective of a skills-based approach seems to be a process of improvement encouraged by positive feedback. The next portion of this analysis explores the opportunities provided to doctoral students across the globe to write in a language other than English and to understand whether this was a choice, an act of agency, or a requirement that may have restricted, or mobilized, opportunities for the self. Data has revealed that “self” may have two meanings for some participants—the personal and the academic—while for others, English language has become a way of life, a reflection of reality seemingly unopposed.

For almost all participants, writing in English was “mandatory”, “required”, “obligatory”, an “unstated assumption”. When asked why, however, few participants were forthcoming in analyzing or considering the option to write in any other language; some did not question the requirement.

Participant 13: It was in English. There was never a discussion about another option.

Participant 14: Never taught to write it in Spanish.

Participant 18: That my dissertation would be in English was an unstated assumption that I didn't question.

Other participants alluded to international university programs, which use English as an international language (ELF) or referenced international publication.
Participant 5: It is a policy of University that PhD thesis from foreign students must be written in English […] Because I was asked to. But how else? I was a non-Danish speaker in a foreign country and in an international environment. A magnificent challenge

Participant 6: It is required. My PhD is article-based, and these must published in international journals

Participant 7: I studied in Denmark and am from Sweden

Participant 8: English was the only acceptable language for my Institute for the dissertation

Participant 9: I did my PhD studies in Denmark, where I did not speak and understand Danish by the time I started. Also, Aalborg University is an international university, where English is considered a second language - it holds M.Sc. and PhD in English for international students. It also has a considerable body of international faculty staff.

Participant 16: That was the expectation as all theses in our department were article based

Participant 17: In order to reach a larger audience

Based on participants’ responses, little opportunity exists for expression or meaning making in a language other than English. A knowledge contribution in one’s native language appears nonexistent, in dissertation writing and in publishing. When English controls programs, publishing, and represents the “larger audience” of academics, to argue that students have a choice in the language of their writing is difficult.

The term international has become synonymous with “English speaking”, whereas it should represent linguistic diversity and multiculturalism. In academic environments,
international implies involving two or more nations. Thus, an international program touts itself as representing a linguistically rich, culturally diverse, multinational student body. The identities students bring to doctoral study do represent diverse nationalities, languages, experiences, and cultures—not to mention the knowledge traditions and writing styles of those cultures—yet, this study shows that nearly all students assume the language of academia: English. English has become an “international language” that controls knowledge production, expression, and meaning-making, globally. The prevalence of English, therefore, leaves little room for identity and knowledge development within homogenized international academic environments.

Further, English dominance and program expectations concern issues of agency related to the choices available to students. Of the participants in this study for whom English is not their first language, none expressed the option of writing in a language other than English, except for one participant in Argentina. When dissertations were article-based, the expectation was to write in English because “these [articles] must [be] published in academic journals”, which implies English language. The data speak to the use of English as a lingua franca in academia, whether written or spoken among international colleagues and faculty. While English does have the power to bring diverse groups together and serves as a vehicle for global communication, the power is also restrictive and favors native English speakers. To participate in doctoral study and to become part of the global network of scholars, students have no choice but to write, speak, and publish in English.

Participant 17 stated that to write in English was “to reach a larger audience”. This participant is aware that for one’s knowledge contribution to be recognized and influential, writing in English was necessary. To reach the most people, to be visible, one must write in
English. Even if a doctoral student chooses to write in English, the prevalence of English still controls aspects of the choice.

**Perceptions of English**

Understanding the concept of “choice” for students writing in English as a non-native language is complex; equally dynamic is the choice of university. Where students pursue doctoral study determines available language choices. All participants who identify as native English speakers pursued doctorates at English-speaking universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Canada. Most participants for whom English is not the first language studied in Anglophone countries (the US, UK, or Canada), in Denmark, or the Netherlands. As stated previously, Denmark and the Netherlands support strong international programs, and participants from these countries express confidence in their English usage, identifying as “near native”. For participants whose exposure and access to English may be different, especially from Latin America, the Middle East, and Arab Gulf countries, the choice of language and university tie closely to cultural perceptions. Dr. Zacharia’s story highlights the unique experiences of Arabic-speaking students in Middle Eastern and Anglophone institutions.

**Dr. Zacharia’s Story**

Dr. Zacharia describes herself as “bilingual” and “bicultural”, with Egyptian and Scottish heritage. She speaks English and Arabic and works as an education advisor in Dubai. Throughout her career, she has mentored Arabic-speaking doctoral students studying in the UK and the Middle East. Her reflections on these students’ experiences show how English language and the university connote prestige among Arabic-speaking communities. When working with an Arabic-speaking student who was studying in English, Dr. Zacharia noticed his struggle to express himself in English.
I said to him, if you’re struggling, why did you do it [doctoral study] in this English speaking university? And he said “look, I’m going to be honest with you. It sounds better when I get it [a PhD] from a British speaking university.” And that made me think that there’s a perception that if you get your doctorate from an English speaking or a Western language university, it’s perceived as better, regardless of where the university is located. By saying that he got his doctorate from this university associated with a Western country, its associated with a Western language, therefore, must be better quality. […] I think that there is a perception that if it’s [PhD] done in English, then, it must be better quality, it must be accepted worldwide and there’s more respect that comes with it.

Dr. Zacharia recounted another experience with an Arabic-speaking colleague at a university in the UK. She said to her colleague, “why are you doing this, you seem like you’re torturing yourself” and her colleague replied, “I just want the D.R. at the beginning of my name, because I work in the Middle East, and in the Middle East, if you’re not a doctor, nobody listens to you”. Motivation to complete a doctorate in English and at a university with a “Western” reputation suggests the perception that English, and its cultural capital, are considered prestigious and necessary for mobility in some cultures. For these students, the challenges to write a dissertation in English were worth the prestigious results in their home countries.

Access to English proficiency and access to higher education in Anglophone countries influence perceptions of choice and mobility. While English language is a barrier, discussed later in this chapter, sometimes the barrier is financial, socio-economic, or geographic. The goal, in Dr. Zacharia’s experience, is to obtain a doctorate from an English-speaking university, no matter the location nor the quality of the program. Even if a student has the option to pursue
doctoral study at a better quality, non-English speaking institution, the student will choose the Western institution. Dr. Zacharia commented on the experience of another student she mentored:

So, instead of doing the degree from an Arabic-speaking university, she did it from an English speaking one, again, because of the perceived prestige and quality attached to an English speaking university.

Dr. Zacharia commented that “Getting a doctorate is prestigious […] it gives you social currency […] it’s a professional currency”. She continued, “The positioning of an individual’s society, the socio-economic background” determine opportunities for students to pursue doctorates in English-speaking countries. “Ability to access the language [English] to home provision”, meaning socio-economic status, Dr. Zacharia explains, provides the advantage—not exposure to English in public education. This held true for other participants in this study, explored later in the chapter.

My conversation with Dr. Zacharia transitioned into a discussion of language proficiency, culture, and writing, which shift the narrative of this study toward the analysis of identity, voice, and authorship. The data suggest a relationship between proficiency and opportunity, which connect to an individual’s ability to express meaning. Meaning-making in writing has cultural implications. Thus, I will consider how the requirement to write in English influences the writing experiences and processes of multilingual doctoral students, the barriers students must overcome, how they differ across cultures, and how they differ from native English speakers. Ultimately, the data will add to the body of knowledge to understand the connections that may exist between language, culture, writing, and identity throughout the dissertation process.
Writing and Identity

While writing a dissertation, students use academic writing, a style of writing distinct in its language, vocabulary, and structure. Academic writing departs from other writing genres and is often characterized by prescriptive university standards and writing conventions. Further, since academic writing in the current study implies writing in English, the complexities of writing in a non-native language and in an academic style influence how writer identity develops or changes. Participants’ experiences allude to connections between publishing, ownership, and finding one’s self within the discourse as writing identity developments.

Academic Language and Writing

Native language, experience with English, and writing experience prior to the dissertation shape participants’ perceptions of their identities. The voice of a native English speaker highlights the challenges academic language and style present.

Participant 18: I lost my identity as a writer while writing my dissertation. Previously, I derived a lot of joy from writing and was told I was good at it. I changed my style to become a technical writer and then had to change it again for the academy. The transition was difficult, and I never felt I got good enough or fluent enough in academic writing to continue as a researcher.

Participant 18 states that he “changed his style” both for the technical writing profession and “for the academy”. He also references not being “good enough or fluent enough” to pursue a career as a researcher. Use of the term “fluent” to describe academic writing in English suggests academic English is another language, challenging and restrictive even for a native speaker with years of professional writing experience. Participant 18 shares a bleak self-perception; being told he was “good at it [writing]” and then failing to find success in another style of writing, academic,
suggests that the feelings one has toward writing ability may influence and impair professional trajectory.

Participant 20 also comments that academic writing is distinct from other writing styles:

Writing as a researcher is different than for other contexts and audiences. Though Participant 20’s statement is brief, it is important. Writing “as a researcher” means one assumes the researcher identity. To fulfill this identity, to become a researcher, requires a specific writing style and awareness. Participant 18 felt he could not achieve the style or “fluency” of academic writing, thus he could not become a researcher. Participants’ statements suggest that academic writing ability in English determine one’s ability to become a researcher.

During her interview, Dr. Zacharia also highlighted the differences in academic writing, referring to a “language barrier”, even though she is a native English speaker.

I spent a lot of my time learning from and relying on experiences writing to help me navigate this language barrier that was, that was debilitating at times. […] Writing at an academic level was very, very, very frustrating.

She also noted the differences between “work functional language”, with which she was familiar, and “academic writing”, which was a new challenge. To refer to her native language, English, in the academic style as a “language barrier” relates not only to the vocabulary and style but also to the “jargon” of discourse, which I analyze later in this section.

For some participants, writing experiences helped express their identities and relationships with writing.

Participant 5: I have always loved writing. The Ph.D. thesis is not my first writing work. I wrote two master dissertation that have been published as well as some poems. I
really feel comfortable with a pen and white page in front of me. I have a very strong writing identity that helped a lot in this occasion.

**Participant 16:** I didn't think of it [writer identity] that way but I started writing short opinion pieces, conference papers and scientific articles at that time.

Other experiences with writing, such as through expressive poetry and publication, helped shape participants’ identities as writers. What they produced, as opposed to the language of production, seem more important in the identity development process. Participants also noted style, proficiency, and who they became as part of their writer identity development.

**Participant 10:** Developed my writing style and how to develop a thesis and a clear point of view

**Participant 14:** Yes, as an advocate for ELLs

**Participant 23:** I became more proficient at academic writing

**Participant 27:** That of an ethnographer

Participant 10 refers to “my writing style”, which is to take ownership of the academic writing process, and mentions “a clear point of view”, which is not only to take a stance as the author, but to use writing to communicate clearly, which takes practice. Participant 23 notes becoming “more proficient”, which suggests greater confidence and command over writing and language. Participant 14’s response is especially relevant to the current study, as she advocates for ELLs (English Language Learners). This response is important because it connects the question of identity to writing in a non-native language. To “advocate for ELLs” is to say that developing a writer identity in English is possible, and the tone of the response is confident and assertive. Finally, Participant 27 connects writing specifically to becoming an ethnographer, an identity specific to research practices, which offers a transition into discourse identity.
Discourse Identity

The dissertation is immersive in that the researcher spends months, even years, reading, gathering data, analyzing, and writing. Throughout this process, the researcher familiarizes herself with literature in the field and designs a study to add to the body of knowledge within that field. A discourse identity may develop parallel to writer identity, as the discourse identity emerges from writing and meaning-making processes and signifies a dialogue among writer, reader, and existing literature. Though many participants questioned the development of a discourse identity, a few spoke to their experiences and detailed the meaning.

Participant 5

I think that this is a very interesting question. And I have to say yes. Because there is a big difference between your data set and the results of your analysis, that are there in your mind in a very composite synchronic pattern, and the way you can communicate them in your dissertation for future readers. I consider thinking process really different from telling process and writing down things helps anyone organize a better rationale in the discourse.

Participant 5 begins by noting the differences between data and results and that “the way you can communicate them in your dissertation for future readers” relates to the writer’s ability to identify and respond to those differences. This alludes to style but also to thinking processes, which she also recognizes are different: “I consider thinking process really different from telling process and writing down things helps anyone develop a better rationale in the discourse”. The process of thinking about the data and conducting mental analysis, which may have meaning to the writer, translate differently once “told” in the writing process. The act of writing, she comments, helps the rationale develop, which reconnects thinking to writing. Her response to
developing a discourse identity alludes to how she thinks about the data, its meaning, and the process of communicating information to other readers in the discourse. Participant 5 considers how to position oneself through the writing process.

*Participant 9*

**Participant 9:** I actually don't know. During my dissertation I was to immerse in my work, the theme, the topic, and make a proper dissertation. I know I had a clear message to give: I want to link theory and practice, I want to bring forward the relevance in integrating education for sustainable development in higher education, propose alternatives to traditional education and bring a forward looking into what is needed for the future of engineering education. I want to foster reflection. So I think I might have develop this but I cannot say if it is a discourse identity or not.

A unique pattern of ownership through repetition emerges from Participant 9’s response. He repeats “I want”, meaning he knew his purpose and had clear goals to execute within his field. The use of “I want” also suggests ownership of the writing and his topic. How he intended to position himself in his field by writing a “proper dissertation” demonstrates his eagerness to become a part of that discourse, as does being “immersed” in “the work, the theme, the topic”. To become a part of the discourse was to take on the task of the dissertation with clear, informed goals and with the ambitious outcome of “reflection”.

*Participant 20*

**Participant 20:** Yes, you learn the "jargon" of the field you are working in and become more comfortable with that through time.

Participant 20 refers to “jargon”, as I noted earlier in this chapter. Jargon defines specific language and terminology of a field and is a discourse identity marker. Being able to
communicate comfortably in the language of the field demonstrates one’s integration into or “becoming” part of that field. In other words, entering the dialogue, literally, through language. As the dissertation calls upon immersive processes of reading and writing, acquiring the language of the discipline allows novice scholars to participate in their chosen fields by identifying with the field through writing.

Dr. Navarro, a Spanish speaker from Pero, and Dr. Aiden, a Korean speaker from South Korea, perceived their discourse identities through writing and identifying within their fields. Dr. Aiden described being “academically trained in English”, whereas Dr. Navarro stated, “I prefer, really, writing in English as opposed to Spanish simply because I learned my sociology in English. […] I think I am more fluent in, kind of, sociological English rather than in Spanish sociological”. Dr. Aiden agreed, explaining that to write in academic Korean would have constructed a greater barrier for her writing because of her exposure to academic English and resources throughout doctoral study. Dr. Navarro and Dr. Aiden successfully and confidently constructed discourse identities through writing in English. Later in this chapter, I detail the meaning of academic English varieties and how they relate to specific disciplinary styles.

**Authorship & Self-Expression**

Authorship and how students position themselves assist the transition from discourse identity. Perceiving themselves as authors of their work, becoming part of the discourse, having a distinct voice and contribution, and taking ownership of their knowledge production, involve language proficiency, expression, and possession. How students identify as English speakers to perceiving themselves as authors of their work follows a non-linear trajectory of experience and negotiation. While participants have expressed having no choice but to write in English, some were able to take ownership of their writing, which, in itself, is an act of agency.
Most participants responded by saying that they experienced a sense of authorship while writing their dissertations, but how each perceives authorship tells a unique story. For some, authorship was synonymous with ownership, and for others, authorship related to developing and expressing individual voice and style. Reading and learning from other writers alongside developing (or achieving) self-expression defined other ways participants communicated their ownership. Furthermore, publications resulting from the dissertation helped some identify as authors. Table 2 shows positive responses to participants’ unique senses of authorship.

**Table 2**

*Sense of Authorship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes – as extracts from my thesis were published in journals and book chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Having read hundreds of literature &amp; research studies, I feel relieved that I was able to reach a sense of authorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Certainly yes. I have written a piece of knowledge nobody could write in that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes I did because I followed a structure on what the content of the book should contain, and knew the demands for a dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes and this is given to the type of collaboration I had with my supervisors and the ownership I always had in relation to my PhD studies and research work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Felt as though I owned the outcome of the research and the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes, I Made sure the reader could somehow see who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes. Helped me express myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes although the help from the committee is always present. My approach and style were respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Yes, it was my own expressive academic writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Maybe, it was my work that was being presented, so the authorship was already inherent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only two of the participants in Table 2 are native English speakers, which suggests that even while writing in English, participants perceived themselves as owning their work and expressing themselves. Participant 5 alludes to the self by stating that she had “written a piece of knowledge
nobody could write in that way”, showing that she owned the language and style of the knowledge she produced. The dissertation was representative of her self. Participant 14 shares a similar sentiment, ensuring the reader could “see who I am”, as if the self, through writing, were evident. Participant 4 notes the near-miraculous emergence of authorship among the “hundreds of literature & research studies”, citing relief, as if it were a desire, to “reach a sense of authorship”. Work with committees and supervisors also demonstrates the necessity of those positive relationships, as Participants 9 and 20 note that even though this support was present, they retained “ownership” and “approach and style were respected”. In these relationships, the participants perceived they were able to develop their writing selves in the dissertation, regardless of university standards, “structure” or “demands”, as Participant 7 notes. Further, no participant mentions writing in English as a hindrance to authorship.

**Writing Practices**

Writing practices and sense of self-expression are also critical to feeling like an author. Dr. Zacharia’s struggles and frustrations with writing, for example, ultimately tell of a positive outcome. Her writing practices helped her overcome the “debilitating” “language barrier” of academic writing, allowing her voice, which she attributes to authorship, to emerge.

I struggled at the beginning. I found myself often having to mimic other writers […] what I found myself doing as part of my writing process was when I was doing my literature review, quotes I liked, I just kept a database of phrases I liked […] if I liked a phrase, if I like an expression, if I liked how an author connection two sections of the paper. I had two files running, one which was my literature related and another was just language relates, and what I would do is I would write my idea down, and I often found myself dipping into the database of expression and reading through it and trying to say which of
these expressions best fits what I’m trying to say. I spent a lot of time learning from and relying on experiences writers to help me navigate this language barrier that was debilitating sometimes.

Dr. Zacharia conclude her thoughts on authorship, stating “I always felt that I was able to express myself, I felt that I owned what I wrote, and I learned a lot from […] borrowing from other styles, but I think, eventually, I found my own voice in my own way of writing”.

Dr. Aiden, a native Korean speaker, reflected similar writing practices, which she discussed during her interview. Upon moving to the United States in her mid-30s to begin doctoral study, Dr. Aiden “was not able to speak in English, you know, like, several sentences. I wasn’t able to write a paragraph”. Rigorous reading and writing processes encouraged her English development, which shaped her writing voice in English.

I believe, in my opinion, good writing skills in any languages, start ‘imitating’, ‘following’ good writing, so, for the two, three years, I’m doing that. […] I read aloud at least five pages of an academic article in my area in the morning […] I was literally typing, typing, you know, scribble in good expressions and sentences from academic journals. […] I think the best ways reading good models and, you know, imitating, sometimes just typing the sentences, good sentences, expressions.

Dr. Aiden expanded on writing and revising her dissertation, alluding to how she shaped her voice and ideas.

I blocked my time for reading and writing. […] I like making a lousy, “lousy”, draft […] although it is very lousy, it has my ideas, so I can see my own idea, right, so I don’t care about, you know, grammar or a sentence or a subject, verb. […] then I come back, and come back again and “polish” the lousy draft.
When I asked her what she meant by “polishing”, she referred to citation, “it’s about citation.” The polishing process involved a review of ideas, communicated in her own voice, to ensure she had citations where she needed them. Her advisor, with whom she shared a close relationship, help her see her voice as separate from the voices of other writers.

I have a very good relationship with my advisor for my doctoral program […] she said to me, “I can hear your voice here, this is your piece, I can see that, but I feel like this is not your words, you borrowed from somewhere else. This is not you, this is not your voice”.

As with other participants in the study, Dr. Aiden had strong advisor support, which respected her voice and ideas and ensure they were clear. Other aspects of feeling like an author in the dissertation process are situating individual thoughts and ideas with those of the field, as well as modeling or “imitating” the writing style of the field, which Dr. Zacharia and Dr. Aiden both expressed. Through reading, imitation, and modeling, novice scholars position themselves in the discourse, which further develops their identities as writers and authors.

Dr. Aiden identifies as an English language learner (ELL) and as using English for academic purposes (EAP), which firmly shape her discourse identity and confidence writing and speaking within her field and profession. She explained:

we need to learn academic languages, you know, vocabulary and syntax […] and discourse, how to write, how to speak, how to communicate within a specific academic area […] scholars in a specific academic area has, you know, insider’s way to speak, communicate each other.

Her use of the phrase “insider’s way” suggests that discourse identity develops through writing and publishing within the field; thus, discourse identity reflects knowledge and practice gained through experience. Not that assuming this writer identity is a secret, but more so, representative
of a skill set or toolbox built over time, after a novice researcher completes the dissertation and continues to research, write, and publish.

The concept of English as a “tool” also emerged from my interview with Dr. Aiden, which transitions the narrative toward a deeper discussion around English as a global language, how it influences multilingual doctoral students’ writing and education experiences and their processes of becoming professionals and scholars, which comprise the next section of this chapter.

In explaining English as a tool, Dr. Aiden assumes the first personal singular pronoun “we” to account for all non-native English speaking scholars: “we are not a native English speaker, however, we do academically, you know, communicate by using English as a communication tool”. Her comments related specifically to a large education conference held in North America, which attracts international scholars and researchers. Dr. Varkey, a doctoral student from Argentina whose native language is Spanish, expressed similar comments about global communication. He said, “if you don’t get the language [English], you are out of many of the discussions”. Dr. Varkey noted that he participates in “global discussions every week”, which, he says, “90 percent of them are in English” and if you don’t know English, “100 percent you are out of the discussion”.

Data from this study show that English is a global language with deep academic roots. English offers a means for global communication and scholarship and possesses the power to bring people together. Participants expressed developing confident voices in English and seeing themselves in their writing; some lost and found identities throughout the dissertation process, or after. Yet, deeper interpretation of the data illuminates the intimate and complex relationship between multilingual students and English: the inequitable challenges and barriers they face; the
lack of knowledge and resources available in native languages, which further distort the “choice” to write in English; and the connections among language to thought, culture, value, and meaning. Thought, culture, and meaning, as they related to expression, are emergent themes from the data, and are critical for understanding writers, their perceptions, and their identities in multiple languages.

The Meaning of Writing in English

Language, culture, and writing connect deeply to participants’ identities, how they express themselves, make meaning, and see themselves in their writing. The next section of this chapter analyzes participants’ experiences with language, their perceptions of language and culture, and how language and culture influence writing style. Further, in this analysis I will interpret the challenges and unbalanced nature of English education, which influence students’ experiences in higher education. Ultimately, data shows that multilingual students see themselves as navigating between multiple languages, which represent and cultivate multiple context-specific identities.

Language

Dr. Navarro, a multilingual native-Spanish speaker from Peru, stated: “language, really, makes you, to an extent, who you are”. His statement beautifully situates the remaining sections of this chapter, which explore the roles of languages in greater detail. Discussing language in general, Dr. Navarro narrated:

A language really does influence how you think and also influences, for example, your emotional style as well. […] your language allows you to see in a certain way, or even to hear or taste in a certain way. […] the point is like, really, languages allow you to see in a certain way, so really they are a part of you, I mean, they’re really part of how you live,
what you are. [...] I think that, in that sense, they’re really any important part of [...] your identity, as in, really, what you are.

To learn another language is like “growing another set of eyes [...] if you have more than two languages, just like another set of eyes”. I attribute Dr. Navarro’s description of language to a point he made later in our discussion, which was “multilingual literacy is super very important in terms of knowledge production”. He claimed that to reduce everything to one language is a mistake, comparing French and American philosophy to suggest that the language of production reflects the thinking of the field and the culture of thought.

Languages as eyes affect and reflect perceptions of reality. Dr. Navarro said, “reality is not something out there that is objective and everybody perceives exactly the same thing. That’s just not the case. [...] language [...] filters reality in certain way”. The more languages an individual learns, the more she changes. From Dr. Navarro’s perspective, “as you learn other languages, you really change, not just the way you read, but the way you are”. To learn and to use another language is to “switch to this new way of thinking [...] and I would guess that is the main difficulty”.

Again, ways of thinking emerge as a challenge when working among multiple languages. Further, working with multiple languages requires cultural shifts. Multilingual students are also multicultural—with every language they use to speak, read, and write, they seem to need to adopt and practice the culture of that language, which is to argue against the belief that English may function independently of culture (Fiedler, 2011; Pölzl, 2003). While English may be a communication tool use globally, an individual’s proficiency and exposure to, purpose for using, and attitude toward English shape their perceptions of English and of themselves.
An Introduction to English

For decades, research has traced and discussed the bloom of English worldwide. Kachru’s (1992) contribution to the discussion of varieties of English certainly frames English language usage in cultural, national, international, and intranational contexts. Connor (2004) and Mauranen (2003), among others, extended the conversation around English as a lingua franca and applied it specifically to academia, while Hyland (2016) has spent decades advocating for English for Academic Purposes. While the literature provided necessary background and shaped my perception of English, Dr. Navarro’s explanation of English introduced me to a new concept—Esperanto.

I used to think that English was the Esperanto, or, particularly, the scientific Esperanto for the world, that everything was in English. But turns out, that was not the case, it really is not the case […] I found a whole lot of original and important material in other languages […] which were not translated into English. So I used to think that everything was in English, and if you knew English, you were okay, but it really is not the case.

Dr. Navarro returned to the idea of English as an Esperanto multiple times throughout our conversation, which prompted me to understand his meaning. Esperanto is a language invented by L. L. Zamenhof in 1887, and its purpose was for international communication (Gobbo, 2015). Esperanto did not have a native cultural identity, thus it belonged to the whole world (Gobbo, 2017). Though the language is an amalgamation of Latin, German, and Slavic origins, Esperanto is an inclusive language that attempts to embody the meaning of a lingua franca—a neutral language that does not belong to the communicators (Gobbo & Marácz, 2021).

The sense of “belonging” here is important to my interpretation of Dr. Navarro’s meaning. For English to be a lingua franca, it cannot have native speakers—it cannot “belong” to
anyone. English, thus, cannot be a lingua franca in the same sense as Esperanto, which has no culturally native speakers. Thus, I interpret Dr. Navarro to mean that English is not the global language (ELF) or the global academic/scientific language (ELFA) because it has culture codes and because it has not yet dominated every corner of the globe. While I understand this is only one perspective, it is an interesting perspective to consider when debating the global perception of English.

While Dr. Navarro may not see English satisfying the international language function, he does find value in its scientific use. Dr. Navarro sees English as a “microscope”, a language that “allows you to describe minutely, the reality out there […] English allows for this kind of close inspection of things […] certainly more than any other language I can think of”. For its scientific usage, English makes sense, as the modern scientific method was born in England, thus, English has become the linguistic medium for the sciences. Dr. Navarro believes that fields such as computer science, engineering, and medicine wisely choose English as their language. Even as an ethnographer, he perceived English as a meaningful option. But globally, and regarding knowledge production, he thinks differently.

English can be a poor, poor choice, I think, in other fields. English can be not really a particularly interesting choice, or not even necessary, in fact, certainly for other fields. […] in terms of the production of knowledge, I think that reducing everything to English would be a mistake.

Dr. Navarro’s perception of English is field specific. In certain contexts, it works, but Dr. Navarro seems to disagree with the idea that academia is English-dominant. More so, his perception reflects Dr. Aiden’s interpretation of English as a “communication tool” among researchers. How doctoral students perceive English as the language of production in certain
contexts and for specific purposes is important to consider in this study. For some, English has strong cultural connections, whereas, for others, it is a means with no emotively expressive qualities nor purpose. Thus, how students use English is integral to their challenges.

**Language as Culture**

My interviews with Dr. Aiden and Dr. Zacharia revealed insights into language, culture, and writing, which help frame this section of the chapter. To situate the conversation around English in a global context, and to represent another interpretation of English, I quote Dr. Aiden, who said “higher education, all around the world, it’s made of English, right? Regardless of the country, nation, states”. Her phrase “made of English”, and specifically the verb “made” transcends speaking and writing. To be “made of English” implies foundation, framework, structure, building, materials—English is the “stuff” of higher education and all that it contains. English language is the material culture of higher education, research, and scholarship. English controls everything because it IS everything—speaking, writing, learning, programs, funding, knowledge, titles and prestige, experience, materials, resources, and the list goes on.

To homogenize the language of higher education is to homogenize the culture. As Dr. Navarro said, “it would be really a mistake to reduce everything to English”. International doctoral students who must assume the language and style of academia are expected to communicate in English, which, according to Dr. Zacharia, requires “stepping outside of their culture into the English culture and using the language correctly”. She was referring to Arabic students writing in English. She explained:

because I spoke Arabic, and because I understood, I was able – I understand the culture also – and when I’m reading what they’re saying in English […] if I only spoke English it would just be words that don’t make sense or appear disconnected.
As bicultural (Scottish-Egyptian) and bilingual (English-Arabic), Dr. Zacharia was able to help these students but only because she “understand[s] the culture also”. Without a mentor possessing knowledge of Arabic language and culture, these students would have struggled to represent their ideas in writing. Had Dr. Zacharia only spoken English, she would not have been able to make sense of the students’ English writing.

Dr. Zacharia provided another example of mentoring an Arabic student. When a multilingual student’s supervisor does not share knowledge of the student’s language and culture, the student is at a disadvantage.

[her supervisor] politely indicated that she [the student] still needed to do a lot of reading and research in order to clarify her thoughts […] after reading her work and reading the supervisors comments, I understand what they were trying to saying. It was basically “this doesn’t make sense” […] they [the supervisor] equated their [the student’s] academic quality with their language and their ability to express what they’re wanting to say, which is what I think is dangerous because sometimes language can be a barrier to them, to an individual being able to fully express their intellect or their thought, and I think that’s what happened in that situation. It was just a language issue rather than this individual having an intellectual shortage. […] They [the student] didn’t need to read, they didn’t need to do more research, what they need to do was go away to take a six month course in academic writing and learn how to develop their vocabulary, their style of writing, and their ability to step outside culture and use language, independent of their cultural perspective […] they need to change two lenses in order to be able to write in a way that was acceptable to the university.
Dr. Zacharia’s use of the word “dangerous” caught my attention. Students using a language that limits “an individual being able to fully express their intellect or their thought” is dangerous for two reasons. First, the language barrier disadvantages students and inhibits knowledge production and self-expression, and second, leads to misconceptions from supervisors who, because of their perceptions and lack of cultural knowledge, do not provide students with the help they need. Dr. Zacharia’s example relates to the “cultural shift” necessary to write in English, as well as to Dr. Navarro’s example of language as multiple eyes equating new ways of seeing and perceiving. Reality changes. Students who do not have the language proficiency to think in English cannot accommodate an English perception of reality. Further, students for whom English is not their first language must shift and alter lenses that native English speakers do not, thus, native speaker status remains an advantage.

Producing in English is complicated. Dr. Aiden explained this, saying “I do believe writing process, thinking process are different depending on, you know, their background, culture, language”. “English writing,” Dr. Aiden claimed, “is very different, that’s why I was struggling at the beginning because the way of communication […] is very different between two language because of the cultures”. She is referring to Korean and English and proceeded to describe the styles, “My English writer identity is more straightforward and clearer […] a Korean style is […] very indirect and kind of timid”. The “way of communication” means the style of writing or form of expression, which reflects the cultural style of thinking, which, of course, relates to language.

In conversations at the university where she is employed, Dr. Aiden says she still struggles with listening comprehension, which harkens back to Dr. Zacharia’s experiences with Arabic students. Dr. Aiden says of her colleagues, “I know every word they speak but I didn’t
understand,” highlighting the disconnect between language as vocabulary and understanding content and meaning, based on context or prior knowledge. She said:

so I think that’s the difference […] I need to be very focused on the contents when I listen in English, so, yeah, it’s not easy. I’m living in an English speaking country, teaching in English, so yeah, that’s my life.

As with her previous statement that “higher education is made of English”, so is her life, her reality. Dr. Aiden said, “the way of communication depends on their cultures […] cultures embedded in different languages make different identities”, to which Dr. Zacharia’s statement correlates, “languages always have a big part of identifying who you are, as a person”, and to Dr. Navarro, “language, really, makes you, to an extent, who you are”. Analyzing the conversation between language and culture focuses on thought processes, which, along with culture, determine how students write. The processes of thinking and translating also influence how multilingual students make meaning and approach writing. From Dr. Zacharia’s examples, language, both native language and English, presents barriers to students experiences and agency in higher education. Further, they define their identities in many ways.

**Language and Thought**

For native speakers, English is, as Dr. Aiden described, “automatic”, an “unconscious process”. When referring to me, a monolingual English speaker, and comparing her own experiences in English, Dr. Aiden said:

you speak one language. For you, academic identity just personal identity, formulated along with one language, right? But my identity as a “person person”, it’s around my Korean culture and my Korean language […] my thinking processes is not English. I’m thinking in Korean and I produce in English […] it’s not automatic process, ever. When I
say, you know, just three sentences, it should go through the filter, Korean filter. I think
in filter and it is produced in English.

She is referring to speaking, but the same applies to writing, in the sense of how thinking and
writing connect culturally. Dr. Navarro also mentioned a filter. He said, “language, I think, a
little bit like a filter that filters reality in certain ways”. Discussing his ethnographic work with
diverse linguistic cultures, Dr. Navarro said, “they really think different, they perceive
differently”. As for his own experience writing in English, Dr. Navarro discovered that “really I
was expressing myself in Spanish, with English words”.

Dr. Zacharia used nearly the same expression to describe Arabic student mentees as
“thinking in Arabic but writing using English words”. She explained this process as
“transliterated”: “they were thinking in Arabic but writing in English”. Dr. Varkey, a native
Spanish speaker, also mentions the challenges of thinking in Spanish but writing in English.

It was very hard for me not to be writing or not to be translating just what I was saying in
Spanish into English because my thinking is in Spanish. […] if you translate exactly, or if
your thinking is being translated into English, is not easy to read in English. […] it’s not
only the content, it’s the way you express some of the things in your own language. I
think at some point you started thinking in the language you’re writing, but it’s a long
process, and it’s never complete.

I interpret Dr. Varkey’s phrase “it’s never complete” to mean that, unless one is a native English
speaker or achieves near-native fluency, one is unable to think completely in English. As Dr.
Aiden said, “it’s not an automatic process, ever”, moving from one’s native language to English.
Time, age, and access may influence language proficiency, but access and exposure to English
vary globally, which means students enter doctoral study with varying levels of proficiency, yet
are expected to produce the same “academic writing” using the same “academic language” in English as native speakers.

**Self-Expression**

Before analyzing barriers, expectations, and challenges in more detail, it is important to relate thinking and writing processes to meaningful expression, which was important to many participants in this study. For participants, meaningful expression implies being able to express their voices in their writing and relates directly to the value of the writing and to the writer’s identity. The connections between language, voice, and meaning come together for writers to produce writing representative of who they are and for their specific audiences. English poses challenges to these thinking and writing processes, and Dr. Varkey’s experience speaks to the importance of the value in the writing he produces.

Dr. Varkey is the only participant who chose not to write his dissertation in English. When I asked why, Dr. Varkey replied:

> because it’s going to be very related to my job, and there are two things. First, the university is in Argentina, everything’s in Spanish, and second […] there is very few materials on Spanish […] very few books, papers in Spanish […] it’s hard to find things in Spanish, so I think that there is a value added of putting something in Spanish.

Access to and availability of resources is a separate issue, discussed in the barriers and challenges section below; however, the lack of availability of materials in Spanish is important to note as a factor in Dr. Varkey’s decision. His purpose for obtaining a doctorate is to give back to his local and national communities, and eventually, to help other countries in Latin America develop education training programs for principals.
**Dr. Varkey:** If you write something and no one is going to read that, is not useful at all. So if we write something that someone could read, could discuss, could write something, like, afterwards, it is important. If you write something […] if I write in English, no one in Argentina could read it, like, very few people could review and discuss […] I truly believe that all the study that you are doing is to open a conversation and discussion, to build knowledge. And if it is not in the language with the people you’re working on, it’s much harder.

Dr. Varkey realizes that by writing a dissertation in Spanish, he will reach a limited audience. He said, “if it is in English, I can share it and send it and publish it in many different places. If it is in Spanish, less people is going to read it, less people will discuss it, but it’s okay”. English-speaking populations are not Dr. Varkey’s audience. His choice to write in Spanish connects directly to the purpose and audience of his dissertation—local, national, and international communities within Latin America, specifically. To write in English would not assist those countries in developing the education programs they need. Dr. Varkey identified a need, and through his dissertation, he is contributing knowledge for discussion, reflection, and action, starting with his home country, Argentina.

Dr. Varkey’s dissertation topic is meaningful to him, and to write in Spanish, to accomplish his goals, he seeks value in expressing his own voice. When I asked about representing his voice in writing, Dr. Varkey said,

if it doesn’t happen, it is not meaningful in the best way possible, like, the point of writing something […] for others, or something that you’re selling, the point is that you have to express yourself […] If I cannot express myself in a very good way, I think that was no sense to be writing that.
Dr. Varkey wants to ensure that his dissertation, the knowledge he contributes to his field, is accessible to the people who matter most. Because of his investment, the meaning the topic carries for him, it is critical that he also convey and express meaning in the language that allows him to communicate most effectively.

Conventions and standards, as well as the English language itself, also limit students’ opportunities for self-expression. Dr. Navarro represents his stance on American sociology. He describes the writing as “very flat, kind of bound by academic conventions”. In his field, there is “no expectation of self-expression at all”, and the same applies to ethnographic research, where the writer’s voice is meaningfully absent. Conventions and standards determine writing style specific to the field, but in meaning-making processes, English can be limiting. Students’ perceptions of English personally and academically seem to suggest their opinions about using English.

Unlike other multilingual participants in this study, Dr. Varkey made a choice to write in the language that would best represent his voice but also his audience and purpose. For every other participant in this study, writing in English was not a choice. The limitations of English are two sided. For Dr. Varkey, choosing not to write in English limits the reach of his research—he reaches a smaller audience but has a greater impact by filling a local need. For the remaining participants, English was a requirement, either because English was a participant’s native language, a university requirement, or because of the “prestige” associated with English. The English language requirement in doctoral study, globally, whether fulfilled by studying in an Anglophone country or in an international program, affects how students contribute to the field, navigate barriers, and express themselves.
**Barriers, Challenges, & Expectations**

The data in this study suggests that English is both restrictive and empowering. English has the power to mobilize participants and bring together researchers from across the global, but in doing so, English also dictates how they write, limits their knowledge production, controls style, and restrains expression. An alarming comment from Dr. Aiden suggested that, even if given a “choice” to write in her native language, she wouldn’t have.

no option, there was no option, there was no such option to write a doctoral dissertation, you know, in the language other than English […] even if there was an option to write my dissertation in my native language, in Korean, I would not have chosen the option. I would not. I have been academically trained in English, not in Korean, right? So writing my dissertation in my native language needs an extra process, translation, you know, translating all the academic terms, syntax, discourse, into my native language.

Dr. Aiden’s phrase “academically trained” caught me by surprise. The term “trained” suggests rigorous conditioning to assume the identity of a scholar in English. The concept of being trained relates to Dr. Zacharia’s explanation of “stepping outside of” one’s culture and into English writing and culture. Dr. Aiden’s experience demonstrates the demands of English and the broader implications of culture associated with doctoral study in English. Further, regardless of the language—native language or English—multilingual students must engage in processes and overcome barriers that native English-speaking students do not.

**Language Proficiency**

Academic English is no one’s first language, and academic writing requires a different skill set. These literature-informed claims have served as mantras to this study, but I state them
again here because language having two faces—social, conversational language and academic language—frames the challenges for novice scholars. Another research-informed claim is that students enter doctoral study with varying levels of language abilities. However, when a student whose first language is not English enters a doctoral program, aware that there is no choice but to “produce in English”, as Dr. Aiden said, there are a few factors to consider.

- First is the multilingual student’s knowledge of academic language in her native language. As she will be expected to read, think, and write in English, she will also be expected to translate her thoughts (and research materials) into academic English. Thus, to write effectively, according to university standards, and to express herself meaningfully, the student must have a command of multiple levels of English.

- Second is writing skills. The multilingual student may have little academic training in her native language; these underdeveloped skills are expected to guide her writing in academic English, in which she has had no training. Cultural barriers, however, exist between the two languages, so to understand conventions is not enough.

- And finally, the student’s exposure to English, socially, academically, or not at all, prior to entering doctoral study, influence the two previous points.

These points outline the challenges students experience with language and allow me to analyze the barriers, as communicated from participants. In framing the challenges of Arabic-speaking students, Dr. Zacharia said:

What I found personally was that, with the students who were very fluent English speakers, I couldn’t tell that this was a second language writer, or that whoever was the author of this document was a second language English speaker. However, there were some whose English was not as proficient.
The students she describes as “not as proficient” are the students who were “thinking in Arabic but writing using English words”. For these students to “write in a manner that was acceptable to the university”, Dr. Zacharia indicated that students needed to “step away” and “take a six month course in academic writing” in English to prepare them for the demands—linguistic and cultural—of writing a dissertation in English. Dr. Zacharia attributed proficiency to social, socio-economic, or financial situations. Exposure to English in school, for example, does not prepare students for the English proficiency necessary to write a dissertation. When comparing two students with different English proficiency, Dr. Zacharia notes fluency gained from “home provisions” or “travel abroad”. Exposure to English in school, for example, is not what makes the difference.

Their exposure to English would have been the same, and I think it’s the positioning of an individual’s society, the socio-economic background. I mean, one individual had English-speaking nannies. So she was brought up with English in the home and traveled a lot. […] so, in terms of officially being exposed to the same amount of English, that was there, but one of them had a better ability to access the language to home provision.

Along with social and socio-economic means, geographic location also influences how students are exposed to English, and learning English as a school subject, which Dr. Zacharia refers to above, does not always prepare students. For example, students in Nordic countries such as Finland and Denmark, learn English as a second language early in their education. The growing number of international higher education programs in these countries further supports the use of English in academics. Danish participants, as well as those from the Netherlands, reported near-native fluency and identified as ESL. Life-long exposure to English in academic and social contexts encourage that development.
According to Dr. Aiden, English as a school subject taught in South Korea does not prepare students to think in English nor use the language in social contexts. She said:

I learned English as a school subject […] not as a language, actually. It was a subject.

Very different. […] I was not able to speak, I was not able to write in English, even a paragraph. And also listening comprehension was a big problem. So, you know, very unbalanced English education.

Dr. Varkey, from Argentina, and Dr. Navarro, from Peru, both reference access to English growing up in their home countries. In high-school, Dr. Varkey said he “refuse[d] to learn English at my high school, like I didn't care much because I thought that I would never use it. And then I'm still suffering that”. While he had some access to learning the language, he did not put forth the effort because he did not recognize the perceived value of learning English at that time, which is something he suggests regretting now as an adult and globally-influential academic. Dr. Navarro said his access to English growing up was “zero”, explaining “it was not in the cards […]. I came from a very poor background”. While socio-economic barriers are a factor, geography is also important. Intellectual markets in Latin America, according to Dr. Navarro and supported by Dr. Varkey’s experiences, are “autonomous”, which could also explain the limited focus on English proficiency or need.

Dr. Zacharia discussed her father’s challenges earning his degree in the UK as a native Arabic speaker. Moving from Egypt without a background in English, Dr. Zacharia’s father spent an additional two years while earning his doctorate, just to “get the language right”. She explained that her father had written his thesis, “he had already got his thesis, his research work is done […] it was just a two year process of getting the language right. So he was held back because of language”. Dr. Zacharia noted that, for her father, “the idea was there, the work is
done”, but English was his struggle. She reflected a similar experience with students she mentors.

I definitely know that there are those who are fluent English speakers, and language was not a barrier, and their ability to access the program and to meet the criteria, including writing their thesis to the university standard and passing the viva, that wasn’t a problem. There were others whose […] their language was less proficient and lower than intermediate. They had no problem with the conceptual work. A lot of it was their ability to write according to the standards. They tended, like I said, to write using English words but thinking in Arabic, so you needed an Arabic speaker almost to decipher that they were trying to say.

Again, the analysis returns to thinking and how language proficiency and use develop the ability “to think in English”. Dr. Varkey also mentioned the challenges of working with ideas versus more technical English representation in writing. The data of this study suggest that students grasp concepts and ideas in English and feel comfortable writing certain sections of the dissertation in English. Whereas, technical analysis and expression, which involve meaning, are more challenging. In regard to “adapt[ing] the language”, Dr. Varkey said, “it’s a lot about contextualization”—which, for him, is to take language and make it accessible to others but also representative of certain vocabulary. When reading and writing the literature review, Dr. Varkey alluded to the thought and translation process and referenced adaptation.

The literature review—most of that is in English, so it’s like you need to translate.

Translate ideas is quite easy. To translate, like, quotes, is more complicated. […] because, an idea, you can adapt […] the more common literature reviews, like, you put them, general ideas, and you can express yourself […] when you are quoting, you have to
be more careful of like, yeah, like respecting the details of the ideas and is a more technical translation.

My interpretation of Dr. Varkey’s narrative is that to translate ideas allows the writer more flexibility to adapt or interpret the idea, calling upon native language. He understands ideas in English, per the literature he is reading, but also thinks about them in Spanish and adapts his language accordingly. To quote someone else directly requires a more technical command of English. A quote is not expressive; there is no room for flexibility.

Related to multilingualism, Dr. Navarro also mentioned flexibility, extending Dr. Varkey’s perspective. He said:

if you speak more than one language, you have a wider repertoire of concepts, I think, and for that reason you’re a little more flexible as a thinker. You have more angles into the same kind of aspects of reality. […] I don’t think you have to be super good at one language to actually be in that flexibility.

Dr. Navarro reads fluently in six languages, thus, his repertoire of language and meanings is extensive. Greater knowledge of multiple languages could ease the translation process, but only if a student has access to such volume of languages. From Dr. Navarro’s perspective, the challenge of translation is subjective to content and depends on the language and style of writing. He referred to the difficulty of translating “nuanced ideas”, as well as conveying rhythm and meaning characteristic of certain languages. Further, he noted:

language is not just a bunch of sounds that are just different in another language.

Ultimately, they are different concepts, overlapping concepts as well, but there are certain things that you cannot say in one language that you can say in another language
He also stated that there is “the point of which it’s just not possible to say it in another language”, alluding to the reality that some words, ideas, and meanings simply are not translatable between languages. Working with what he described as “technical materials”, however, Dr. Narvarro said, “the translation was very straightforward into English […] wasn’t really that complicated […] technical material is, I think, eminently translatable”. A technical translation for Dr. Varkey refers to representing language and syntax, which is challenging, whereas for Dr. Navarro, technical refers to content, which is more objective, thus less challenging. This is an important distinction to recognize.

Participant 29 stated that he is “most comfortable communicating in English, especially, when it relates to technical matters” and explained that “[I] really could not write a dissertation in any other language as I do not know if we even have equivalents for technical terms in those languages”, referring to Talugu and Tamil. Language proficiency seems to connect directly to the type of English being used, such as field-specific terminology, or style of writing, such as technical. Further, lack of proficiency or available terminology to write academically in one’s native language sometimes makes English the only option.

Translation, however, regardless of its ease or difficulty, represents a barrier, an “extra process” for multilingual students. The content, language, and student’s exposure to language(s) certainly influence how challenging the process may be, but overall, it disadvantages multilingual students in English-dominant academic settings. Throughout this study, translating to convey thought and capture meaning have been common among participants. Without “thinking in English”, multilingual students rely on extensive translation practices to communicate their thoughts and to express themselves in English. Translation is another facet of the language barrier and presents additional challenges for students without English fluency. I
use the term “fluency” here based on how participants equate the term with being able to think in English, thus call upon English production as “automatic” or “unconscious”.

Writing Practices

The writing practices of multilingual students and native English speaking students vary, yet the expectations of what students produce adhere to the same standards. Academic standards, established by universities, define expectations for doctoral student writing. Programs set the language of production as English and expect students to write and organize their thoughts in a language and style which, essentially, is the English style of writing, which is to say, the English style of thinking. Dr. Aiden said, “apparently writing is so similar because we have specific jargon, terms, and, you know, format, organization, and everything”. She is alluding to discourses that have specific writing methods, but because everything is produced in standard academic English, the writing “sounds” similar.

Dr. Navarro shared Dr. Aiden’s opinion and represented the field of American sociology. He described writing within the field as “very flat, very kind of bound by academic conventions. Is really just kind of, really bad writing, really, so there’s no expectation of self-expression at all”. When I asked him to explain what he meant by “bad writing”, Dr. Navarro described socio-lects and their role as discipline-specific languages—in this context, academic writing in American sociology:

A socio-lect is a language that is very specific to a particular discipline […] there are some socio-lects that are very expressive and other socio-lects are extremely dry. There’s no kind of self-expression […] it’s really just kind of a bunch of conventions, and that is really what makes it bad writing. It is nothing beyond the convention.
His final statement, “It is nothing beyond the convention” impresses upon me a writing style devoid of meaning. To call writing “bad” because of strict adherence to conventions nature calls into question whether quality of writing and expression are important. For Dr. Navarro, writing according to academic standards and conventions relates to quality—the perception of what makes writing good or bad. Confined to academic and discipline-specific conventions, in certain fields, writing seems to fail to be expressive in English, especially for multilingual students.

Dr. Aiden contributed further to the conversation. Regarding learning English and academic writing according to standards, she said:

you are learning how to speak, you know, what kinds of words to use, how to write, how to organize a paragraph in my proposal, my dissertation, how to organize a research proposal, how to develop it, how to set up your dissertation.

She continued her comments about writing in English, referring to style and how different writing is in Korean. The style of thinking, speaking, and writing in Korea, she note, are “very different” than in English, which exacerbates the challenge for her, yet highlights the connections between culture, thought, and writing.

**Dr. Aiden:** writing is an academic skill. We need to learn academic languages, you know, vocabulary, syntax […] sentence template, and discourse, how to write, how to speak, how to communicate in a specific academic area.

Dr. Aiden describes the English standard of writing, “say the main idea, main sentences at the first, right […] bring out supporting idea to support the main ideas”. The Korea style, she noted, is “very indirect and kind of timid […] we finally get to know the main point at the very end of the conversation or at the very end of paragraph”. Writing in English, therefore, is not just about the language—it is about structuring words into sentences, into paragraphs, and into entire
documents, such as a dissertation or article. Dr. Aiden repeatedly refers to “organization”, meaning how the writing, from the sentence level to the ideas to the whole article or dissertation, flows together. She even describes her “English writer identity” as “more clear and straightforward”—a cultural reflection of the English writing style.

Dr. Zacharia mentioned multiple occasions where English language is a “barrier” and that students struggle to make progress because they are expected to “write in a manner acceptable to the university”, yet instruction on how to do this is unavailable. Instead, universities attempt to “remove English as the barrier”.

Dr. Zacharia: There was a huge amount of scaffolding provided by the university to remove English as the barrier […] they’re [international students] almost given a template for writing, so they [the university] try and remove the language as much as possible. […] There’s a huge amount of barrier removing in order for them to get their doctorate.

Dr. Zacharia mentioned that supervisors tell students that they could not continue making progress on their dissertations “until they had quote unquote passed the first chapter”. This practice, which Dr. Zacharia knew was not common practice among all doctoral students, created a different set of expectations for multilingual students, the expectation of “passing a chapter” in order to progress. “Passing” implied that the chapter met the writing standards of the university, and, according to Dr. Zacharia, this practice of “passing” was “the only way we’ll get them to do the work”. “Work” in this case means putting the effort into writing according to English language and academic standards.

Experiences described by Dr. Zacharia only begin to touch the surface of the barriers multilingual students must overcome. Students who do not “think in English” and who have not
had formal academic training to write in English according to university standards, must devote additional hours, course work, time, and energy to reading and writing.

Dr. Varkey and Dr. Aiden shared similar challenges with reading and writing in English. Both alluded to how English proficiency impeded their progress and required extra time and energy to their reading and writing practices. When discussing writing his thesis in English, Dr. Varkey said:

First, it was [...] energy that you put on the thesis. It’s like you have X amount of energy, or capacity, or time, or whatever measure you want, and if it’s not in your language, translating, accommodating that—it’s not easy at all. And it’s less energy, time, on the content itself or the analysis. It’s time consuming.

He noted that because of the time and energy he had to spend translating and “accommodating” that—which I interpret to mean accommodating the language, the process, and the reality—he had less time to devote to the content and analytical portions of his thesis. This suggests, had he written in Spanish, the thesis would have developed to meet his own standards and desires for what he wanted to produce. Having chosen to write his dissertation in Spanish, Dr. Varkey will be able to express himself authentically and devote his time and energy to producing meaningful content and analysis, instead of on English language challenges.

Dr. Varkey also commented on the extra time he spent reading and how he struggled in class discussions, not having a knowledge of English that allowed him to participate. Knowing little English “was a limitation to discuss in class. The time I spend reading for class, it was double, at least double […] as I was going very slow”. Dr. Aiden reflected the same challenge, noting, “I read […] I think, twice, more than twice, you know, three times compared to English
native speakers”. She also explained a process she referred to as “training her language muscles”, which was a reading and writing process she used to build her English skills.

I read and wrote, like we do, every day, 20 to 30 minutes, yoga practice, to train our muscle. I think it was effective to read aloud and […] sometimes I’m just typing the sentence, imitate the sentence to train, how can I say, my language muscle, yeah yeah, so it is not easy, it was not easy and, just, honestly, it is not easy now.

Dr. Aiden says “like we do”, referring to doctoral students and recognizing that reading is a part of the doctoral student’s daily life; however, for her the process served a dual purpose. She was reading to learn both content and language. She was writing, typing, imitating to build her knowledge of academic writing in English. Her revision process was also involved, and she admitted having to step away from the writing and editing; otherwise, she could not progress.

I think I revise my dissertation within 10 times, 15 times, read and rewrite, revising, but I believe because I’m not a native speaker English, not a native English writer, I am too obsessive about grammar […] I cannot go forward.

Previously in this chapter, I quoted Dr. Aiden discussing her relationship with academic English and her native language, Korean. She refers to her experience as being “academically trained in English”. When discussing the choice to write in Korean or English, she explained that writing in Korean would require an “extra process”, thus, even if she had a choice, she would still choose English.

Writing my dissertation in my native language needs an extra process translation, you know, translating all the academic terms of syntax, discourse, into my native language. […] when I hear the terms in English, I didn’t need to think about the meaning, I know them. But if I hear the terms in my own native language, it needs an extra process time.
Her explanation points to an issue of resources. If more resources were published in Korean, Dr. Aiden would not have moved to the US to pursue a doctorate. In the survey, 100 percent of participants stated that they had sufficient resources available in English. This is because, as Dr. Aiden said, “higher education, all around the world […] it’s made of English”. Resources are a driving force in why students write dissertations in English.

When discussing his reliance on English language resources to write his thesis and dissertation, Dr. Varkey said:

I have to translate it. All the ideas. In a course I’m teaching now, in a master program, I’m not allowed to put mandatory readings in English, and it’s really hard to find good books, papers in Spanish. So I’m struggling with that challenge.

As I quoted previously, Dr. Varkey explained the process of translating everything he reads for the literature review, whether he is writing in English or Spanish. If he is writing in English, as with his thesis, he is mentally translating into Spanish to understand ideas—thinking in Spanish to make meaning. Then he writes those ideas in English in a way that reflects and represents his understanding, his thinking, in Spanish. For direct quotes, he said the process is even more challenging because the ideas cannot be generalized. While writing his dissertation in Spanish, he is faced with the same task, except in the reverse. He must translate what he is reading in English into Spanish, since his dissertation is in Spanish. Most native English speakers do not have to translate nor face the challenges listed above, unless they are working in a field where resources are not available in English.

Interesting to note about Dr. Varkey’s statement is that while teaching in a master’s program in Argentina, he “is not allowed” to assign required readings in English. This is almost the reverse of every other experience in this study, where English reading dominates coursework,
literature reviews, and program study. The prevalence of English in Latin America, according to Dr. Varkey, is not as common as in other parts of the world. In Argentina, “they’re trying to have English as a second language, but I would say, it’s not a nationwide spread enough […] I think that if we are not doing that, we are reducing their opportunities”. Dr. Varkey is referring to young students in Argentina who, without English as a second language, will not have the same opportunities as others with greater access. Dr. Navarro commented that in Latin America, “there are very autonomous intellectual markets”, so there has been less pressure to incorporate English language learning into curricula.

**Resources**

The availability of resources in English makes writing in English an easy choice for doctoral students, though as this study suggests, for most doctoral students, there is no choice. Access to resources in English, and the dominance of English-language publications and programs, controls knowledge production in higher education. Further, reading, writing, and studying in English influence the identities doctoral students develop and limit their possibilities for contributing knowledge in another language. To succeed as a doctoral student, regardless of the dissertation language, students need access to English language resources. Access, in this sense, means both availability and proficiency, which, as data from this survey have shown, are “unbalanced” and inequitable, globally.

**Dr. Aiden:** every academic papers and article and resources, they are in English […] for my research area […] regardless of which nation, country, virtually all academic articles are written in English. […] All academic articles, they are written in English. Because I have studied English, including my dissertation, I do have access to resources in my areas
If I studied in a Korean institution, I think I’m not able to read English, you know, paper in writing in English.

Dr. Aiden fully commits to her professional academic identity in English, shaped by reading, writing, studying, and working in English. In a comment that surprised me, Dr. Aiden said, “I do not write any academic, any professional piece in Korean, this is my native language, no, no, no. I didn’t learn Korean intentionally any more”. Upon moving to the US and devoting her time and energy to doctoral study in English, Dr. Aiden made a point to stop learning Korean, the language that defines her identity as a “person person” as opposed to an academic. Dr. Aiden’s reality, her life in English, as well as the experiences of Dr. Varkey, Dr. Zacharia, and other participants in this study, speak to the strength English has in creating and dictating identity development, simultaneously wielding the power to suppress native cultural identities and languages.

Difficult to accept is that students must change who they are to meet language and writing standards acceptable to the university, even though, globally, varieties of English exist and are accepted. Acceptance of English varieties do not appear to translate into acceptable university writing practices. Unbalanced educational experiences and exposure to English, based on home countries, broaden the equity gap among international doctoral students. Dr. Zacharia, Dr. Varkey, and Dr. Aiden all mention the need for writing and language support because English is a barrier; academic language and writing in English further complicate the challenge. Ultimately, students are expected to learn English to communicate socially within higher education, but also academically, which requires two separate identities, languages, and cultures to develop alongside the identities of their native languages and cultures.
Language, Culture, and Identity

The data from this study supports that students develop a writer identity during the dissertation process. For participants, identity relates to how they express themselves using their voices, the sense of authorship they perceive through ownership of writing and production, and finally, how they see themselves in their writing. Identity, however, stretches deep roots into language and culture, exposing new perceptions of the identity making process when writing in English as opposed to one’s native language. While students may develop a writer identity, that identity, English controls and constricts the identity. The perception of English in this context may be different, more positive, if students were given the choice to write in English—if they could exercise agency—but instead, they must negotiate among multiple identities, dictated by variations of languages, both native and English. The final section of this chapter focuses on the identities of the four interview participants to unite the themes of language, culture, and identity to writing.

Dr. Aiden’s Identity

Dr. Aiden began by describing her identity as “Korean language identity” and “English identity”. Throughout our conversation, she fractured her identity to represent an academic or professional identity and a personal identity. Each of these identities she defined as using languages for different purposes. She described the phenomenon of identity for international students who speak more than one language.

International students are […] you know, from different countries. We often “joked” about this, like, we have two faces, two personalities, two identities. So we are a very different person when we communicate in our native language and English. I also believe the first one is about cultures, the way how to speak. But also, I believe, the main purpose
of the two different languages, very different for my case, one for, I mean, English for academic and professional purposes and the other one for Korean for mostly personal purposes. So, purposes and cultures embedded in different languages, make different identities.

Dr. Aiden uses Korean to identify herself as a “person person”, which I interpret as representing her self—who she is outside of her academic profession and social interaction with English speakers, which require different Englishes used in different contexts.

My identity as a “person person” it’s around my Korean culture and my Korean language, however, my academic writing, speaking, it’s about English, so yeah, they’re very different. […] I can say my identity, my Korean speaking writing identity and English speaking writing identity are different, but I also think my academic speaking writing identity and day to day conversation English, they’re very different.

Dr. Aiden expressed confidence in her communicate skills in English in the context of her profession. In social situations, however, where context and colloquial language forms are less familiar to her, Dr. Aiden continues to struggle. She is less comfortable in her conversational English identity. The person she is outside of academia is still Korean at heart, thus, her English language identity connects most strongly to academic language. “Learning academic language is very different from learning conversational language,” she said, and noted how academic context controls the perception of meaning—how to think about words.

I do believe writing process, thinking process, are different, depending on, you know, their background, culture, language […] I speak English, I write in English for academic and professional purpose, but […] my thinking process is not English. I’m thinking in Korean and I produce in English.
Dr. Aiden also described the dissertation as a “learning process”. For her, learning related to language, her “academic training” in English, as well as learning the style of writing in English, which, for her, marked a shift in thinking, a cultural shift. While the Korean language and culture remain a part of who she is, outside of academia, learning English, thinking in English, writing in English, and teaching in English are her “reality”. To succeed as a doctoral student and professional in an Anglophone country, Dr. Aiden learned to maintain and navigate, and continues to negotiate, her many identities. Language is her means of contextually derived self-expression.

**Dr. Varkey’s Identity**

When I asked Dr. Varkey, “do you see yourself as a writer?”, he responded, “Not too much. I think it’s not something we develop enough or in a very good way, and I, personally, have to put like, extra efforts or to ask for help anytime I’m writing something like, serious”. From his response, I interpret that seeing oneself as a writer is not the same as having a writer identity. For Dr. Varkey, to express his identity in writing is to reflect his voice, his expression through language, which helps him establish meaning, value, and purpose. In English, this is not possible. Though Dr. Varkey has produced a thesis in English, the dissertation, for him, has more meaning and value to his local, national, and Latin American communities. The language of the dissertation must reflect the identities not only of himself but of the audience for whom he is writing. Identity through writing, for Dr. Varkey, is not about becoming an academic and participating in the world of global academia. His identity as a professional and as an influencer in education relies on his use of Spanish language to represent his and his culture’s way of thinking. To see Dr. Varkey is to see him in Spanish.
While Dr. Varkey expresses the need for English in global communication, he does not perceive English as appropriate for the dissertation, which serves a local need. Unlike Dr. Aiden, Dr. Varkey does not frequently navigate identities or negotiation languages, meaning he does not see himself as becoming someone else in different contexts. He did not experience the cultural shift as deeply as Dr. Aiden, and since he remains in his home country of Argentina, where English is less common, he maintains personal and professional identities that use Spanish for common purposes.

**Dr. Zacharia’s Identity**

Though Dr. Zacharia identifies as a native English speaker, she recognizes herself as bicultural and bilingual. She is fluent in Arabic and learned the language as a child but said, “I tend to think in English”. Her background, having an Egyptian father and a Scottish mother, meant she was raised within Arabic and Scottish cultures and used Arabic and English simultaneously. However, her knowledge of these languages did not automatically transfer to a writing identity.

If I was to sort of take myself out of myself and look at the whole experiences, the third party, and even in Arabic, we were never really taught to read and write, so in neither language was I taught reading and writing skills […] what I used in school was very different from what I use for my post graduate studies. So from the perspective of them, to language users of three language […] I think it’s a very different experience.

In this statement, she uses her knowledge of two languages and cultures and her inexperience with learning reading and writing skills to perceive the challenges of multilingual students. She stated, “I was never taught to write properly […] so when I did my masters, I did my doctorate, it was always self-taught”. Writing in English, Dr. Zacharia said,
I always felt that I was able to express myself, I felt that I owned what I wrote [...] I don’t think that it’s in any way was an obstacle to me, feeling that I didn’t express myself or I wasn’t able to fully take ownership of what I wrote.

While she did feel that she could express herself, which this study shows is important to students writing in English, her challenges of being “self-taught” and lacking instruction exacerbated her struggles with academic writing and language. She expressed difficulty using academic English.

Of her doctoral education, Dr. Zacharia said,

The struggle was real, from the language used, the terminologies, all the way through to the type of writing. [...] It was putting it in academic writing, putting what I wanted to say in academic writing. So navigating the language in academia. But it always felt there was a rite of passage, you know, to join the world of academia.

The challenge to “join the world of academia” for Dr. Zacharia—"It’s two things. It’s the writing, but it’s also the language and academia”. These challenges with academic English are for a native English speaker. Data from this study suggest that English serves multiple functions in academic contexts—as the language of writing, which requires academic English and a different self—and as the language of communication, such as speaking at conferences or teaching, where English is more content-based than reflective of the cultural style and shift evident and required in writing.

The perception of language as a barrier, in this study, relates to writing, but also to the perception of multilingual doctoral students’ abilities and intellectual capacity. As Dr. Zacharia noted, “I think it’s dangerous because some time language can be a barrier to them, to an individual, being able to fully express their intellect or their thought”. International students who struggle with writing in English may be perceived as having an intellectual deficit because they
have not been taught “to develop their vocabulary, their style of writing, and their ability to step outside culture and use language independent of their cultural perspective”. Dr. Zacharia added, “And, it was like, they needed to change two lenses in order to be able to write in a manner that was acceptable to the university”.

The phrase “change two lenses” reflects Dr. Aiden’s experience and her comments about international students having “two faces”. The expectation is that non-native English speaking students—I use the term here purposefully to highlight the experience of othering—must change to be successful in doctoral programs. Change may be a natural, expected part of doctoral student growth; however, for multilingual students, university standards, English as “the global standard norm” (Dr. Aiden’s words), and the lack of choice to write in a native language, force inequitable cultural, language, and identity shifts.

Dr. Zacharia commented on a student who had the option of pursuing her doctorate from a high quality, Arabic-speaking university where she could have studied and written in her native language with much greater success. The student, however, chose to study in the UK and write in English. She said:

I think that the language being associated with a culture that is perceived as scientific and better, I think gives a sense of prestige. […] Instead of doing the degree from an Arab speaking university, she did it from an English-speaking one, again, because of the perceived prestige and quality to an English speaking university. Where, she could have very easily done it in any two languages because she was fluent Arabic, fluent English. Where there is a lack, whether of resources or the perception of prestige, English language and its cultural capital, its dominance of mainstream higher education fields, plot the trajectory for
many doctoral students and demand linguistic and cultural identity shifts for which they are not
prepared.

**Dr. Navarro’s Identity**

Dr. Navarro is a native Spanish speaking sociologist from Peru who not teaches at a
university in the United States. Prior to moving to the US, he had no exposure to English except
when traveling in Japan for a few months. His writing style developed from the “Baroque,
ornate” style of Spanish to the “flat, dry” English that he uses in sociology. Dr. Navarro, like
many other participants in this study, experienced the challenge of thinking in his native
language while learning to write in English. His perspective on language and writing, however,
deviate from some participant’s experiences. Dr. Navarro sees English in academia as discipline
and research-specific, much like Dr. Aiden, and recognizes English as a form a global
communication. Yet, Dr. Navarro’s argument is more language-inclusive when compared to
academics and knowledge production.

While writing his dissertation, Dr. Navarro described his identity development as “that of
an ethnographer”. Much like Dr. Aiden, he attributes his English writing development to his field
of sociology but also to ethnography. His identity as an ethnographer shaped his voice in very
different ways than other participants.

In ethnography, you try to very specifically separate your voice from the narration. In
fact, there’s a technique specifically for that. […] the idea is that in the end, when you
read it, when somebody else reads it, they can separate your kind of, your biases from the
writer, from the observation itself. […] you really have to use very specific techniques to
not to contaminate the description with your own kind of, you know, philosophy or ideas
[…] the point is to become, as much as possible, machine, observation machine.
When describing the identity of an ethnographer, Dr. Navarro’s analysis reminded me of Dr. Aiden’s example of international students having “two faces, two personalities, two identities”.

The identity of an ethnographer is, essentially, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde when you have two persons. So I can have my ideas, my beliefs, my, you know, mental routines and so on, but as an ethnographer, I have to […] put all those things on the side and just become a neutral observer and describe things in a most neutral way possible.

Dr. Navarro’s role as a researcher and his training in ethnography decide his style of writing and his approach to reporting. Unlike previous participants, he reported no issues with self-expression or representing his voice because as an ethnographer, he was not supposed to. When discussing his dissertation, he said, “the dissertation was not very good, really. The ethnography was good but the dissertation was not very good”. This was not because of the writing, he explained, “the writing was fine, I got good comments about that”. Dr. Navarro struggled with aligning his data and theory.

As I mentioned previously in this chapter, Dr. Navarro sees translation as rather “straightforward”, depending on the content, type of writing, and language. As a self-described “observation machine”, Dr. Navarro did not struggle with writing in English, as the writing was objective and neutral as opposed to expressive of his own ideas or voice. Thus, the discipline, the academic training, and the role of the researcher—even the type of research (qualitative or quantitative) assign specific expectations to writers.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter Four was to provide an overview of the data generation process, to report on survey and interview data, analyze and interpret the data, and narrate a storyline of participants’ experiences. The role of the researcher as interpreter becomes evidence in Chapter
Four, as it is the researcher’s purpose and intent to engage and interact closely and often with the data in order to analyze and interpret meaning of participants’ experiences. Interpretation and analysis, as well as close and thorough reading, achieved through memoing and multiple phases of coding, help the researcher identify emergent themes, which allow her to construct theories. Representing participants’ authentic voices, using their own language and statements, was a critical step in understanding meaning and constructing theories from the data.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand multilingual doctoral students writing practices, perceptions and use of language, and writing experience in doctoral study. Further, the study intended to add to the body of knowledge in the field of ELF and ELFA. This final chapter presents a summary of the study, discusses emergent themes, presents theories constructed from the data, offers recommendations for future research, and includes a reflection from the researcher. The chapter also includes information about reflexivity, triangulation, and data saturation, as they pertain to constructivist grounded theory and the researcher’s process.

Research Summary

Global dominance of English in the twenty and twenty-first centuries has grown parallel with the massification and internationalization of higher education. English proficiency has become a requirement for many international students studying abroad in Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries, or even in their home countries, where the perception of a “Western” degree is considered prestigious. The spread of English into higher education, and into doctoral programs specifically, and the resulting homogenization of programs, influences the ways students think, produce in writing, and negotiate and develop their identities.

Data from this study suggest that language homogenization limits students to a single form of cultural expression, thus constrains their capacity for authentic self-expression. Multilingual students for whom English is not their first language also experience language, writing, and program barriers and must negotiate identities in ways native English-speaking students do not. Though English may be perceived as a useful communication tool among speakers who do not share a common language, English disadvantages students who are not native speakers or who do not possess the cultural capital of English fluency.
Chapter One provided an overview of the issues of English dominance in higher education, specifically as it relates to the massification of higher education, globalized international program markets that use English as the medium of instruction and production, as well as the threat English poses to other languages. Additionally, the relationship between English and identity development throughout the writing process, along with the voices and senses of authorship students develop, were central to issues in Chapter One. Regarding writing specifically, Chapter One also discussed the general challenges of academic writing, approached academic writing as “no one’s first language”, and addressed the barrier to completion—the dissertation—that plagues many doctoral students.

Data in this study report international participants’ attitudes toward the prevalence of English as an international language and highlight the distinctions between spoken and written English as a lingua franca in higher education. Survey data and interviews provided relevant, timely context to the issues in Chapter One, and as this was an international comparative study, participants represent diverse, global perspectives. Further, data generated helped address the research questions posed in Chapter One, which have been reiterated below. All participants in the current study who do not speak English as their first language have been influenced by English in higher education programs. This study reveals insightful information that will encourage future research to investigate more deeply the experiences of multilingual doctoral students writing in English, internationally.

**Research Question Review**

(1) Why do students write dissertations in English?

(2) How do doctoral students perceive identity negotiation while writing dissertations in English?
(3) How do doctoral students perceive authorial voice development while writing dissertations in English?

(4) What are students’ attitudes toward using English to write dissertations?

Overview of the Study

The question I sought to answer when I began this study was why doctoral students who do not speak English as a first language write their dissertations in English. As I began to explore the literature that might support the answer to the question, worlds of identity theory, linguistics, psychology, power, symbolic capital, and culture opened to me. I realized the question I sought to answer was far more complex than I ever imagined, which encouraged me to think more deeply—what happens to students when they write in English as a non-native language and undertake such a massive, emotionally and psychologically distressful task as writing a dissertation. While experiencing my own identity revelations, writing and reading in English as a native speaker, to fathom that experience and the further strain on process and identity became a challenge of empathy for me.

Almost immediately, the research became personal; not to me, but as a passion. As I became more aware of the issues I was tackling with my questions, informed by a deep-and-wide investment in literature, my thinking and purpose evolved. The grounded theory approach offered me the flexibility to let participants’ voices and experiences speak—they are the data, and the theory I constructed is grounded in them. From the data, I adapted to the needs and gaps that emerged. In-depth interviews provided the depth of perspective I needed to form and fulfill the study’s purpose, and the meaning-making process was arduous and rewarding.

To live inside of participants’ experiences, via our conversations and expressions in the survey, and to understand these experiences alongside the literature, informed my interpretation and understanding. The global perspective was also humbling and awoke me to future research
and policy needs. Johnson (2014) comments that the flexibility and sympathetic social origins of constructivist grounded theory intensify levels of meaning and enable synthesis. Grounded theory, my own informed perspectives, and my rejection of a single, objective reality allow the truth of the data to be central to this study, which ultimately questioned dominant practices and accepted truths in global higher education.

**Reflexivity**

Johnson (2014) writes, “The ways in which social actors understand and interpret what constitutes their environmental reality reflects their subjectivity and reflexivity” (p. 128). Researchers in constructivist grounded theory are actors and meaning-makers, which encourages and enables interpretation (Johnson, 2014). As an actor, interpreter, and meaning-maker within the current study, I bring my own assumptions and values, which I have chosen to recognize as a positive influence—not as a limitation. Important to note is that I am a monolingual, native English speaker in the process of earning a doctoral degree. I entered into this study with no preconceived notions, experiences, nor expectations regarding participants’ experiences. A focus on multilingual writers, which I am not, allowed me to remain objective and receptive to data since I share no experiences with participants. To address reflexivity in this study, I will use Gentles et al. (2014) five types of researcher interaction.

**Researcher Influence: Design and Decisions**

As a novice researcher with a writing and creative-writing background, I was interested in conducting a qualitative study that afforded rich, thick description. Further, early in doctoral study as I was learning different methodological approaches, I decided to employ a grounded theory approach. An investigation into grounded theory led me to Charmaz and a constructivist design. Knowing that I intended to conduct a study that represented diverse, international
perspectives related to writing in English, I knew the flexibility of CGT would be an appropriate approach because it would focus on participants’ experiences and support their unique realities. As I engaged extensively with literature and commenced data collection, I revised the research questions and adjusted my approach to interviews, guiding the conversation with follow-up questions rather than following a script. These changes kept the data and participants as the focus of the study.

**Researcher-participant Interaction**

My only interaction with participants was during Zoom interviews. While listening to participants, I took notes, formulated follow-up questions, and considered their responses alongside survey data. I was also aware of myself as a native English speaker interacting with speakers who use English as an additional language. To ensure I represented participants’ perceptions and responses authentically, I would ask clarifying questions and check for meaning. As I transcribed the interviews, I listened to the recorded interview, read the transcript generated by Zoom, and edited the text line-by-line. Then, I compared this information with my notes to ensure I represented participants’ meaning.

**Researcher Influence: Analysis**

In grounded theory, theoretical sensitivity serves as a form of reflexivity (Gentles et al., 2014). One example is the practice of theoretical comparison. Since I share few experiences with the participants, aside from writing a dissertation and some experience with translation, there was little that was similar. However, I interpret theoretical comparison here as my perception of the differences between our experiences, which helped me “see ways the conceptual phenomenon in question can vary” (Gentles et al., 2014, p. 10). Throughout the interview
process, referring to and between survey and interview data, I remained sensitive and open to emergent or changing themes and patterns.

**Researcher Influence on Writing**

As this was an international comparative study, most participants are not in the same country, however, I still maintained anonymity by using pseudonyms in the report. Should participants express interest in reading the dissertation, their identities are protected. Regarding reflexivity and audience beyond participants in the study, I am not concerned with self-censorship, thus I write open and honestly.

**Influence on the Researcher**

The experience of conducting an international comparative and giving voice to participants’ experiences was humbling and complicated. I realized that this study is the beginning of a life-long research journey to understand the many branches of thought and experience that have grown from this one endeavor. Though I entered this study confident as a writer, with some experience using Zoom for my profession, my confidence grew with each interview. I became more aware of participants’ needs as well as my own with each new conversation. Though taking notes was important to comparing data and editing transcripts, I found that it was more important to listen than to take copious notes. Through listening, I demonstrated interest and engagement and felt much more connected to participants as a person than as a researcher. Overall, this study shook my identity, my own perceptions of reality, and my future research interests, at their cores.

**Survey Data Summary and Comparison**

An online survey collected data from 29 participants representing 17 different countries and 14 different languages. All participants, except for one, wrote their dissertations in English.
Further, nearly all participants attended a university where English was the medium instruction, regardless of its geographic location and official or native language status. The diverse population of students, countries, and languages in this study suggest that on nearly every continent, English has become the language of reality for doctoral students.

Open ended questions asked students to describe their writing practices, writer identity, voices, and authorship. I also asked participants about their exposure to English and English usage prior to commencing doctoral study. While interpreting, analyzing, and comparing data, I learned that students perceived themselves as having a writer identity and felt ownership of their work through the voices they developed in English; however, writing practices among students who did not possess the fluency to think in English participated in grueling reading, writing, and translating practices to make meaning of their writing. Among students representing diverse cultures and knowledge traditions, and who did not have the privilege of learning English fluently prior to doctoral study, writing the dissertation became a negotiation of language, culture, and thought, which affected how students perceived and developed their identities.

**Interview Data Summary and Comparison**

Interview data aided in the generation process by offering opportunities for deep, rich discussion. As I was not able to meet students face to face, due to the nature of the study, Zoom interviews sufficed. I met with four participants, each representing unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Dr. Varkey and Dr. Navarro are Spanish speakers from Argentina and Peru, respectively. My conversations with them provided unique insights into the perspective and use of English in Latin America, where autonomous intellectual markets are more common. Dr. Zacharia, a bilingual professional who works between the UK and Dubai, gave voice to Arabic-speaking student experiences. As an English and Arabic speaker who works as a mentor to
Arabic-speaking doctoral students, Dr. Zacharia detailed a very different perception of English language and western culture in the Middle East, one far removed from the experiences of Dr. Varkey and Dr. Navarro. Finally, Dr. Aiden is an educator from South Korea and speaks Korea as her first language. Dr. Aiden’s experiences represented higher education practices in South Korea, which helped explain why she pursued doctoral study in the United States, having no prior experience with English.

Each interview participant added depth to the study. Their stories and experiences corroborated survey data, which assisted the emergence of themes. Together, the survey and interview data helped me begin to understand why doctoral students write their dissertations in English, how they negotiate identities and establish authorship in their writing, and their attitudes toward English. While the populations represented in this study are diverse, many of the students experienced similar challenges and barriers writing in English, while attitudes toward English varied and were often context specific. What emerged from the data, collectively, were the importance of meaningful expression, the role of culture, and the bond of language and thought that must work together for students to achieve their writing goals.

**Emergent Themes**

Data from 29 surveys and transcripts from four, one-hour-long interviews provided me a wealth of information. My first task was to read and begin to understand students’ experiences and perspectives, considering how they articulated and expressed themselves to answer questions. Using a grounded theory approach, I spent significant time with the reading the data, memoing, coding, and interpreting meaning. Further, I grouped survey data based on responses to geographic location, confidence writing in English, language proficiency, and challenges. I then compared participants’ languages and geographic locations to the responses they reported to
understand meaningful relationships between language and experience. Interviews spanned a two month period, which allowed me to adjust questions as necessary. Identifying gaps in the data helped me to determine effective methods to fill gaps as I continued data generation. As interview data and survey data was collected over a four-month period, I revisited preexisting data, compared it with the new data, and continued this process of generation, comparison, and analysis, until I reached a level of saturation appropriate for a doctoral research study.

Before I was able to identify the themes that emerged from the data, I engaged in a meaning-making process from the data I collected. To understand participants’ voices and experiences, I analyzed their challenges against the existing literature relevant to the study. This practice helped formulate my interpretation of meaning and supported the emergence of themes, detailed below.

- Culture specific attitudes toward English in academic
- Writing in English is rarely a choice and affects agency
- Cultural and linguistic capital influence how students experience dissertation writing
- Multilingual students negotiate identity and authorship more complexly
- Native language is critical to thought and authentic self-expression in writing
- English as a lingua franca and as a culture free are questionable

These themes demonstrate how English dominance not only controls the means of production in higher education but also challenges and disadvantages students whose first language is not English. While writing a dissertation does have field-specific requirements for researcher representation, students still strive to create writing that is meaningful and authentically representative of their intellectual capacity, which English restricts. Further, the widespread use of English for research and publication determines how and where students choose to participate
in higher education, restricting their options geographically. English-dominant resources also influence how students negotiate and define identity and authorship. Regardless of home country or native language, participants in this study revealed that, globally, the meaning of English as a communication tool has much deeper implications for doctoral students writing in English as a non-native language.

Discussion

The discussion portion of this chapter considers participants experiences and responses as I interpret my perception of meaning and align themes with theory and construct theory. Headings in this section represent emergent themes. I have organized the discussion to draw a specific conclusion about English as true international language, or lingua franca, thus the preceding headings and discussion help support the final theory to emerge.

Culture-Specific Attitudes toward English in Academia

English is an international language in that it is used internationally by native and multilingual speakers. Often, English is a common language used among individuals who do not share a common language, which further supports its function as an international language. The many varieties of English that have developed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries also signify ownership of English for the populations in which those varieties have developed. Varieties of English also exist outside of the standards or norms prescribed by British or American English, and in spoken or casual written exchanges, participants focus less on formal language and structure. In such contexts, English has the power to connect people to people and people to information and experiences around the world without the expectations of “native competency” to participate in meaningful communication.
In higher education, however, the use of English is different. The many varieties of English may exist in social situations, such as conferences or in education programs, but concerning the means of production—writing—English dominates, and the stigma of native standards persists. Globally, students pursue doctoral programs in English, understanding that the medium of instruction, the resources, and the dissertation and defense or viva will all be in English. The expectations for students to write using formal academic English, to understand academic language and jargon, and to produce writing that is acceptable to university and international publication standards. Few students enter doctoral study will these levels of proficiency.

Thus, students know the expectations. They are aware of how they must write, even if they do not have the English background to perform at the expected level of academia. How students perceive English throughout this process is an excellent starting point for understand the choices they make, the agency they possess, and identities they negotiate, and the limitations of their expression. Attitudes toward English also frames the discussion section, and I will return to the nature of English as a lingua franca at the end of the discussion.

Students recognize that English is necessary to participate in global scholarship and to add to the body of knowledge. Doctoral students also perceive English as useful or challenging depending on their field and their academic goals. English, therefore, has a function in higher education that allows students to contribute knowledge to their fields. Attitudes toward English are also culturally specific. Certain countries or regions offer varying degrees of social, cultural, and linguistic capital to multilingual speakers, which influence access to English and how participants perceive English.
Participants from Arabic-speaking countries, such as Syria and Egypt, perceive English as prestigious—the language represents social and professional currency. To access mobility within their home countries, Arabic-speaking students with access study abroad in Western institutions because of the prestige associated with Anglophone countries, programs, and English. Those who cannot travel abroad pursue doctoral study in English-speaking institutions within their home countries, even if they have access to a higher quality, Arabic-medium program. The attitude toward English is that it is a commodity. Thus, English has social, cultural, and professional status that does not exist in countries where access to English may be integrated into academic and social life, such as in Nordic or north European countries.

The Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden have populated their higher education programs with “international programs”, which use English. These countries recognize English as a foreign language learned throughout primary and secondary education, thus students have achieved near-native fluency by the time they enter doctoral study. In northern European countries, English does not have prestigious associations nor social capital because it already exists as part of reality. Access to the language, that is, access to competence, is less of a challenge for students in these countries. Thus, English is just another language these students call upon in specific contexts.

In Asian countries, such as Korea and China, attitudes toward English shift again. Participants from Korea and China, who had virtually no social and limited academic access to English prior to doctoral study, see English connected strictly to their fields and professions. English offered these participants an opportunity to develop themselves, contribute knowledge, and find success publishing and teaching in English. While their conversational knowledge of
English beyond context-specific fields may be limited, these participants flourished and successfully navigated new professional identities through the use of English in academia.

The last geographic locations with differing attitudes are from the Latin American countries of Peru and Argentina. Autonomous knowledge markets in Latin America indicate the spread of English has been slower. Those positioned in social classes that have access to English will access English; however, integration into education equivalent to Nordic countries has not been achieved. Participants from these countries recognize the need for English and believe that students in Latin America should learn English, but they were also adamant about ensuring knowledge production, globally, is not limited to English. Participants from Latin American countries were the only participants to speak to the importance of knowledge production in other languages and perceived English as important for communicating in certain fields, only.

Regarding native language, it is also important to note that participants with Romantic native languages, such as Spanish and Italian, held stronger attitudes against English because of its expressive limitations. I discuss this further in another section of this chapter; however, this connection suggests that language and culture share an identity component.

Data from this study suggest that attitudes toward English vary geographically and, in some countries, have cultural significance. The access participants have to English also shapes their attitudes. Those with greater access, and at little cost, such as in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark, had fewer reactions to English because English has already become a part of their reality—a part of who they are. Most participants did not have the access to English that is available in Nordic countries, for example; therefore, English becomes a commodity, something that must be acquired.
Writing in English: Choice versus Agency

While participants in this study had varying attitudes toward English, all were required to write their dissertations in English except one. The discussion of “choice” is complicated here because on the surface, it seems there is no choice but to write in English since nearly all participants reported this requirement. The deeper issues of concern here are where students pursue doctoral study, why so many programs are in English, and the challenges of writing a dissertation in one’s native language, were the choice available. Ultimately, the question considers how students access agency when given no choice in their language of dissertation production.

Participants wrote their dissertations in English for two reasons: they studied in Anglophone countries, where there was no question but to write in English, or, they participated in international programs, where the medium of instruction is English. A less stated but relevant third reason is that nearly all acclaimed, international publications in top-tier journals require submissions English. Thus, a greater challenge for students would be to write in their native languages when everything they need to participate in discourse is in English.

Not only has the prevalence of English infiltrated programs and deemed them “international” or reached a level of perceived “prestige” that students have no choice but to write in English to be socially and professionally mobile—its prevalence also forces students to write in English because everything they read is in English. To write a dissertation in one’s native language would require a massive translation undertaking to represent English-language sources in one’s native language. The single participant who chose to write his dissertation in Spanish noted the lack of quality resources in Spanish and referenced the process of translating all English resources into Spanish to write his dissertation. A participant from Korea said she
would not have moved to the US for doctoral study, had the resources been available in Korean. The same is true for Arabic-speaking participants who pursue English degrees for prestige, thus do not consider studying in their native languages, period.

To answer the research question: why do students write their dissertations in English, the answer is both clear and complex—because they are required to for reasons beyond their control. Based on the views of participants and my interpretation of their experiences and responses, I see no choice for students to write in any language besides English. Unless the individual’s goal is to remain in one’s home country, working almost exclusively with speakers of one’s native language, there is no choice. And for 28 participants in this study, that was not the case. Even without a choice, however, participants achieve a sense of agency. They achieve agency through complex identity negotiations and their perceptions of ownership in their writing.

**Identity and Authorship: Complex Negotiations for Multilingual Students**

Most participants reported experiencing a sense of writer identity throughout the dissertation process. Data suggests that writer identity emerged through voice representation and feeling a sense of authorship with the writing they produced. Authorship represented their respected voices, which emerged from the writing, or through the use of resources, which required students to make meaning of reading and to align themselves within a discourse. Reading and writing, for many participants, influenced a discourse identity, which positioned them within their fields. While writing in English did pose challenges with authenticity and self-expression, that aspect of identity is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The purpose of exploring writer identity when writing in English as a non-native language was to understand if and how doctoral students experienced a writer identity throughout the dissertation process. The identities participants perceived either positioned them
within their fields by adding to bodies of knowledge or as becoming professionals. Thus, the strongest sense of identity to emerge was a discourse identity. Research methodology, research field, and the writing conventions associated with specific fields influenced identity development. As students researched and wrote to position themselves within their respective fields and professions, they learned the language (jargon) and style (conventions) associated with their field. The methodology, such as an ethnographer, also shaped how students perceived their identities and voices in their writing.

In these ways, discourse greatly influenced the process of becoming for participants in this study. My interpretation of students’ experiences and descriptions of their identities, in part, suggests that the writer identity is an identity that develops beyond the true self—as one participant described, beyond the “person person”. The discourse, academic, or professional identity is an identity that exists in English exclusively because of how identities develop in context- and content-specific environments of their fields and research methods. A discourse identity in English, specifically, is an extension or a branch of the autobiographical self.

Another aspect of identity emerged as well, which is specific to multilingual students. While the study does suggest the development of a discourse identity, the identities are in English, which means discourse and knowledge exchanges occur and continue to occur in English only. When considering “choice”, students do not have the choice to develop a discourse identity in their native languages. Further, to participate in becoming a scholar in a mainstream field of academia with global representation, multilingual students must abandon their native languages AND cultures to immerse themselves in English language and culture.

Multilingual students must navigate and negotiate multiple identities throughout doctoral study, including: native language and cultural identity (which some choose to abandon);
social/conversational identity in English; academic language/writer identity in English. As multilingual students use English in various contexts from social interactions, to reading, to writing, the form of English they must learn and use shifts with each new context. Meanwhile, native English speakers shift between conversational and academic English when speaking and writing but do not participate in the cultural loss or shift that multilingual students experience.

In gaining a discourse identity in English, multilingual students risk losing their native language and cultural identities. As noted, some go so far as to abandon their native languages and cultures. Difficult to accept is that this is the expectation—for students to perceive English as the language and culture of their academic experience and to step outside of their autobiographical selves. The process of achieving a discourse identity in English also requires additional processes, such as language learning and translation, which impede progress and disadvantage multilingual students, compared to native English speaking students. So while students in this study report feeling a sense of identity and authorship upon completing their dissertations, they also noted the challenges, limitations, and shortcomings of having to represent themselves, authentically, in a non-native language. To perceive English as a neutral and culture-free language is to choose not to see the systemic inequity and disadvantages that are very real for multilingual students. Students are unable to represent their full intellectual capacity in English, which implies that English restricts multilingual students’ opportunities for identity development in doctoral study, which I explore in more detail in the following section.

**Language, Thought, and Self-Expression: A Critical Juncture**

This study shows that multilingual doctoral students do experience a sense of writer identity, which they achieve through reading and writing practices and by establishing a sense of authorship. The process of negotiating identity, however, also involves a culturally,
psychologically, and linguistically informed practice of achieving meaning in another language. Many participants noted the challenge of feeling they could not express themselves in English, which explains the disconnect between thinking in a native language and writing in English. Further, moving between a native language and English, from thinking to writing, not only involves translation processes—there are also cultural shifts that must occur, as well as grammatical and syntactical challenges that complicate the thinking and writing processes exponentially. For multilingual students who do not possess near-native fluency in English, writing in English poses challenges in thinking and composing meaningful expressions that represent the writers’ authentic identities while satisfying university standards.

My interpretation of writers’ experiences in this study suggests that multilingual writers are not attempting to achieve desired meaning in English, their target language (TL) of production. Instead, English is the vehicle that must communicate and convey the meaning writers are attempting to express in their native language (NL). Many participants explained that their writing practices connect directly to their thinking practices, and they are not thinking in English because they do not have the fluency to think in English. This means the thinking and writing processes pass through a native language filter to achieve a satisfactory “meaning outcome” in English. Participants are more concerned with the meaning in native languages, in translation, than in the target language. What they write in English should closely reflect the meaning in their native languages. To produce directly in English is nearly impossible for some aspects of the dissertation, especially when working with analysis, discussion, and data collected in the writer’s native language, so the meaning-making and writing process involves translation, transfer, and language filters to achieve a satisfactory outcome in both languages.
Theory Construction

Identity theory expands many fields, such as sociology and psychology, which support developmental-contextual identity formation processes. Further, identity is fluid and negotiable, which means it is constantly in flux and may be contextually derived. Data from the current study support that participants’ experiences with identity development and negotiation are contextually derived but also connect psycholinguistically to how participants’ use and navigate language in their writer identities, which they develop and negotiate throughout doctoral study. To construct the Theory of Meaningful Productive Performance and the Multilingual Context-Synthesis Identity Theory, I drew upon Ivanič’s (1998) theory of the four-part identity, Sedikides and Brewer’s (2001) tripartite identity theory, Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of the “whole social self”, as well as Selinker’s (1972) interlanguage theory, and the translinguaging theory, as it has been expanded upon by Li Wei (2011) and Lewis et al. (2012). Further, Ivanič (2004) and Gee’s (1989) writing on D/discourse, as well as Halliday’s (1994) approach to text and context, help unify the theories’ many facets.

The influence of these writers supports that identity negotiation in writing and social contexts is complex, and for multilingual writers, has important cultural and linguistic properties that may not affect as strongly writers who are using English as a native language. Thus, the theories I have constructed represent strategies and processes for multilingual students who are writing with the intent to produce meaningful expression in native and target languages, as well as the identities that contribute to, influence, and emerge from these processes.

Multilingual Context-Synthesis Identity Theory

Bourdieu (1977) writes of “the whole social person” (p. 653), whereas Ivanič (1998) refers to the autobiographical self, which has a “prior social history” (p. 24). Sedikides and
Brewer (2001) developed the tripartite self, which attempts hierarchical order of the individual, relational, and collective selves; however, Sedikides et al. (2011) consider contextual primacy, which asserts that the self fluctuates between individual, relational, and collective, in response to contextual features. Halliday (1994) characterizes text as “language functioning within context” (p. 22), while Ivanič (2004) proposes a multi-layered view of language, where text is central. Ivanič (2004) and Gee (1989) consider discourse and Discourse as they relate to identity.

Thus, for a multilingual student, “the whole social person” comprises many selves but also develops a writing self, an academic persona, a discoursal self, in the process of meaning-making via participation in interlanguage and translanguaging processes. From Bourdieu, Ivanič, and Sedikides and Brewer, Halliday, and Gee, I constructed the Multilingual Context-Synthesis Theory, which is a model that represents the autobiographical self as the “whole social person”—the person that exists prior to entering doctoral study, and who fluidly exchanges, transfers, and negotiates among cultural and discoursal identities.

At the core of the model is context identity synthesis, which represents the process of becoming for a multilingual doctoral student writing in English. I chose the term “synthesis” for two definitions: 1) the composition or combination of parts to form a whole; 2) the combining of diverse conceptions into a coherent whole (Merriam-Webster, 2021). As noun form (a synthesis) and verb form (the act of combining), the term best represents identity as a state of being and as a constant, fluid process.

The sense of becoming is informed by seamless interaction among the cultural self (language) and the discoursal self, which I define as a situated identity informed by reading, writing, and social practices throughout doctoral study. As identity is constantly in flux, and as multilingual students draw upon two or more languages and engage in D/discourse to develop
their identities and make meaning, they form a split identity—one representing the autobiographical self, which maintains native language and culture, and one that represents a newly formed cultural self, representing the target language (English), and the discoursal self, which is the identity related to a specific field or discipline. The autobiographical self is not static, however; therefore, it is affected by new cultural, linguistic, and discoursal practices. The context-synthesis identity—the identity formed in the target language (English) is contextually based and a synthesis of the preexisting autobiographical self, as well as cultural (language) and discoursal practices in the target language. Figure 1 represents the theory visually.

Figure 1

Multilingual Context-Synthesis Identity Theory

The text, the dissertation, is the reason for these identities and languages processes. Halliday (1994) writes, “Language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning; so text is a process of making meaning in context” (p. 22). The dissertation represents action,
production, and reproduction for doctoral students. Participation in doctoral education
commences identity and language negotiations. Ivanič (2004) places “text” at the center of her
multi-layered view of language to represent the “linguistic substance of language” as well as
“material” (p. 222-223). Cognitive processes, the second layer of Ivanič’s (2004) model, connect
to Halliday (1994) by demonstrating more broadly “what is happening” in the production and
comprehension of language. The dissertation is a text, a material object of linguistic substance,
which serves to represent “the whole social person” the doctoral student becomes, the meaning-
making processes, the cultural identity shifts, and the target language, discourse identity.

Gee (1989) refers to the “identity kit” of Discourse, mentioned previously in this study,
which teaches one (through socialization) how to be (including how to write) to satisfy a
particular role others will recognize—for example, a doctoral student emerging as a novice
scholar, well-positioned in the field upon completion of the dissertation (p. 7). The capital “D”
discourse connects to Bourdieu’s whole social person, as Discourse culminates “words, acts,
values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities”, which Gee (1989) considers “ways of being in
the world” (p. 6-7).

Ivanič (2004) introduced six discourses, which align with her multilayered view of
language. The first three discourses, skills, creativity, and process, comprise “the written text”
and “the mental process of writing”, which are the inner and secondary layers of Ivanič’s (2004)
view of language (p. 225). Writing processes that occur within these discourses and layers of
language influence the writing event (the dissertation). Between the mental process and the
writing event, “Writing consists of composing processes in the writer’s mind, and their practical
realization” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). Writing practices, supported by language, cultural, and social
influence, shape the discoursal self. How doctoral students compose sentences in their minds and
realize meaning and expression, encourages the development of the discoursal self, which feeds back into, thus changing, autobiographical and cultural identities. The process is both iterative and fluid. Understanding that identity that is contextually derived, socially, culturally, and discursively shaped, and that identity and writing are mutually influential, is critical to understanding the second emergent theory in this study, the Theory of Meaningful Productive Performance.

**Theory of Meaningful Productive Performance**

To participate in the context-synthesis identity process, a student must exercise interlanguage and translanguage practices, which help construct the second theory I propose: the Theory of Meaningful Productive Performance. To explain this phenomenon, I have constructed a theory built from Selinker’s (1969, 1972) theory of Interlanguage (IL), which I connect to Wei’s (2011) discussion of translanguaging. For Selinker (1972), the process of interlanguage is a separate linguistic system adult language learners activate when they attempt to express meaning in a language they are in the process of learning. Though participants in this study may not identify as English Language Learners (ELL) in the official sense, a learner, to Selinker (1972) represents the 95% of second language learners who do not achieve “native-speaker competence” (p. 212).

Whenever a language learner attempts to produce a sentence in the target language (TL), she activates a latent psychological structure to express meaning (Selinker, 1972). The sentence the writer produces when moving from NL to TL is represented as IL. In this study, the TL is English, and the TL represents one norm. Because university and publication standards expect doctoral students to write using academic English that adheres to American or British standards,
the TL represents the norm and the appropriate conventions that the multilingual writer should achieve.

From Selinker’s (1972) five central processes, I focus on two: language transfer and strategies of second language communication. Selinker (1972) notes that little is known “about strategies which learners of a second language use in their attempt to master a TL and express meaning in it” (p. 219). Thus, I have attempted to construct a theory that represents the language transfer that occurs and the strategies writers use to achieve meaning when moving from their NL to their TL, English. Where I deviate from Selinker is in meaning. Multilingual writers must achieve meaning in both the NL and TL; however, writers are more concerned with how the meaning in English translates back to authentic, self-expressive meaning in the NL.

**Interlanguage.** Selinker (1972) defines three stages of utterances, which I use as the foundation for the theory I have constructed. The use of term “learner” connotes, in my example, a multilingual writer who has not achieved “native-speaker competence” (Selinker, 1972, p. 212).

Selinker’s (1972) Utterance Process:

1. Utterances in the learner’s native language
2. Interlanguage utterances
3. Target language utterances produced by native speakers of the TL (p. 214).

In Selinker’s (1972) utterances, step three represents the norm—what the non-native speaker must achieve, in this case, according to university standards. In my construction, I alter the steps slightly:

Utterance Processes for Meaningful Productive Performance:

1. Utterances in multilingual writer’s native language
(2) Interlanguage utterance (first phase of translation from NL into TL)

(3) Target language utterance produced by multilingual writer

Step one indicates a thinking and/or writing process. The writer thinks in her native language and may write in the NL then translate into English, or she may think in her NL and then write directly using IL to produce a sentence in English. The sentence the writer produces in IL is a raw thought, a first attempt to make meaning. To reach step three, the writer engages in an iterative translation process, during which the sentence produced in IL passes through a “native language filter” to represent meaningful expression in the NL and satisfactory expression in the TL, adhering to conventions, but also subject to further revision from supervisors or editing boards. Figure 2 represents the process visually.
The identities students express in English also represent cultural challenges, which relate both to linguistics and to intercultural rhetoric. As students move between NL and English, they rely on translation practices, through which they attempt to represent NL meaning and TL meaning. The translation process, combined with the theory I have constructed, is best situated in translanguaging, a practical theory of language.

**Translanguaging.** Li Wei (2011) builds a theory of translanguaging that is informed by Williams (1994, 1996), Baker (2006, 2011), Swain (2006), and Garcia (2009), who have all
contributed descriptive features to the translanguaging process. Baker (2011) defines translanguaging as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p. 288; as cited in Lewis et al., 2012, p. 655). Lewis et al. (2012) add that translanguaging is a process multilingual students use to maximize understanding and performance. In Wei’s (2011) approach, translanguaging is an extension of “languaging” in the psycholinguistic sense, which “refers to the process of using language to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate one’s thought and to communicate” (p. 1123). Language, in this process, is a vehicle used to articulate thought, which is transformed into an “artifactual form” (Swain, 2006, p. 97; as cited in Wei, 2011, p. 1223). I interpret the “artifactual form” as the written medium, and in the case of this study, the dissertation.

Wei (2011) contends that translanguaging requires moving between different linguistic structures and systems, which include diverse modes, such as writing and remembering, but also refers to “going beyond them” (p. 1223). To go beyond is to include linguistic performance objectives, such as the representation of values, identities, and relationships (Wei, 2011). Wei (2011) writes, “The act of translanguaging then is transformative in nature,” as it combines personal history, experience and environment, attitude, ideology, and cognition, to create a meaningful performance, which translates as a lived experience (p. 1223). Further, Wei’s (2011) translanguaging also considers the process of “cultural translation” (Bhabha, 1994; as cited in Wei, 2011). Wei (2011) describes cultural translation as more than coexisting identities, values, and practices—the process of cultural translation is the space where these elements combine to generate new identities, values, and practices.

Wei (2011) describes the space as having a “three way dialectic”, defined as cognitive, socio-historical, and cultural dimensions (p. 1223). The cognitive dimension, in which
participants create rules of interaction and interpretation; the socio-historical dimension considers the social space occupied by the self and others, which coexist; and the cultural dimension includes multilingual practices.

Translanguaging, Interlanguage, and my own constructed theories, provide a framework for understanding not only how multilingual doctoral students construct writing in English, but also aids the understanding of the cultural and discoursal identity shifts that exist and are necessary in the writing process. Ultimately, these theories, combined with theories of thought and intercultural rhetoric, further assist my interpretation of the multiple identity phenomenon multilingual students navigate while writing in English as a non-native language.

A final visual demonstrates how the Theory of Meaningful Productive Performance (as a process action) and the Multilingual Context-Synthesis Identity Theory work in tandem to explain identity negotiation from the perspectives of language and identity for multilingual doctoral students. Figure 3 represents the theories together.
The upper, inverted triangle represents a multilingual writer’s native language identity—the identity an individual experiences when using her native language. The native language identity, and all it represents, flows into the target language identity, represented by the lower triangle.

Cross hatching where the triangles intersect serves two functions: 1) it represents the intersection of native- and target-language identities, as these affect and change each other; 2) it signifies the process of meaningful productive performance, where language transfer and writing practices happen. Multilingual contextual-synthesis, though not explicitly labeled in Figure 3, is evident in the symbolic relationships between the writer’s identities and the processes occurring. Just as language, meaning, and expression transfer linguistically as the writer translates and activates language and writing processes, identities also transfer through a process of negotiation in a reciprocal nature.
Writing culture. Concepts of culture, as it applies to rhetoric, have been refined from Kaplan’s (1966) seminal study, as seen in the writing of Connor (2004), Holliday (1999), and Atkinson (2014). Research supports a strong connection between language and culture:

- Language simultaneously reflects culture, and is influenced and shaped by it (Jiang, 2000, p. 328)
- A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 1994, p. 165; as cited in Jiang, 2000, p. 328)
- Language is an expression of culture and individuality of its speakers. It influences the way speakers perceive the world (Akbari, 2013, p. 13).

Wittgenstein (1922) famously stated, “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (p. 74; emphasis in original), which is to say that language and culture help shape an individual’s reality and capacity to engage intellectually with the world. Language limitations mean capacity for expression is also limited, which in turn, limits an individual’s participation and identity representation in writing. For multilingual writers required to write in English, each individual’s English competency signifies the limitation, which I explore later in this chapter. Further, just as doctoral students may not have access to English language, neither do they have the access to “culture” that is necessary to represent the self, one’s full intellectually capacity, in English.

“Culture is more extensive than language” (Nida, 1998, p. 29; as cited in Jiang, 2000, p. 329), thus language must represent culture in multiple ways, for example, through culture-bound expression, syntactic structure and word choice, and knowledge traditions (Akbari, 2013). Using the framework of intercultural rhetoric, which is “the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds” (Connor, 2011, p. 2), combined with the
previous theories proposed in this discussion, I understand that for doctoral students to represent their linguistic and cultural identities in writing, they must practice extensive translation processes while remaining aware of their native cultures and languages AND the TL and culture. And this is never fully achievable.

Connor (2004) argues that intercultural rhetoric is a negotiation between two cultures, but it is a negotiation that must be reciprocal to work. McIntosh et al. (2017) state that in IR, “texts are understood to be interactions between producers and consumers of information, who must both be willing to make adjustments in terms of substance and style to understand one another better” (p. 14). Paired with approaches to English for Academic Purposes and English as a Lingua Franca in Academia, IR pushes for greater acceptance of English varieties in written contexts (McIntosh et al., 2017). However, as Flowerdew (2013) identifies, and as this study supports, “writing in general, and academic writing in particular, tends to be tied to notions of a Standard Written English (SWE) based on British or American norms” (Flowerdew, 2013; as cited in McIntosh, 2017, p. 15), and writing undergoes revision to conform to these standards (Mauranen, 2012).

Participants in this study, along with Flowerdew’s (2013) findings, convey that standards of written English still exist and are enforced upon doctoral students writing and publishing in English. Some students in this study published article-based theses, which had to be prepared and submitted to competitive, English language, international journals. Regardless of the efforts of IR and EFLA to support multilingual and multicultural writers, their identities and writing practices remain constricted and limited by English and English standards.
Competence, Capital, and a Disadvantageous Market

To consider writers and their receivers as “producers and consumers” (McIntosh et al., 2017, p. 14) assumes that they produce for the education market, whether in the form of a dissertation or publication. The market is saturated with English—it is an English market—and, therefore, excludes diverse languages, cultures, and identities. Bourdieu (1977) writes, “when one language dominates the market, it becomes the norm against which the prices of the other modes of expression, and with them the values of the various competencies, are defined” (p. 652). For Bourdieu (1977), the educational system represents the “object of struggle” that has a “monopoly over the production of the mass of producers and consumers, and hence, over the reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends” (p. 652).

Bourdieu (1977) claims that “what speaks […] is the whole social person” (p. 653). In part, this is true, as doctoral students already possess a variety of selves with varying levels of cultural, social, and linguistic capital. Yet, they are expected to negotiate writer identities and compose writing to the standards of American or British English, which limit their expression and intellectual capacity. Combined with the expectations of the university, reality, through the lens of English, changes. As Bourdieu (1977) states:

> material conditions of existence determine discourse through the linguistic production relations which they make possible and which they structure. […] they govern the form of the communication, through the structure of the production relation in which discourse is generated, and which enables certain agents to impose their own linguistic products and exclude other products (p. 653).

The whole social person, in such a controlled and restrictive environment, cannot exist. Further, part of one’s linguistic capital is their English competence, which has been shaped by cultural
and social capital prior to doctoral study. Selinker (1972) predicts that a mere five percent of second language speakers achieve near-native competency, and as Bourdieu (1977) adds, “Dominant competence is the linguistic capital” (p. 654) and “the propensity to acquire the dominant usage is a function of the chances of access to the markets on which that usage has value” (p. 656).

So what are the chances? They vary, based on students’ backgrounds. To determine whether doctoral students actually have a choice and can exercise agency, I must consider the conditions for the establishment of communication, the anticipated conditions of reception, and the conditions of production (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 649). A doctoral student may enter doctoral study by choice, which is an act of agency, but even there, social and professional pressures may encourage this decision. Where students attend university and why may also be a choice, but again, one that has social pressures or circumstances.

To analyze the “conditions for the establishment of communication”, is to assume a student has entered into a doctoral program and communication will be established via a dissertation. This is the producer-consumer relationship. The dissertation is the communication that links producer (student) and consumer (institution/academia). Next is the anticipated conditions of reception—that is, how the dissertation will be received. When considering this, a student’s agency may wane. To think of how others will receive the writing, and aware that those others are in authority positions, a student has little choice but to write in English and to write to meet standards set forth by the university or editorial boards. Finally, the two prior conditions determine the conditions for production, which must be standard American or British English.

A dissertation is what Bourdieu (1977) may refer to as a “legitimate site of expression” (p. 654), and “the form of linguistic production relationship governs the particular content and
form of the expression” (p. 656). Therefore, choice and agency, the opportunity for English variation (much less native language) and cultural style, appear to be controlled and predetermined based on the dominance of English in higher education programs, English as the dominant linguistic means of production for the market, and English as the conditions for production established abstractly through institutions and international publication markets. If not in English, the writing students produce will have no marketable value for the institution nor for their professional mobility. With so little freedom, it is difficult to argue that English is a true lingua franca, which I cover in the final section on this chapter.

**English: A True International Language?**

In the final section of this chapter, I do not intend to revisit the extensive literature available, which defines and discusses English as a lingua franca and English as a lingua franca in academia. The purpose of this section is to argue that while English may be an international language, it is not culture free, due to the fact that it belongs to native speakers around the world. In the ELF context, Gobbo (2015) describes English as a commodity “that does not belong specifically to anybody in particular” (p. 198), which represents an integrated perspective, supported by Jenkins and Siedlhofer, who believe that ELF exists for communication purposes only and involves no identity issues.

Fiedler (2011) and Phillipson (1992), however, see ELF as a language of communication and identity. Data from this study show that students see important connections between thought, culture, and language, and expressed their linguistic and culture challenges related to identity when writing in English. Thus, I argue that to communicate in English as a second or an additional language, or for academic purposes, requires linguistic, cultural, and identity shifts for multilingual doctoral students. I also agree that with Fiedler (2011) that if students must write in
English, the language must offer expressive purpose, but students still require certain levels of competency to master this level of expression, which is not supported in doctoral education. Competency, mastery, fluency—however it is labeled—is not achievable through education, thus must be derived socially, which perpetually disadvantages students with limited access to English. Bourdieu (1977) argues, “practical mastery of language is only acquired in a home environment” (p. 659), and Selinker (1972) states “the second language learner who actually achieves native-speaker competence cannot possibly have been taught this competence” (p. 212-213).

It is not possible for doctoral students who do not speak English as a native language to share the advantages of a native speaker in a global market dominated and controlled by English. While students may appear to make choices, these choices are often dictated by outside social and culture pressures to pursue education and produce writing in English. Further, they engage in additional psycholinguistic processes to attempt to convey meaningful expression in native and target languages, which native English speaking students do not. Multilingual students are expected, required, to step outside of their native languages and cultures, essentially, to cease to be themselves so they can write and become someone else in English, though they have little awareness, without life-long learning of English, to understand this phenomenon. Native English speakers experience the language barrier of writing in academic English, but this is a challenge not far removed from their regular linguistic practices. English as a lingua franca, perceived as neutral and culture-free, is a dangerous concept that threatens students’ success, self-perception, and possibilities for selfhood through writing. Further, the integrated view of ELF perpetuates the homogenization of knowledge produced in only one language and style, limit native language users access to resources. Gobbo (2015) writes notably:
to deal with multilingual matters, the concrete contexts of use of the languages that are part of the linguistic repertoires should be considered, paying attention not only to the language ideology being adopted but also to the perception of the users (p. 202).

**Triangulation**

Jonsen and Jehn (2009) define triangulation as a researcher’s way of thinking, which includes constant cross-check on theories, explanations, methods, data, participants, and the researcher. In grounded theory, triangulation should reduce biases, increase validity and comprehensiveness, and encourage confidence in results (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Further, triangulation may occur throughout the research and data analysis processes, which include employing multiple data collection methods, a variety of perspectives, iterative data collection, and deep reading.

In the current study, I employed the various methods mentioned above to ensure the study was rigorous and valid. Multiple data collection methods, include survey and interview data, provided thorough data from which I constructed a narrative. During the interview process, I checked meaning and interpretation with participants to ensure I represented their thoughts correctly. As this was an international comparative study, participants from across the global provided a variety of perspectives. Months of data collection, including analysis and purposive sampling, ensured I filled gaps and gathered meaningful information from participants. Additionally, a thorough analysis of related literature, prior to, throughout, and following data collection and analysis, informed my epistemological and ontological stances while supporting theme and theory emergency. In grounded theory, the researcher aims to ensure a sufficient link to theoretical considerations. The richness of the data, the depth of the narrative, and the breadth of supportive theory suggest this study has maintained rigor and achieved valid results.
Data and Theoretical Saturation

The goal of grounded theory is to reach saturation, the point at which no new significant insights emerge from the data (Timonen et al., 2018). As a novice researcher and doctoral student writing a dissertation, I had limited time to complete the current study, which influences data and theoretical saturation (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Timonen et al., 2018). This study had significant information power, however, so considering the limited time aspect, I was able to conduct a study and gather data sufficient to theoretical saturation. Timonen et al. (2018) define saturated theory as “heavily contextualized insights”, wherein data “capture the complexity of the processes and interactions” (p. 8). Survey and interview data I collected are contextually-dense and insightful and certainly capture participants’ processes related to writing and their interactions with language.

For the study, I collected 29 participant surveys and conducted five interviews, each lasting an hour. Thus, I argue that my study possesses strong information power, a component of saturation. To increase information power, I addressed the following aspects defined by Aldiabat & Le Navenec (2018): narrowing the study aim through theoretical and purposive sampling; a dense, knowledgeable sample size with backgrounds and experiences that would support the study; broad theoretical background, achieved through a deep-and-wide literature review; quality dialogue, which developed throughout the interview process; and vivid description, conveyed as a storyline (p. 248). Further, my use of triangulation, discussed above, also helped me achieve a saturation level appropriate to the study.

Recommendations for Application and Further Research

This study was conducted to gain insight into international doctoral study and the language practices of multilingual doctoral students writing in English. The audience for this
study is practitioners, scholars, stakeholders, and policymakers in higher education, but may be especially influential to those responsible for designing international programs that host multilingual, multicultural students. Thus, the findings apply to any higher education context where multilingual writers are enrolled.

As English continues to reach around the globe, I hope this study will encourage stakeholders and policymakers to reflect on the students they admit and consider the challenges and barriers multilingual students may be facing when they study and write in English. This study suggests that students who do not use English as a first language enter doctoral study with varying levels of proficiency, which affect their reading and writing habits and their abilities to express themselves in English. While the movement toward international doctoral programs that support students writing in their native languages may not happen soon, doctoral program curriculum and design efforts should support the unique needs of multicultural students and craft curriculum and policies that support linguistic and cultural diversity as it applies specifically to writing.

As for future research, McIntosh et al. (2017) addressed Flowerdew’s (2015) concerns that intercultural rhetoric has not been adequately informed by studies of ELF, stating that their article was a step toward bridging the gap. Additionally, many ELF studies focus on spoken language through the lens of Kachru’s (1992) varieties of English. Though this study did not begin as a study of ELF, it slowly morphed into one, as the purpose became a conglomeration of identity development and negotiation, a consideration of power relations and agency, an exploration of culture, and finally, the role of English as a lingua franca in academia. This study also focuses exclusively on writing practices, which is less explored in ELF research. The emergence of intercultural rhetoric’s value also informed the study, along with psycholinguistic
theories. Thus, the current study contributes a multi-pronged perspective to the field of ELF. But as this study only represents a small population of participants and sought to uncover the many complexities at work in international doctoral education, there is much work yet to be done. The following are recommendations for future research. All recommendations assume the study would be internationally comparative.

- While this study did collect data on participants’ fields of study and professions, it did not consider this information thoroughly in the data analysis. Further research should explore the relationship between doctoral students’ fields of study and their writing identity development, using English, relative to the field.

- Resistance to writing in English does exist in regions such as Latin American, Nordic countries (Finland and Norway), and France. More research is needed to understand why students in these regions are resisting writing in English and how this connects with institutional policy, as it could bring awareness to translanguaging practices, which support multilingual writers.

- The current study explored participant competency in English but did not gather extensive data on participants’ knowledge of nor exposure to English prior to entering doctoral study. A deeper exploration of competency related to cultural and linguistic capital and home country could offer meaningful insights into doctoral students’ challenges with writing in English.

- From this study, psycholinguistic theories emerged. As I do not have a background in psychology nor linguistics, research that considers these fields and relevant theories more specifically would contribute to the body of knowledge of ELF.
• A student’s native language may influence her attitude toward English and her ability to think and write in English. Further research could compare diverse native languages and the challenges students may experience when crafting meaningful, expressive writing in English.

• Finally, the current study did not ask how many languages participants use, how they use them, nor address competency in those languages. As a repertoire of languages could influence how participants think and make meaning between another language and English, additional research could attempt to understand if a relationship exists between levels of multilingual fluency and writing.

Researcher’s Reflection

As a monolingual, Western researcher focusing on the role of English in higher education at an international level, I often felt as if I was perpetuating what I have come to see as a major issue in global higher education—the dominance of English in instruction, writing, and publication. Prior to beginning reading and research for this study, I was unaware of the pervasiveness of English as the standard, as well as what the word “standard” implies and how damaging and dictating a term it remains in writing, language, and identity contexts. As the study and writing of this document concluded, I realized I had much left to learn, and I am committed to pursuing this research further.

Comments from participants and interviews with professionals across the globe have inspired me to consider more deeply the connections between culture, language, writing, and identity, and from an education perspective, and as an educator myself, I am hyper-aware of the role of English in influencing learning and knowledge production across the globe. Language should not be a commodity. Identity, a person’s right to her self, cannot be a right when
controlled and manipulated by capital. As a native English speaker, I recognize that I may use my position to conduct research to explore and understand more deeply the conformist and resistance cultures surrounding English in higher education. I hope this study adds insight to many existing bodies of knowledge, and as an informed student, practitioner, and novice researcher, I intend to engage these topics further.
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