sciendo

Acta Educationis Generalis
Volume 11, 2021, Issue 3

DOI: 10.2478/atd-2021-0018

The Role of a Writing Center in Academic Writing Socialization of Second Language Graduate Students

Osman Solmaz*

Received: June 30, 2020; received in revised form: September 17, 2020;
accepted: October 4, 2020

Abstract:
Introduction: The present study aims to investigate second language graduate students' academic writing socialization in relation to their experiences at writing center in North American higher educational context. The study documents how graduate students are socialized to use academic language in order to participate effectively within their academic communities by employing Weidman, Twale, and Stein's (2001) framework for Graduate and Professional Student Socialization.
Methods: The data is collected through semi-structured interviews with five graduate students who had experience visiting writing center to receive support for their academic writing. The data was analyzed based on the tenets of thematic analysis, which followed an iterative process.
Results: It was revealed that second language graduate students' reasons for visiting the Campus Writing Center included their educational background, field of study, and their first language(s). It was also shown that all participants expected revision on their grammatical errors as well as feedback on global areas such as idea development and organization during their visits. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that the participants gained both positive and negative experiences from the tutoring sessions, while it was found that writing center was not the only resource our participants relied on for the development of their academic writing.
Discussion: There are various factors influencing and contributing to second language graduate students' development of writing socialization within academic community. It is a challenging task for students from other educational and cultural backgrounds to adapt and socialize into new environments, especially in the academic community of higher education. Therefore, the support from writing service and writing development programs/workshops that are tailored to the specific needs of second language graduate students would be one helpful resource to help them go smoothly through the process of second language academic writing

* Osman Solmaz, Dicle University, Ziya Gökalp Faculty of Education, Diyarbakır, Turkey; osolmaz@dicle.edu.tr

socialization. Given that second language graduate students generally benefited from a strong supervision and supportive feedback, and appreciated them as reported in the literature, it is also important to survey international students' academic enculturation experiences periodically in terms of areas such as writing, speaking and participation in scholarly activities, faculty mentorship and offer feedback-support to overcome issues reported by students.

Limitations: The number of participants and the lack of students' academic text investigation were noted as limitations of the study. It is suggested that further research incorporates various sources of data collection such as tutor's perspectives and the analysis of participants' texts.

Conclusions: It was concluded that writing center played an important role in academic writing socialization experiences of the participants, and there were various factors influencing and contributing to their academic writing socialization. Overall, it was concluded that the developmental processes into academic writing in second language were non-linear, dynamic, and multimodal.

Key words: language socialization, academic writing, second language graduate students, writing center.

Introduction

"Socialization" is often referred as a process through which an individual needs to acquire knowledge, values, and practices of a group, organization, or community in order to become a part of them, and participate effectively within that particular community (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). Informed by disciplines, such as anthropology, education, sociology, and sociolinguistics, socialization studies cover a broad range of topics including language socialization, which concentrates on language and literacy development of an individual within a particular group (Duff, 2010).

Many researchers (e.g., Gardner, 2007) point out that the graduate school experience is challenging, and the process requires students to build strong relationships with people in their academic community and improve their academic skills. Additionally, students need to adjust to the culture of their academic departments and institutions as smoothly as possible (Braine, 2002). Academic socialization can take even more time for second language (L2)/ international graduate students who may have to deal with challenges, such as sociocultural difference, previous first language (L1) education, and the level of L2 literacy. Seloni (2012) defines the group of international graduate students as a unique population and remarks on the adaptation experiences of these students while they switch between the expected academic language and culture and their native languages and cultures. As the universities in the United States and Canada are popular destinations for international students (Anderson, 2015), the

integration of these students into academia needs to be investigated for understanding the dynamics of a successful academic enculturation and experience overall.

Informed by the studies of language socialization and academic discourse socialization, the current study employs Weidman, Twale, and Stein's (2001) framework for graduate and professional student socialization. The academic discourse socialization experiences of second language graduate students are investigated through a multiple-case study. The study concentrates on the writing center at a large Southwestern university in the United States as a venue for academic writing socialization (AWS) of these students. It aims to explore the reasons for visiting the writing center, and their expectations when visiting it, the impact of the center on their AWS, as well as their critiques and suggestions regarding the writing center.

1 Conceptual framework for academic socialization

Socialization is broadly defined as the process by which a child acquires the knowledge and practices that help him or her participate effectively within a particular community (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). Language socialization is more specifically concerned with how novices are socialized to use language and through the use of language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Duff (2010) expressed the core theoretical premise of language socialization as the process of learning the language "through interactions with others who are more proficient in the language and its cultural practices and who provide novices explicit and (or) implicit mentoring or evidence about normative, appropriate uses of the language, and the worldviews, ideologies, values, and identities of community members" (p. 172).

Academic discourse, sometimes referred to as academic language or academic literacies, involves oral and written language and communication forms that are commonly used by academic circles in educational and professional contexts (Duff, 2010). Academic discourse socialization, on the other hand, is the process that novices experience when they enter academic institutions. It is not a static process, instead, it is dynamic, potentially complex and conflictual (Morita, 2000), multimodal (Duff, 2010), and multilayered (Seloni, 2012). Some of the factors that may characterize the socialization of graduate students include feedback of colleagues and professors, different amounts of investment of learners, sociocultural backgrounds and financial situations of the students, social positioning by oneself and others, relationship with advisor and faculty, graduate programs and available university services. Each of these factors may affect the enculturation process of each graduate student differently.

In order to gain a better understanding of graduate student socialization, it is essential to be guided by a framework designed particularly for this type of socialization. Weidman et al. (2001) adapted such conceptual model for graduate and professional student socialization, which address the implications of the

discussions raised in the literature for creating and sustaining effective graduate programs. They listed four developmental stages of graduate student socialization as part of the model: Anticipatory, Formal, Informal, and Personal (see Figure 1). The Anticipatory Stage is the time when students enroll in the program and the need for learning new roles and procedures arises. During the Formal Stage, graduate students observe older students, learn about role expectations and communicate through course material and faculty-student interactions. The Informal Stage includes learning acceptable behaviors and reacting in an appropriate manner as well as starting to feel more like a professional than a student. Finally, students become professionals and they are in search of their own identity independent from their departments in the Personal Stage. However, as the broken lines and the relationship among students, university, personal and professional communities in Figure 1 show, the process is not linear. Instead, it is highly dynamic and interactive one which takes several factors into account at various stages of graduate and professional student socialization.

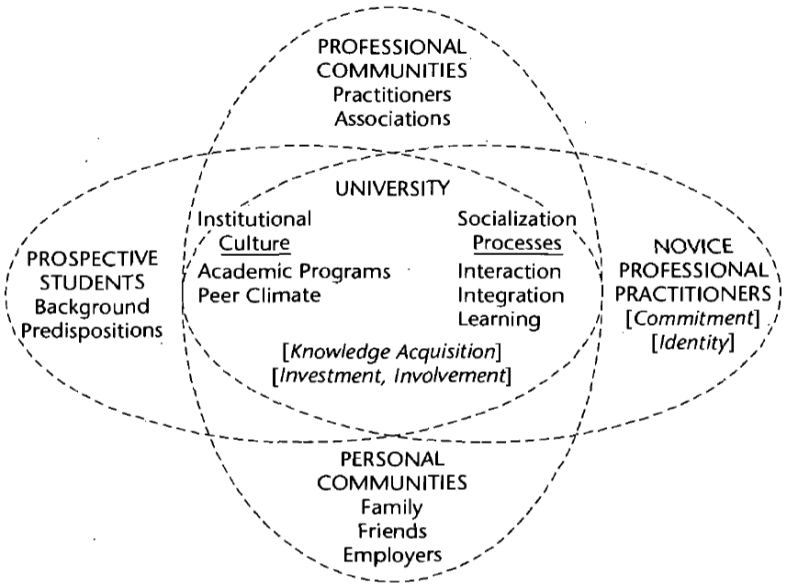


Figure 1. Conceptualization of graduate and professional student socialization (Weidman et al., 2001).

As the process is highly interactive and non-linear, students are likely to experience two stages at the same time. For instance, while experiencing the

"Informal Stage" in academic literacy socialization, they may have been going through the "Formal Stage" in oral discourse socialization. Therefore, the framework is suitable for the current study, because it places emphasis on the role of environment in academic adaptation and socialization is considered within a given context. The presence of such framework provides a clear picture for researchers and becomes a useful lens to see the processes that students go through in graduate school and the factors that are likely to shape their academic socialization process.

2 Literature review

There are a number of studies focusing on academic literacy socialization of graduate students. For example, after reviewing the scholarship on academic discourse socialization, Braine (2002) remarked that writing played a vital role in graduate studies. His research provided rich data as he integrated anecdotes of his own experiences into his study. Having been a non-native speaker graduate student himself, he shared his personal experiences and observations in order to enrich his paper. In an earlier study, Dong (1996) discovered that non-native speakers could not appropriately socialize into their academic communities by stressing that the major problematic area for three Chinese graduate students was lack of social relationship and membership within their discourse communities. Regarding plagiarism, Abasi, Akbari, and Graves (2006) determined that students' prior socialization had a major role in their understanding of the nature of knowledge and their relationship with the knowledge itself. This affected their way of using knowledge of citing and referencing earlier works in the field of studies. In another study, Nam and Beckett (2011) found that Korean graduate students' socialization into American academic writing was "difficult, frustrating, and disempowering as well as restricted by lack of coordination among resources" (para. 1). Their interviews with Korean participants showed that those students were passive users of university resources such as the writing center and research courses.

Some of the studies reported that "critical and analytical thinking" could be one of the challenges students may face depending on their background education in their native countries. For example, Morita (2000) found that Asian participants in the study felt that they lacked training in critical thinking. To illustrate, one of the participants reported that she was "lost" because of the necessity of critical thinking for successful completion of presentations and term papers and she realized that it was because of the type of education she had received in her country. Suspitsyna (2012) researched the narratives of international students and found how those narratives reflected perceptions of international graduate students towards their host departments and the ideas they developed in their home countries. In another study, Lan (2018) examined academic English socialization of non-native English-speaking graduate students in Taiwan through semi-structured interviews and reported that participants successfully

socialize into their academic communities following a period where they experience challenges including negative perceptions towards their English accents, and a lack of interaction with their Taiwanese counterparts. Investigating both native and non-native first-year doctoral students' academic writing development, Xiong (2020) reported that the similarities between the two populations were greater than their differences with respect to their developmental trajectory. Finally some of the other relevant research explored L2 writers' academic writing socialization experiences in connection with their identity constructions (e.g., Cui, 2019).

In comparison to AWS studies in general, the number of studies mainly investigating the role of writing services is limited. In one such study, Nakamuru (2010) conducted research on lexical issues in writing center tutorials with L2 writers. The research included two international and two US-educated students. It was found that US-educated learners had "superior" strengths in lexical areas compared to international students. A recent study conducted by Okuda and Anderson (2018) provided evidence for the importance of writing centers and tutors for international graduate students' English academic socialization through highlighting the experiences of three L2 Chinese graduate students at a writing center in Canadian context. Additionally, it was shown that tutors at writing centers need to be equipped enough to address the needs of international graduate students.

Even though there are studies conducted within the context of academic discourse socialization processes of second language graduate students, few of them focus solely on the their writing center visits. In the present study, I aim to fill this gap by exploring various socialization aspects of L2 graduate students who visit writing centers on campus and how it contributes to their AWS.

2.1 Researcher positionality

Before moving forward to discuss research procedures, it is critical to place myself as the researcher in the picture and what I bring to the scholarly conversation on academic writing socialization (AWS) of L2 graduate students. At the time of conducting the present study, I was in my second year of pursuing a doctoral degree in a highly interdisciplinary program as an international student in the U.S. My interest in examining the experiences of international graduate students in relation to AWS was sparked by the fact that many international students often experienced issues related to academic socialization despite the orientation programs and several other opportunities provided by the host institutions. This interest particularly stemmed from my awareness of international colleagues' writing center visits and curiosity about how such venues could explicitly or indirectly contribute to their AWS. As a graduate student who visited the writing center on campus several times in my first semester at graduate school, I identified with those experiences even more after I took a course particularly addressing issues in language socialization.

The in-depth study of this phenomenon allowed me to develop a needed theoretical perspective to explore the experiences of international students around me. Identification with my participants opened up possibilities for examining the issues pertaining to multiple aspects of socialization experiences of international students. In this study, I attempted to document the type of experiences students have while visiting writing centers on campus through semi-structured interviews which offer a closer look at one of the potential agents taking role in the phenomenon of AWS. For this purpose, I interviewed five international graduate students who benefited from the services offered by the writing center on campus. The goal of the qualitative inquiry was to reach a detailed account of student experiences through which it was possible to illustrate factors salient in students' academic writing experiences and the specific role played by writing centers. In order to demonstrate the outcomes of the study, thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011) was preferred, which fit with the intended research purposes as it allowed me to identify patterns in the transcribed data addressing the issues covered in the study, and the process was iterative in nature and included several coding phases ensuring that the interpretations are trustworthy. I hope that certain pedagogical and curricular interventions facilitating international students' adjustment into their respective academic communities are carried into practice through studies like this.

3 Methods

3.1 Setting

This study was conducted at a large Southwestern University in the United States in the year 2013. The focus of the project was L2 graduate students' experiences at the Campus Writing Service (CWS). Since 2009, CWS has provided peer tutoring service for students in all levels and programs of study at the university. Their aim is to help students feel more confident about their writing and become successful writers by providing advice and resources on how to draft, revise, and edit all kinds of writing pieces. CWS offers two types of service: the free and the paid sessions. For the free sessions, there are 15-minute drop-in and 30-minute appointment sessions. In these free sessions, students and tutors discuss several issues of their writing projects depending on their needs such as structure, formatting, and expression. Then, if free sessions are insufficient, or if students have a larger writing project, they can make appointment for 1-hour paid session for the purpose of in-depth discussion with tutors. The fee-based session is $22 per hour, and students should send their papers to the center in advance so that the assigned tutors can go through the papers and prepare for the most efficient session.

The tutors who work at CWS are students of different programs of study at Southwestern University. There are certain qualifications that CWS requires of

their writing tutors: they must have a 3.0 overall GPA; they must be (at least) sophomores; and they must have completed the first-year writing sequence of two composition courses with a B or higher. The writing tutors of CWS participate in training every semester including large-group trainings with other tutors in other areas, as well as the training called "Tutor Enrichment", which is specific to the area of tutoring writing. This training includes sessions on the issue of effective communication with non-native speakers of English, such as sessions on multicultural and multilingual awareness in the shared training (with all tutors) and new sessions held by CWS on tutoring ESL students and tutoring graduate students.

Regarding the physical environment, there are three CWS locations around the campus. The most popular location and the one that all of the participants visited is at the old university gymnasium. Visitors who walk in will first see the reception counter where they make appointments and request walk-in tutoring sessions. Behind the reception desk are two separate rooms that serve as working spaces, one for the writing tutoring sessions, another for math tutoring. The tutoring rooms are one big open space with about six to seven rectangular tables and many chairs around them. More than one pair of student-tutors may sit and talk at the same table without a partition separating them from one another.

3.2 Participants

Five L2 graduate students participated in this study. They were recruited through e-mail, which was sent by the program coordinator of the CWS. The shared characteristics of the participants were: (1) they are international graduate students at the university; and (2) they have been to CWS for a tutoring session at least one time. Participants have diverse backgrounds and programs of study ranging from Second Language Acquisition and Teaching to Soil, Water, and Environmental Science (See Table 1 below). The information regarding gender, academic level, academic department, country of origin, first language, age, length of stay in the United States, and the graduate socialization stage of the participants based on Weidman et al.'s (2001) framework is summarized in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used instead of the participants' real names. In addition to the table, the descriptions of participants' background relating to their writing process, length/types of text they brought to CWS, as well as their initial information about the service at CWS are discussed in detail below. It is important to note that this multiple-case study was deemed to be exempted from Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Pseudonyms are used in order to ensure participants' confidentiality in this study and their information were protected as part of ethical research practice.

Table 1

Participants' background information

Participant	*Gender*	*Academic level*	*Academic department*	*Country of origin / L1*	*Age*	*Length of stay in the U.S.*	*Graduate Socialization Stage*
Carisa	female	MA	Portuguese and Spanish	Venezuela/ Spanish	30s	5 years	Informal
Carlos	male	PhD	Center of Higher Education	Mexico/ Spanish	26	2 years	Formal and Informal
Fatima	female	PhD	Second Language Acquisition and Teaching	Saudi Arabia/ Arabic	28	2 years	Formal and Informal
Nadia	female	PhD	Second Language Acquisition and Teaching	Pakistan/ Urdu	28	4 years	Informal
Kali	male	MA	Soil, Water, and Environmental Science	Indonesia/ Indonesian	27	9 months	Formal

Carisa is a graduate student in Hispanic Literature Program under Portuguese and Spanish Department. She first came to the U.S. from Venezuela to be a babysitter in New York City before enrolling in an academic program at the Southwestern University. This is her last semester in the master's program, and she has been to CWS several times every semester when she needs help with her English papers. The papers she brings to CWS are usually three to four pages in length and in various topics depending on the courses she takes. She knew about the service at CWS because she also works there as a tutor in Spanish language. The interview revealed that Carisa paid a very good attention to her written texts as she mentioned that she constantly revised and edited her papers because she "wanted them to be good". She confessed that sometimes she was not satisfied with the feedback she received from a session because it was not critical enough. When that was the case, she would bring that same paper to the Center several times within the same week in order to get different perspectives from different tutors. Her frequency of visit to the CWS was high (almost weekly, and about 15-20 times per semester) compared to other participants in this study.

Carlos is a Mexican doctoral student in Higher Education program at the Center for the Study of Higher Education. He first came to the United States with a Summer Research Program that brought students from Latin America to conduct research at the Southwestern University. He found out about the service provided at CWS during his second semester from his cohort. The texts he brought to the center were varied in length, from three to ten pages, and were in topics relating to science and education. Like Carisa, Carlos takes his writing seriously and goes through multiple drafts to refine his papers. He usually edits

the work by himself and sometimes asks his friend who is a native speaker of English for help. After that, if he feels that it is not sufficient, he visits the writing center to seek additional assistance. His frequency of visits to the center was parallel with his writing assignments. He visited the CWS five to six times per semester.

Nadia is a Pakistani first year doctoral student in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching program. She worked as a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant at the University of Texas at Austin for two semesters before coming to the Southwestern University. She received her master's degree in English Literature and Linguistics in her home country. Nadia has been to CWS five to six times in the past two academic semesters in order to seek help revising her research paper. She found out about the CWS service from her colleague who recommended that the service could help improve her writing quality as well as the writing style. Regarding her writing process, Nadia also constantly revises and edits her draft according to the suggestion she receives from the center.

Fatima is a second year doctoral student in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching program. She is originally from Saudi Arabia where she received her first master's degree in Linguistics. She then obtained her second master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages) at a large university in California. She moved to the current location and started her Ph.D. program in the year 2011. Unlike three of the participants mentioned above, Fatima went to CWS only one time upon the recommendation of her friend who is pursuing a bachelor's degree at the same university. She brought a two-page reflection paper to the center for one of her classes and she did not find the service as helpful as she expected. Later, she started to go to the writing development program offered by the university and she liked it. The reasons and information about her experience at CWS are discussed in the findings.

Kali is an Indonesian student who received Fulbright Scholarship to pursue his master's degree in Soil, Water, and Environment Science Department. He is in his second semester and he has never been to the U.S. before. Similar to other participants, he heard about the service at the writing center from his roommate. He first went there for a revision of his five-page research paper in the field of science and continued to go for various writing assignments. Kali believes that writing multiple drafts before submitting his papers is necessary, and he tries to write at least three drafts before submission. During his writing process, he edits and revises his works by himself as well as seeking additional help from his friends and the service at CWS. He visited the center approximately once in a month, and four to five times per semester.

From the descriptions of each participant, one can see that apart from being international graduate students, who have been to CWS, they also shared other common characteristics. One is the fact that they all heard about the tutoring session at CWS from their friend, classmate, roommate, or cohort, all in their academic community. Additionally, all of the participants, no matter what their

level of L2 academic literacy is, are dedicated writers who pay good attention to their writing. They all go through multiple processes of drafting, revising, and editing in order to create polished texts they feel confident about. Apparently, this is the one main reason they went to CWS to seek additional help to improve their works. In turn, advice and suggestions they received from the center also familiarize them with the process of multiple drafting to improve their papers.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews with five international graduate students were conducted utilizing Glesne's (2011) suggestions for the interview protocol. I wrote while-interview notes and post-interview reflection, which informed the data analysis afterwards. Interview questions were based on their academic writing socialization in relation to their Campus Writing Service (CWS) experiences. Some examples of the main interview topics included the following: the quality of writing center services, resources to develop academic writing, expectations for visiting writing center, type of writing support needed. During the interviews, I set a conversational tone with participants to make it a "distance-reducing experience" (Glesne, 2011, p.134) as it provided a relaxed environment in which I could listen to the participants without judgment and encourage them to share as much information as possible. Face-to-face interviews took about 25-40 minutes at a quiet location of participant's choice over a period of one month. They were recorded using a digital recording device. Participants were encouraged to share their opinions through expression of lived experiences they had before, during, and after visiting CWS. The recordings were transcribed verbatim following the completion of each interview session.

Later, I and a colleague, who was familiar with the research, independently coded the transcriptions to see what themes emerged from them by conducting a thematic analysis (Glesne, 2011). Each data set was carefully read several times in search of emergent and salient themes. The process of data categorization was iterative and featured several coding phases, which was in line with Creswell's (2007) data analysis spiral. Following the initial coding, sub-themes within individual interviews were compared collectively. As a result, categories emerging from the data were extrapolated and collapsed into three central themes which were shared across interviews.

Given the nature of a qualitative inquiry, research questions of the present study were exploratory and tentative in the beginning, yet it provided me "a tool for articulating the primary focus of the study" (Agee, 2019, p. 433). The initial plan was to provide a rich account of international students' academic socialization experiences through their pre- and post-visit writing drafts to analyze rhetorical differences across their works, as well as the perspectives of the tutors and the tutor trainer at the CWS. However, the emergent process of focusing questions led me to the specific data of students' perspectives itself which could potentially contribute knowledge to the field of academic socialization. As a

result, the following research questions were formed; a) What are the second language graduate students' reasons for visiting the writing center and their expectations from it?, b) What kind of experiences do the second language graduate students have at the writing center in relation to their academic writing socialization?, c) What are the perspectives of second language graduate students towards visiting writing centers?

4 Findings and discussion

After engaging in the full complement of thematic analysis procedures outlined by Glesne (2011), I developed four main themes captured language socialization and L2 academic writing development of international graduate students. The first theme involves their reasons and expectations regarding their visits and experiences of being tutored at CWS. The second theme discusses the academic writing socialization of the participants in general, benefits they gained from CWS, and the other resources they use to improve their writing. Lastly, positive and negative perspectives towards visiting writing center given by the participants are included as the final theme.

4.1 Reasons for visiting a writing center and expectations

For international students, writing in L2 is always a challenging task, the task is likely to become harder when academic writing is required (Braine, 2002; Ferenz, 2005; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Poel & Gasiorek, 2012; Wang et al., 2002). Consequently, all participants shared similar feelings that they were not quite confident with their L2 academic writing and needed assistance for variety of reasons. One main reason involves their backgrounds which include their first language, educational background, and field of study. Carisa and Carlos, whose first language is Spanish, were worried that they transferred their writing style from L1 to L2. Both of them mentioned that they used different structures and organization when writing in Spanish, and they did not want their English papers to sound like they were translated from their L1. Additionally, Carlos expressed how his initial experience led him to a visit to the writing center and pointed out other reasons which played a role in his visit:

"The first time that I was there was because I had this huge article, a critique of one of my subjects. So I was so scared of not having it right because my first experience in writing wasn't that good here. I came from this background of sciences. I've never had to write that long and Spanish is different. The first time it was so different and I got not a good grade."

Not only their L1 background but also their educational background played a role in how they write. For example, Nadia received her English education mainly in the British system and therefore, she needed someone to help edit her papers to sound more like American English. In terms of the field of study, Carlos came from the background of science which usually requires shorter length of text with concise and direct writing style as partly quoted above. On

the other hand, even though Kali has always been in the field of science, he has never written scientific papers in English before. Overall, their L1 background, education, and field of study, had an influence on the way the participants develop their L2 academic writing skills which contributed to the reasons of their visit to CWS.

Participants of the study reported that they had specific aspects in writing they needed revising and also specific types of advice and suggestions they hoped to gain from the writing service. As the data showed, all of the participants sought help with their linguistic accuracy including the revision of grammar, wording, and other linguistic errors. They also looked for global area feedback including idea development, organization, coherence, and page format. In addition to linguistic feedback, some participants hoped to receive general advice and suggestions that they could apply in their academic writing development. For instance, Nadia remarked that because she came from a different culture and educational background, she did not know what the academic expectations were in the United States. Hence, she expected that the tutoring sessions could inform her about what she lacked and how to improve her writing skill in English. Interestingly, the participants not only provided information about what they expected from the service but also what they did not. The data analysis showed that most of them did not seek help with the contents of their texts from CWS, which was evidenced in Kali's following commentary:

"it [the service] is really helpful for me because they fix my all grammatical error [sic], but for the content itself, the content of my paper, they cannot give me more suggestion because it is not their field."

For Carisa, because she knew that the tutors might not know the content or the topics of her papers, she usually told them in the beginning of the sessions what her papers were about in order to avoid confusion. Similarly, Carlos stated that he expected the tutors to focus only on the mechanical aspects of his papers and not on the topics. It is clear that the participants had low expectation on content editing but very high expectation on linguistic feedback and revision from the service at CWS.

4.2 Academic writing socialization of second language graduate students

An important goal of the present research is to explore what kind of academic experiences L2 graduate students have at the CWS, and how these experiences impact their academic writing socialization (AWS). In order to have a broader picture of students' academic writing activities, resources other than CWS are also included in this section.

One of the most commonly reported issues regarding AWS were related to linguistic background of the participants and how their native language affected their English writing skills. Carisa, for example, felt that proof-reading was always needed and she added that "And if this is your second language, you'll need it more. Well, I think I need it [writing help] more than anybody else."

Both Carisa and Carlos, who speak Spanish as their first language, talked about the writing differences between Spanish and English which was briefly mentioned in the section 4.1. Carlos, who mentioned that Spanish was "different", explained the difference in this way: "In Spanish, we write and write. In English, it is different." Carlos' comment is interpreted as a reference to the difference of rhetorical aspects that are valued in various languages. While some parts of the composition, such as thesis sentence, are not required in most cases in traditional Spanish writing, it is given relatively greater importance in English. Differences like this are documented in L2 writing research through the strand of contrastive rhetoric research displaying the composition differences through L1 influences on L2 discourse, and intercultural rhetoric (Connor, 2011) proposing a multilayered context-sensitive model. Along the same line, most of the participants mentioned that they wanted their writing to "sound like English" and not to be influenced by their first language. Participants' concern over their L1 interference is seen in Carisa's comment:

"This is my main idea and this is what I want to say. How can I make this the thesis and how can I make explain this in a way that everybody will understand, and it isn't confusing, and it doesn't sound too Spanish."

The differences of writing styles among the participants resulted not only from the first language, but also from previous L2 literacy knowledge. Nadia, the Pakistani PhD student, mentioned that she had to double check her writing because of the differences between American and British English styles of writing by noting the following:

"I learnt some small but important things from these sessions which I did not know because I received my education through another system. For example, in British system we are always encouraged to add a cover page but once I did that, I was told by them [tutors] how to substitute the cover page."

Even though this is not specifically related to the writing itself, it is a good example of AWS of an international student who comes from another country with a different education system and how she tries to adapt into the requirements of the new academic environment.

In terms of communication with tutors, Carlos believed that CWS's tutors understood that there were many students from other countries, and therefore, he has never had communication problems with any of them as tutors were familiar with international students. According to the information received from the program coordinator, all of the tutors are encouraged to attend training sessions, which aim to increase their intercultural awareness and help them communicate more effectively with students of different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. In relation to this issue, Carisa told that her accent could be an obstacle sometimes and she felt that she had not been understood by her tutors. As she considered herself to be shy, this situation was likely to set a barrier between her and the tutor. Another remarkable comment was concerning the sensitiveness of Carisa who was afraid that the tutor might be offended by the

content of her paper about American culture. Thonus (2004) mentioned that the risk of offending was also experienced by the tutors who have to maintain politeness and increase comprehensibility when talking to students from other cultures.

As part of their academic writing socialization, the participants mentioned the impact of CWS on their writing in specific and graduate school experience in general. The contribution of CWS to the participants' academic writing was closely related to the reasons that led them to the center. Beside Fatima, who had a negative experience overall, all of the participants made use of the services they were offered at CWS. Kali and Carlos mentioned that the service really helped improve their writing qualities and grades in general. Similarly, Carisa told that "they helped me with grammar and content, such as how to make an argument stronger". This showed that her visits at CWS did improve her writing skills such as the structure of her papers. In the same fashion, Kali said that the service was really helpful in correcting grammatical errors and helped him improve sentence cohesion and idea development. Nadia voiced her opinion by specifying the areas of help she received and those she did not:

"I visited the writing center for a couple of times and it did help me in my purpose of getting my writing format edited and writing analyzed in each of those visits. But, I cannot comment on other aspects of writing like composition, paragraphing because I did not make use of it."

Her thoughts can be considered an example of L2 graduate students benefiting from CWS for specific purposes. Overall, they were satisfied with the service offered, with Fatima being an exception.

In addition to CWS as a resource, other resources that L2 graduate students used in order to increase their academic English writing skills were investigated. There were two main professional and social resources from which they sought help. This finding was in line with other studies (i.e., Ferenz, 2005; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Seloni, 2012). Professional resources included the writing development programs, writing workshops, and writing classes, whereas social resources were professors, peers, and native speaker friends. Regarding professional resources, there is another major resource for writing development that is offered by Graduate and Professional Student Council at the university beside CWS, and they regularly held workshops designed specifically for graduate students. Fatima and Kali were two participants who have attended the workshops, while Nadia expressed interest in joining the program starting next fall. On the other hand, Carisa and Carlos have never heard of this resource even though graduate student council at the university advertises their upcoming writing workshops for graduate students in their weekly electronic newsletters. Apart from those workshops for graduate students, Kali was also taking a scientific writing class in his department as well as taking an undergraduate course for writing. In terms of social resources, all of the participants expressed that they sought help from their peers who are native English speakers. Carlos,

for example, mentioned that he always consulted his native speaker friend for both content and linguistic advice, and she was very helpful in providing him detailed feedback specific to his field of study. Kali noted that he received assistance from his friends who were non-native speakers of English but were majoring in second language teaching. Professors as a resource were mentioned by Nadia who sought advice and feedback from her professors. All of the resources mentioned by the participants suggested that international graduate students tried to improve their L2 academic writing skills by reaching out to multiple resources available to them.

4.3 Perspectives towards visiting a writing center

The data analysis showed that most participants overall had a positive experience with the service at CWS. They found the service at CWS efficient and effective, and the tutors were very nice and helpful. Most participants received helpful and satisfying suggestions from the tutors and the tutoring procedures. Nadia, for instance, found her tutors very nice and helpful in going through each paragraph of her paper and providing feedback on the areas she needed:

"The tutors were nice enough to randomly go through the paragraphs and advise me if there was something that was weird in accordance with the norm."

Because of the time constraint, most participants were asked to identify aspects or sections of their writings that needed revision the most. For example, Carisa mentioned:

"I tell them that I want to focus on grammar for sure because I'm not so sure if it's making sense. And I also want to be sure that they understand the content. And if they understand the content, I want them to make my argument stronger."

When revising and editing grammatical mistakes, one strategy that the writing tutors at CWS employ is the read-aloud technique by which they have the student's read sections of their texts and then suggest what the problem areas are. This is one technique CWS recommends their tutors to use as it is a way to let the students find the errors in the texts by themselves. However, this strategy may not be the best approach for everyone. Fatima, for example, went to the CWS only one time because she did not find the read-aloud procedure helpful for her purpose. She explained the process and her feelings:

"She [the tutor] had me read it [the paper]. I had to ask her if my sentence sounds right. I don't know, but I came to have my paper corrected. If I know where my mistakes were, I wouldn't go to the writing center."

She revealed during the interview that her disappointment was likely because of her expectation regarding the way tutor tried to help her. Apparently, this situation could bring about different outcomes with other students as they may have perceived the tutoring procedures differently depending upon their expectations and individual preferences.

Apart from Fatima's negative experience, participants reported some negative aspects and critiques regarding physical environment, the tutors, the procedures, and the service qualities in general. One critique was about locations and duration of the session. As mentioned earlier, the tutoring room is one open space with several big tables. As a result, many student-tutor pairs sit at the same table and they are able to see and hear everyone else talking. This was one thing that some participants hoped CWS could improve. For instance, Carisa and Carlos felt that there could be a private space for each tutoring pair, or at least a separate table where the tutor and the student can work individually. Time constraint is another issue that was criticized by participants. Kali commented on the subject by comparing the length of each session with his paper(s) and the solution offered by the tutor:

"Well, actually…30-minute session for five-page paper is not really enough. That's why she asked me which part of the paper I really want to care about. For example, like introduction or conclusion. For me, it was the introduction part, because I had not had data yet and the paper was a research proposal."

It is clear that Kali felt that he could benefit more if the session was longer. As it was not the case, he maximized the benefit from CWS by targeting specific parts of the paper by taking the type of assignment into account. Similarly, Carisa thought that 30 minutes were not enough for her lengthy papers, but she solved this problem by visiting the center for free sessions several times within a week. Even though she knew that she could get longer session if she paid for it, she did not feel that it was necessary. Carisa explained her reasoning by drawing a comparison with her own tutorship at the CWS and stated:

"...because I'm a tutor myself so if a student needs extra time, I will offer that student extra time. And I expect them [CWS] to do the same for me. And I don't charge for doing it so I don't want them to charge me for doing this either."

In relation to the time issue, one participant, Nadia, mentioned that during her session, the receptionist approached her ten minutes before the session ended to remind her how much time she had left. This made her feel uncomfortable as if they wanted her to finish early. Nadia was the only participant experiencing this; nonetheless, it is necessary to include her critique.

Another issue that arose from the interviews was the profiles of the tutors. Because most tutors at CWS are undergraduate students from various programs of study, it is worth examining the opinions of graduate students on this issue. The analysis of themes identified that most of them were satisfied with tutors in general as they were helpful and patient with international students. Nonetheless, they felt that it would be even more effective if the tutors knew the content of their papers and were able to give suggestions on that. Most participants simply sought help from their native speaker colleagues, friends, or classmates for the content revision. Furthermore, some participants suggested that recruiting graduate tutors for graduate students would be a good idea as they could

understand the nature of graduate level writing assignments. It is perhaps best evidenced in the following statements by Carisa:

"I think that maybe the tutors should be grad students just because they know how to write a grad student paper... Because in an undergrad level paper, you can say whatever sometimes."

Her experience was that she once wrote a paper with the thesis statement in the third paragraph. She went to the CWS and the tutor did not correct her on that. Instead, her professor pointed out this problem to her after she submitted the paper. That was when she realized that it was not the way they organized ideas in English papers. Likewise, Carlos pointed out a potential problem arising from the educational backgrounds and knowledge of tutors who were not seeking a graduate degree:

"They [undergraduate tutors] didn't know how to cite. It's very important. I know now how to do it, but maybe they could have this special service for certain, for graduate students."

In connection with tutors' profile, one suggestion provided by Carlos was the need for more linguistic explanations from the tutors. From his experience, the tutors simply corrected his errors without explaining why. Therefore, he pointed out that if the tutors observe the same errors several times, they should provide further explanations so that the students know and avoid doing the same mistake. Finally, another suggestion given by the participants that is worth mentioning here was the incorporation of online editing session using technology such as "Google Drive". In the simplest sense, "Google Drive" is an online document that allows multiple users to create, share, and edit the works collaboratively in real-time. One of the participants proposed that the use of online tutoring session could be effective and convenient for students and tutors as they can work together simultaneously without going to the center.

Conclusion

This study investigated second language (L2) graduate students' academic writing socialization (AWS) in relation to their experiences at a writing center on campus. Because the number of international students enrolling in U.S. universities is increasing every year, it is important to explore their academic journeys at the U.S. institutions. A key area of L2 graduate students' socialization experiences is how they benefit from the writing center on campus as a means for their AWS.

In this study, the aim was to research a number of issues revolving around academic writing experiences of L2 graduate students. The first issue concerning L2 graduate students' reasons and expectations for visiting the CWS revealed that students' first language, education background, and field of study were among major reasons that brought them to the writing center. Regarding expectations, all of them expected revision on grammatical errors as well as feedback on global areas such as idea development and organization. However,

they did not seek advice on the contents of the papers as they understood that the tutors were from different programs of study.

Another area that the current study focused on was L2 graduate students' experiences and the impact of CWS on their academic writing socialization. The analysis indicated that the participants gained both positive and negative experiences from the tutoring sessions. Most of them found the tutors helpful and the service beneficial in improving both the quality of their texts and their general academic writing skills. On the other hand, some participants were not content with the service they received because of the unfamiliar strategy used at the center. It is also interesting to note here that CWS was not the only resource our participants relied on for the development of their academic writing. They also consulted other resources including both social (peers, professors, and native speaker friends) and professional (writing development programs and workshops) ones.

From these findings, one can see that there are various factors influencing and contributing to L2 graduate students' development of writing socialization within academic community. As Weidman et al. (2001) remarked, the developmental processes into academic writing in their second language are non-linear, dynamic, and multimodal in nature. It is a challenging task for students from other educational and cultural backgrounds to adapt and socialize into new environments, especially in the academic community of higher education. Therefore, the support from writing service and writing development programs/workshops and feedback-rich environments (Kim, 2018) that are tailored to the specific needs of L2 graduate students would be one helpful resource to help them go smoothly through the process of L2 academic writing socialization. Such programs could be integrated into First Year Education (FYE) course or programs as a recent study (Yan & Sendall, 2016) found that FYE class in their institution helped international students to familiarize themselves with academic resources and expectations, and improving their English skills. However, the content and opportunities for practice as part of such educational programs are crucial as writing courses might not be sufficient enough for students to facilitate their academic writing (Mukminin, Ali, & Ashari, 2015). In addition, digital tools and materials such as digital storytelling could be implemented for L2 graduate students to express themselves in a rather flexible format as digital storytelling allows students to "incorporate their own voices in the curriculum" (Grigsby, Theard-Griggs, & Lily, 2015, p. 65) and display their creativity while reporting the challenges they face. From a larger perspective, it is important to underscore that socio-emotional health of students should be prioritized as learners experience a transitional development and might be in need of a more stimulating environment for academic success (Mehešová, 2017).

Another implication which can be drawn from the findings is the need to periodically survey international students' academic enculturation experiences in

terms of areas such as writing, speaking and participation in scholarly activities, faculty mentorship and offer feedback-support to overcome issues, which are reported by students. As reported in the literature (Anderson, 2017; Bankier, 2019), L2 graduate students generally benefited from a strong supervision and supportive feedback, and appreciated them. Based on findings from the present study and the literature (e.g., Okuda & Anderson, 2018), writing centers at host institutions could offer tailored orientation programs addressing academic writing needs of international students regarding their adjustment into the academic culture and discipline-specific norms and expectations. Given that L2 graduate students believed receiving writing-related feedback from graduate students would be more beneficial for them, it is recommended that writing centers offer a choice for students to seek assistance from tutors who are graduate students.

In sum, it is hoped that this exploratory research project would fill the gap in the literature by bringing in three key ingredients to the picture, which are the academic socialization, L2 graduate students, and the writing center service.

There are several limitations to this study including the number of participants, as well as the absence of data from other sources, such as tutors' perspective and samples of students' texts. The suggestion of further research would be to incorporate various sources of data collection such as student-produced narratives (e.g., Anderson, 2020) during a longer period of time (e.g., Xiong, 2020). In addition, the recruitment of participants who share similar backgrounds could potentially result in more unified results that allow us to generalize the findings to the certain groups of population.

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