EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES OF MULTILINGUAL GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING

By

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Abstract

A large number of international students enter Canada every year to pursue their education careers. This academic journey is mostly a positive one, rich in various experiences but not without challenges. In this research, I focused on the main challenges that international graduate students encounter when writing academic papers. Although many studies have researched the difficulties encountered by international students when writing academic papers, few studies have focused on graduate international students' personal perspectives of these writing experiences. I chose a qualitative case study as my research design because it provides a rich source of data on experiences and perspectives. In this case, I conducted interviews with seven international graduate students in the Faculty of Education. Results of the study show that individual multilingual students are not necessarily deficient in writing skills; rather, it is a complex matter of many factors that come into play such as language, curriculum, writing pedagogies, literacy practices, disciplinary knowledge, etc. The study recommends that, international students who came from diverse cultural/ ideological backgrounds need support to better understand the new academic context and discover what and how to develop their level of academic writing.

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List of Abbreviation

APA	American Psychological Association
ICEHR	Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research
MUN	Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
CR	Contrastive Rhetoric
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
SP	Social Process
TM	Transculturation Model
CZ	Contact Zones

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

My personal journey, as an international student, through graduate school at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) has been a positive one rich in various experiences. Yet, it has not been without challenges. These challenges range from linguistic, academic, and cultural, to financial problems that have the potential to adversely impact any students' academic performance. One problem that became clear to me through my journey was the difficulties international graduate students experience with writing and it is this topic I decided to pursue in my research. My research study took place at MUN, which has witnessed a large increase in international student enrolment from 978 in 2007 (Fowler, 2007) to more than 2,123 in 2014 (Fowler, 2014). These students come from more than 90 countries around the world, and they are enrolled in over 100 graduate diplomas, master's degree programs, and doctoral degree programs, and comprise 11% of the total student population at MUN (www.mun.ca/isa). In 2015, According to the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) at MUN, 2312 international students from all over the world registered at MUN. Graduate and undergraduate students from Asia recorded the highest number of registrants at 1126. In the second position is Sub-Saharan Africa with 428 students. In the third position is the Middle East with 302 students (27th annual Fact Book).

The growing number of international students has raised awareness of the difficulties these students face when writing academic papers. This concern at MUN is a reflection of a broader concern in other contexts. Al Murshidi (2014), for example, found that international students in U.S. universities face difficulties in writing academically (p. 87). Although many

studies have shown and detailed the difficulties encountered by international students in writing academic papers, few studies focus on international graduate students' personal perspectives of these writing experiences. We need to listen to students themselves and hear about their academic writing experiences, the challenges they face, and what strategies they develop to cope. Currently, little is known about how graduate students experience writing difficulties (Singh, 2015).

Ibrahim and Nambiar (2011) argued that international students must quickly rise to the challenge by being more independent and resourceful in their academic work, and shed their cultural practices by embracing the culture of learning of host universities (p. 631). However, students must experience and develop their own strategies to overcome their challenges in their academic writing in these new contexts. My study intends to explore experiences, challenges, and strategies of multilingual students to overcome their struggles in writing academically.

The term multilingual comes from "multilingualism" which has emerged within the field of linguistics particularly sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics over the past two decades. It is described as someone who has the ability to speak more than one language that encompasses minority languages, migrant languages, sign language, and various dialects (Franceschini, 2011). Franceschini (2009) defined multilingualism "as the capacity of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis in space and time with more than one language in everyday life" (p. 33).

It is very important to explain the term "multilingual" and the process of its shift from L2. "L2 writer" was the dominant term that was preferred by most journals concerned with second languages (Morton et al, 2015, p.2). However, many authors have adopted the term

"multilingual" instead of "L2" to label students - writers like Pomerantz and Kearney, Kobayashi and Rinnert's, and Canagarajah (Morton et al, 2015, p.2).

Canagarajah (2013b) prefers "multilingual writer" in place of "second language writer" as he argues in his article "The End of Second Language Writing." This shift in preference is due to three main reasons. First, because languages are not considered separate from other languages anymore, languages have interaction and influence on each other. The second factor is related to language competence. It is very complicated to decide which language comes first or second in terms of mastering. Some people have two languages (or more) as their 'home language', for example. Lastly, the nature of writing activity has also changed. Writing is not only words: "writing is multimodal, with multiple semiotic features (space, visuals), ecological resources (objects, people, texts), and modalities (oral, visual, and aural) contributing to its production and interpretation" (p. 440). Moreover, Morton (2013) embraces the term "multilingual writer" in his study to reflect the latest understandings of language and its relation to students' interactions with new communities (p.2).

Multilingualism has become a curriculum outcome in a number of school environments. Cenoz and Gorter (2011) proposed a "Focus on Multilingualism" approach to study the linguistic resources of multilingual people and the benefits of languages interaction in communication. In this sense, multilingualism can be a resource rather than be seen as a deficit.

Multilingual students have linguistic resources that monolingual speakers do not have, which they can deploy to reach their goals in communication (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, p.359). Multilingual people are capable of speaking several languages on a daily basis, whether they are in the process of learning a foreign or second language in the classroom context, or speaking or

writing in several languages which are totally different from the one they grew up with (Kramsch, 2006, p.100). Above all, whatever multilingual students bring to class it should be considered "as a resource for writing rather than a language problem or deficit" (Morton, 2015, p.1).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences, challenges and strategies of multilingual graduate students in academic writing at MUN. This study, hopefully will contribute to the teaching and learning of academic writing for international students as well as various university services.

1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What do multilingual graduate students in Education *experience* with their academic writing at MUN?

2. What are the *challenges* they encounter?

3. What are the *strategies* applied by multilingual students in writing their academic papers?

For this purpose, a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach was employed. Qualitative approaches focus on an in-depth probing of people's beliefs, assumptions, understandings, opinions, actions, or interactions (Doyle, 2014). Creswell (2012) described a qualitative approach as the best way "to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore" (p.17). Qualitative research is "interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). This is particularly relevant to understand how graduate students think and write academically. Since

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this study aims to explore student experiences, a qualitative approach seemed the most appropriate.

Graduate international students in the Faculty of Education were invited to be interviewed one-on-one, which means that participants were asked questions and answers were recorded from only one participant at a time. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to give more freedom to the participants to discuss and to "identify any comments people might have that are beyond the responses to the closed-ended questions" (Creswell, 2012, p. 220).

A case study method was used as a research design. The value of a case study is to understand a larger issue through a specific case, which comprises a small number of people. It inquires about the way people look and build their reality in depth and in context. Hence, the case study approach enables the researcher to go beyond the broad explanations and understand the behavioral situations within a specific context (Zainal, 2007, p. 1).

1.4 My Interest in This Topic

Creswell (2013) claims that "researchers have a personal history that situates them as inquirers" (p. 51). Looking at my background assists in explaining why I am interested in this study. I completed a graduate course (Education 6674: Research in Second Language Writing) for my Master of Education degree. The complex issues at play in international students' academic writing fascinated me. The course highlighted couple of controversial issues and debates in L2 writing, such as identity and voice, feedback, error correction, and text borrowing, and the effect of L1 on L2 writing. L2 is used to depict a language which is different form a native language and may be learned in informal, natural environments. It is learned after the first language (L1). The second language refers to non-native speakers who are learning, for example,

Arabic language in an Arabic language environment. The acquisition of the first language is a natural process whereas learning a second language is a conscious one. This made me think about my own challenge in writing academically for the first time in Canada. After talking to a number of graduate students, I found I was not alone. They, too, had been facing problems in writing their academic papers. Hence, I decided to concentrate my study around international graduate students' academic writing in the Faculty of Education since assignments mostly consisted of written papers. Seven international students were interviewed to document their experiences, challenges and strategies in writing academic papers.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis has the following chapters: review of the literature, methodology, findings, discussion, recommendations and conclusion. The review of the literature focuses on previous research studies on issues related to international students' academic writing. Included in the methodology chapter are method and design of the study, context and sampling, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness. The findings chapter presents the results of the study in three main categorization based on the research questions. The discussion chapter discussed and analyzed the findings in the context of the literature review. Furthermore, the recommendations and conclusions of this research are presented in the last chapter.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

This chapter will present an overview of the research on the main challenges that international graduate students encounter while writing academic papers. For international students, "learning and living in a different culture; learning in a foreign university context; learning while developing English language proficiency; and learning the academic disciplinary discourse" (Arkoudis, 2006, p. 5) presents a variety of challenges. These challenges are related to students' knowledge of the English language, experience of academic cultures, and the foreign countries' new cultural norms, and expectations.

This chapter comprises seven parts. The first focuses on the Canadian academic environment. In the second section, I explore international students studying in Canada. Following this, I illustrate the linguistic barriers faced by international students. In the fourth part, I examine academic writing and the three models of literacy on students' writing. Then, I delve into the literature on multilingual graduate students and their academic backgrounds and highlight some dominant models of writing practices, followed by an overview of writing pedagogy. The last section shows the significant shift in the literature from second language writing to multilingualism.

2.1 Canadian academic environment

Generally, international students find that the Canadian academic environment is very different from their home country. As Canagarajah (2002) has argued, multilingual students already come with membership in other communities of practice, membership that they do not find in the new country (p.31). According to Singh (2015), international students who come from the Middle East, Africa, and Asian countries for example, often face difficulties in adjusting to a university in the foreign country. This is often due to the limited language exposure they may

have had in their previous degree in their home country. International students also need to get used to the new university culture, such as systems of grading, different methods of teaching, and different ways of interacting. For example, research shows non-Anglophone students are often not comfortable sharing their thoughts or otherwise contributing in the classroom in their home country (Parsons, 2000, p.33). North American students will often speak out without being called on and use colloquial words in discussions. All of this is often considered unacceptable behavior in many international students' home countries (Tompson & Tompson, 1996, p. 56). As a result, international students often do not engage in class discussions because they are not used to learning this way (Tompson & Tompson, 1996, p.55).

Courses are designed for students who are familiar with Canadian society rather than those who are not. To illustrate, Canadian students are familiar with the elements of their system of education such as digital literacy skills. Whereas, international students often feel that they lack the necessary cultural context to do well in their studies. Most of them may find difficult to adapt to the new environment. A study by Chen (1996) found that often the content of courses was also a barrier to international students who felt they did not have enough prior knowledge and experience to participate in class (p.7). Consequently, many international students keep silent in classroom discussions. Lin and Scherz (2014) found that international students were often not able to follow or understand the conversation – much less contribute to the discussion– because of language difficulties (p.22). What is more, international students sometimes do not have the courage to work in groups with native speakers because of their perceived language and cultural difficulties. They prefer studying and working in groups with other international students from similar backgrounds (Tompson & Tompson, 1996, p.55). This is problematic because international students have much to gain from classroom interactions and group work. Guo and

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Chase (2011) found that international students who did participate in classroom discussions reported positive learning experiences. Students learned from each other about "history, geography, culture, education and economic systems of the country they represented, as well as social issues such as war, and poverty for example" (p. 314). All in all, there are many challenges faced by international students in the new Canadian academic environment. This is a problem since the number of international students at Canadian universities is increasing.

In 2011, OECD countries received 77% of all students enrolled outside their country of citizenship. For instance, the United States has the highest number of 17% followed by the United Kingdom (13%), Australia (6%), Germany (6%) and France (6%), (5%) of students were enrolled in Canada, (4%) in Japan, and (4%) in the Russian Federation and Spain with (2%). In contrast, one of the most popular countries has decreased, in the United States for instance, international students dropped from 23% to 17% between 2000 and 2011 (OECD, 2013). In Canada, the amount that international students spend on tuition, accommodation and living expenses provided more than CAD 8 billion to the economy in 2010 (OECD, 2013). This amount is "greater than total Canadian exports of unwrought aluminium (CAD 6 billion) or Helicopters, Airplanes and Spacecraft (CAD 6.9 billion)" (Canada, 2012).

2.2 International Students in Canada

Newby (2012) reports that the Commission on Foreign Student Policy (CFSP) in its review of the history of international students in Canada, found that Canada had received international students primarily from other English speaking countries, and the United States during the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a noticeable shift to international students coming from wealthy, well-developed Asian countries, specifically Hong Kong and Malaysia (p. 29). In contrast, only a limited number of students came from

poorer, less developed countries. In 1993 and 1994, almost 87,000 international students enrolled in Canadian educational institutions and were 1% of Canada's total student enrolment (Chui, 1996, p.42). In 2010, most international students came from China, India, South Korea, and the United States (Newby, 2012, p.29). In 2011, there were over 193,000 international students pursuing post-secondary education in Canada (Institute of International Education, Project Atlas, 2011) while the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2011) (which became Universities Canada in 2015) cites 190,00 international students. Of those 190,00 students, 143,000 were full-time, and 47,000 were enrolled in part-time studies (p. 10). Forty-one percent of international students were enrolled in universities, colleges and trade schools, and one-third (32%) were elementary and secondary students (Chui, 1996, p.43).

There are several reasons that motivate international students to choose Canada to complete their degrees: (1) Canadian universities are known worldwide for quality education, and (2) friends and families have referred them to Canada (Newby, 2012, p.33). Furthermore, Canada is considered an attractive place where international students can apply for scholarships, fellowships, and other sources of financial support (p.33). However, international students often encounter several barriers to success (Lea & Street, 2000). One of these challenges is in academic writing (Ibrahim & Nambiar, 2011, p. 627). There is a growing body of research that supports this. For example, Al Murshidi (2014) found that less than 31% of Middle Eastern students feel comfortable writing their assignment papers (p.87). He also mentioned that one of his participants worried about his writing weaknesses and described writing tasks as very difficult (p.91). The experience in Canada is similar to the experiences of international students elsewhere. According to Ibrahim and Nambiar (2011), international students who were enrolled in Master of English Language Studies at UKM (University Kebangsaan Malaysia) encountered

many academic difficulties in doing their writing projects. Ibrahim and Nambiar found that these challenges were due to the differences of teaching and learning styles, which are why students felt under prepared to write project papers (p.627).

Zhang (2011) conducted a study on ten Chinese international graduate students' conceptions of writing in a Canadian university. Zhang (2011) found that almost all students experienced difficulties related to academic writing skills. Most of them explained their challenges "in terms of idiomatic ways of expression, word choices, sentence structures, and grammar" (p.45). In sum, Kaur and Abdul Manan (2000) concluded that most of the multilingual students' obstacles are related to the use of English as the medium of instruction (p. 27).

2.3 Linguistic barriers

International students' level of language fluency can negatively affect their ability to adjust to their new academic environment. While they may have performed well on English proficiency tests, they find that local English is a mystery to them when they are on Canadian soil. As suggested, international students often find it difficult to speak fluently with their native classmates (Chen, 1996, p.10). Tompson and Tompson (1996) also found that students who come from non-English speaking countries found it difficult to understand lectures in class (p.55).

Many international students are cognizant of their need to improve their level of English proficiency even though some students may have already spent a number of years studying English. This improvement consists of being able to comprehend lectures, jot down notes, respond to questions, and to produce writing for assignments. As mentioned, international students sometimes have difficulty comprehending lectures because of their vocabulary resources. They find this especially difficult when instructors in class use slang or speak fast

which causes international students to become confused (Andrade, 2006; Lin & Scherz, 2014). Moreover, the problem sometimes is psychological when it is related to the fear of making mistakes in speaking or obtaining negative feedback from instructors (Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010, p. 349), or they feel too shy to engage in discussion (Guo & Chase, 2011, p.315). Parsons (2000) found that Asian students were less confident when compared to African students because African students were often exposed to English in their home universities (p.31). Asian students preferred not to speak in class due to their perceived lack of skills. Calderwood (1993) believes that international students will achieve success if they are supported to communicate and practice their English in small groups (p.69).

Although language proficiency is important, there is an argument in the literature that learning the 'language' of the community is more important. For example, even though a student may be proficient in English, he or she may not be proficient in academic English. This challenge often becomes apparent in academic writing. Academic writing is a key problem that multilingual students face in their new academic community.

2.4 Academic writing

2.4.1 Defining literacies

The present study focuses on the difficulty encountered by multilingual student in academic writing in western graduate contexts. Hence, it is very important to discuss what it means to become academically literate in Anglo-sphere countries where English is the medium of instruction. First of all, the concept of literacy is more complex than reading and writing. Braine (2002) emphasizes that the concept of literacy "extends beyond the ability to read and write" (p. 59). It is more about reading and writing specific documents in particular fields. It encompasses "ways of knowing particular content, languages, and practices" (Johns, 1997, p. 2).

Essentially, literacy becomes literacies because there are numerous literacies that a student needs to acquire: reading, critical thinking, research literacies, argument, etc. Writing is often seen as the key literacy since this is where the other literacies are expressed. Writing is also a major mechanism of assessment.

For multilingual students, the process of becoming academically literate in the new community of practice is indeed complex and bewildering (Braine, 2002; Johns, 1997). These challenges are perhaps mostly related to the stage of writing academically in a thesis or course assessments. Graduate students need to learn how to write fluently in their field of study in order to succeed in writing their research projects. In reality, this process of learning to write academically within a discipline is fraught with tension and contestation (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016).

It is often assumed that students came into the university with background knowledge on how to write in academic contexts. However, research has shown this is not the case. From this perspective, researches argue that students are required to learn the literacies of the field where they study. In other words, students have to have the literacies they need in order to succeed in their academic life (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016).

Since the main purpose of the study is to examine multilingual students' academic writing, it is fruitful to make a clear distinction between the different levels of the learning to write that graduate students engage in. For this reason, the study borrows Lea and Street's (1998) three models of students' writing.

2.4.1.1 Writing as study skills

The first model is often the dominant approach in university settings. It is based on the assumption that writing requires the mastery of rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling (Russell et al., 2009, p. 400) that can be transferred from one context to another (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158) to ensure that students are competent in academic writing. From this perspective, Lea and Street (1998) focus "on attempts to 'fix' problems with student learning, which are treated as a kind of pathology" (p. 159). However, this problem-oriented approach is itself considered problematic from students' point of view (Sung, 2000, p. 4). As Sung (2000) noted:

> The literature tends to focus on what these students cannot do in their study or their unfitness and failure for studying in the United States. In fact, only a very small number of studies on international students have been interested in what those students can do to overcome their language barriers and as a result succeed in their studies (p. 4).

From this point of view, multilingual students are viewed as culturally unfit in their new educational systems. However, a number of researchers are highly aware of, and critical of, this "deficit perspective" (Canagarajah, 2014; Lea & Street, 2000; Zamel, 1995) which does not provide any dignity to multilingual writers. They encourage going beyond problem identification and avoiding a deficit model that has proved to be less than helpful. Canagarajah (2014) calls this the "difference-as-deficit" perspective instead of calling it "difference-as-resource" perspective (p. 13) and points out that: "We shouldn't be surprised that L2 students fall short when L1 writing is treated as the norm or point of reference" (p. 12).

From the perspective of a skills approach, students are seen as in deficit and they, individually have to develop their cognitive ability in writing. This approach has proved to be limited. Lea and street (1998) state, "In recent years the crudity and insensitivity of this approach have led to the refinement of the meaning of the 'skills' involved and attention to broader issues of learning and social context" (p. 159). They call this developed approach "academic socialization" (p. 159).

2.4.1.2 Writing as academic socialization

The second approach views writing as acquiring an understanding of the genres and language used in the discipline. From this perspective, it is the instructor who is in deficit for not explaining explicitly the academic writing of the discipline or the culture to the students (Russell et al. 2009, p. 400). According to this view, learning writing is seen as embedded in the discipline. In other words, the academic socialization model takes for granted that students need to be socialized into the discourses and genres of particular disciplines (p. 400). Although this model takes into account contextual factors essential to student writing, "this approach tends to treat writing as a transparent medium of representation and so fails to address the deep language, literacy and discourse issues involved in the institutional production and representation of meaning" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159).

2.4.1.3 Writing as social practices

The third approach to writing is writing as social practice. Lea and Street (1998) focus on the importance of recognizing the uniqueness and power of multilingual students (p. 158). They coin the title "academic literacies" as an approach in which learning and writing are seen "as issues at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skill or socialization" (p. 159). This approach considers writing as a tool to mediate language, situation, and context (Horner, 2013, p.

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4). Although this model contains many of the features of the other two, it "shifts the focus from the individual to broader social practices" (Badenhorst et al. 2015, p. 1). Lea and Street (1998) argue that the academic literacies model is the best one as it takes into consideration the students' writing background in relation to academic environment practices, power relations, and identities (Russell et al. 2009, p. 400).

The third model of Lea and Street is crucial in terms of interpreting multilingual academic writing for two reasons. Firstly, an academic literacies approach provides an opportunity to "understand the unique challenges confronting multilingual students" (Canagarajah, 2014, p. 34) independently from English as a first language. Canagarajah (2014) advocates "we have to develop a more bilateral interaction with L1 composition circles, where we not only borrow constructs from them but also critically examine those in terms of our unique classroom contexts and contribute to the theorization of literacy independently" (p. 26). Secondly, an academic literacies perspective gives more space for multilingual students to exhibit agency. This model is appropriate to address multilingual students' challenges in academic writing. Rather, each multilingual student has the power to "learn what knowledge is valued, what questions can be asked and who is allowed to ask while at the same time learning what they know and how to write what they know" (Badenhorst et al. 2015, p. 2).

2.4.2 The importance of community

From the models described above, it is clear that teaching writing as an independent transferable skill does not equip multilingual students for the new literacies they need to acquire in their new contexts. Therefore, writing is not only about coming to know the language and writing practices, it is about understanding knowledge in different disciplinary communities (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 30).

From this perspective, teachers of academic writing argue about the importance of learning to write from *within* the academic community. In other words, the argument here is that students need to be aware of the cultural assumptions, values, and practices in order to communicate effectively. The only way to learn these assumptions is by getting involved and engaged in the community from the inside. In this way, students will be able to develop communicative competence and be familiar with language use in context.

For many in the literature, writing as a social practice is related to communities of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) and their notion of situated learning emphasize the importance of learning from inside a context. They explain the importance of legitimate peripheral participation in the learning process. This interaction occurs among the novice students when they move slowly from the periphery of the community to full membership in the community of practice. That is to say, newcomers participate fully in the activities of a community in order to acquire the knowledge and the skills (p.29). As the authors state, "legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between the newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice" (p.29).

Canagarajah (2002) uses the theory of communities of practice to show how multilingual students move from the periphery to the centre as they engage in the practices of the community. However, he argues that "communities" are often not easy to identify; they are sometimes a mixture or "hybrids", and they often do not have clear, distinct practices (p. 31). This is important because it is often hard for multilingual writers to identify the practices, language and processes of the community.

2.4.3 Multilingual students and their writing backgrounds

For many institutions and faculty, writing is still considered to be the fault of individual students rather than a community of practice that excludes international students (Badenhorst et al. 2015, p. 1). Many universities categorize multilingual writers as deficient and different (Haggis, 2006, p. 526). The cause of this problem is seen to be students' weak academic background, lack of English language proficiency or disadvantaged cultural backgrounds. Clearly, academic writing is considered to be a crucial element for academic success for international students (Arkoudis, 2007, p. 158). Research shows that many multilingual graduate students - whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from the rest of the students in the English academic environment (Morton, Storch & Thompson, 2015, p. 1) - would write very differently in their home country. In effect, most of the students "may come to see themselves as ineffectual and inept writers" (Fernsten & Reda, 2011, p. 172). They are often depicted as deficient and underdeveloped or labeled as "basic writers" (Harris, 1997, p. 130). Multilingual students find themselves obliged to learn to learn not only the language but the practices of the new community as well but as outsiders to the community. This is particularly difficult because they continue to belong to their own linguistic communities or communities of practice. However, once these multilingual writers participate in the community and learn how to write in the new context, they can become "good writers" (Fernsten & Reda, 2011, p. 172). In light of developing this argument, Canagarajah (2002) addresses some of the dominant models in writing practices of multilingual students in relation to disciplinary communities.

2.4.3.1 World Englishes

The term World Englishes (WE) refers to the varieties forms of English spoken around the world. Kachru (1990) proposed a three circle model. The first one is the Inner Circle, which

includes the Native English speaking countries. The second one is the Outer Circle, which includes the colonized territories and finally the Expanding Circle, which includes the countries that believe English is an important language for their daily lives (p. 4).

The varieties of English from the Expanding and Outer Circle are still treated as inappropriate for classroom context in the Inner Circle (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 588). The statistics predicted that in 2050 multilingual users of English would be 30 million more than the native speakers (p. 589). In this case, multilingual speakers have much larger speech community and they will be able to use their own varieties in English with more confidence, as there will be other millions around the world who would share similar varieties. It means "their reference point is not British or American communities anymore" (p. 589). These changes will lead us to rethink English as a plural language that encompasses multiple dialects, norms and standards. Canagarajah (2006) believes that "English should be treated as multinational language, one that belongs to diverse communities and not owned only by the metropolitan communities" (p. 589).

With increasing globalization, multilingual speakers of English would bring their Englishes physically to the neighborhoods of communities in England, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Canagarajah (2006) claimed that "a classroom based on 'standard' English and formal instruction limits the linguistic acquisition, creativity, and production among students" (p. 592). Multilingual students feel disabled in the monolingual classrooms as their varieties of English are not accommodated.

The message conveyed to multilingual students is that local Englishes are allowed in speaking contexts only, but restricted in formal writing. Canagarajah (2006) encouraged

multilingual students "to bring their Englishes into formal academic writing in a curriculum that encourages their varieties in everything other than formal/graded assignments" (p. 597).

2.4.3.2 English for Academic Purposes

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) was one approach adopted to help multilingual writers. This is a very pragmatic approach to writing (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 33). EAP has a clear goal, which is to improve skills required to succeed in an English-speaking academic environment, but "it often fails to acknowledge difference in community practices" (Harwood & Hadley, 2004, p. 355). In this approach, it is taken for granted that academic discourse is not open to criticism. If a student tries to merge the discourse system from his/her own community with the established discourse of a discipline, then he/she is considered incompetent in writing and treated as a "problem" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 32). With an EAP approach, multilingual writers would be taught 'academic language' and while this is useful, Canagarajah (2002) argues that it teaches multilingual writers that writing and language is fixed, static, and homogenous (p. 32). Multilingual writers find when they attempt to engage in the broader academic community, this is often not the case. With EAP, the focus is on communication and not understanding the underlying processes of knowledge making. In this approach, the multilingual writer has to switch discourses and leave everything they know behind and adopt EAP.

From an EAP approach, Ibrahim and Nambiar's (2011) research showed that international students did not receive any training in their home country on how to write their project papers (p.627). Even though they have good knowledge of the subject, international students found themselves disappointed with their lower grade achievements from their weak academic writing (Kaur & Abdul Manan, 2000, p. 27). Similarly, Brown (2007) concluded that postgraduate students often feel frustrated and pressured about the writing requirements, which

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make it difficult to adapt to the new academic culture of their host university (p.5). Also, they were often not aware of academic writing requirements (He & Shi, 2008, p. 130) because several factors impact on their academic writing performance. First, many studies have shown that multilingual students are worried and anxious about learning academic writing (Al Murshidi, 2014, p. 87). The second factor is related to students' confidence. Anxious students would succeed and improve if they were more confident. Under the umbrella of the EAP approach, multilingual students would not be able to draw on the resources of their vernacular, and they "appear to lack the strength and resources represented by their own knowledge tradition" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 32). In sum, this approach has no space for multilingual students to exhibit agency.

2.4.3.3 Contrastive rhetoric

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) is another approach to teaching writing to multilingual writers. This approach is a key element to understand the students' cultural context on their writing (Fujieda, 2006, p.64). That is to say, CR takes into account the cultural differences in writing and the different communities a multilingual writer may belong to. In other words, CR analyses the second language writing of learners in order "to understand how it is affected by their first language and culture" (Quinn, 2012, p.31). This "empowers teachers by providing them with the explicit awareness of differences in writing in different languages" (Cumming, 2012, p. 5). However, academic writing is still mysterious and poorly understood by teachers and students alike. (Harwood & Hadley, 2004, p. 355).

Robert Kaplan initiated CR a few decades ago and it is based on the idea that "language and writing are cultural phenomena" (Connor, 2002, p.494). Kaplan (1966) studied and analyzed the rhetorical patterns between L1 and L2 and identified five different types of paragraphs

(English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian) (p. 15). It was mentioned that "Contrastive rhetoric was originally carried out to help students from other language backgrounds adapt their written English for study purposes in English-speaking contexts" (Maxwell-Reid, 2011, p. 418). Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) mentioned two important studies by Spack and Casanave who had investigated the writing experiences of multilingual graduate and undergraduate students in the United States academic environment. They found that the issue is not because students are unable to write, it is simply because they think and write in different ways (p.494).

Contrastive rhetoric explains why students who take EAP still struggle with writing. Canagarajah (2002) criticizes CR for being culturally deterministic. He questions whether everyone from a particular culture will write one particular way but he sees CR as an advance of EAP because it takes communities, culture, and discourses into account (p. 34). CR allows students to see how they write in their home country and what is different about writing in the new country. In this approach, multilingual writers can understand the reasons behind their writing style and it recognizes home cultures, but essentially these students have to switch discourses as well.

Asian students, for example, have the most difficulty in getting used to English discourse patterns. Their writing contains the rhetorical concentric circles, which make it puzzling for western readers to understand (Quinn, 2012, p.33). To illustrate further differences, Japanese writers for instance, anticipate that the reader will extract meaning from a text. Conversely English writers, consider themselves responsible for meaning in a text so more transitions and metadiscourse (signposts) are provided (p.33).

Canagarajah (2002) critiques CR for perpetuating what he calls a 'normative' approach to language (p. 35). In other words, an approach to writing that requires the writer to focus solely on English or otherwise he/she will lose the membership in the community. Even though CR gives dignity to the vernacular discourses of multilingual students, it ignores the issue of power and keeps its disciplinary boundaries protected (p. 35).

2.4.3.4 Social process

Canagarajah (2002) then moves to discuss the Social Process (SP) approach or as he calls it 'boundary crossing'. In this approach, "students can shuttle between their vernacular community and the disciplinary audience without conflict" (p. 36). Students can use their home language and identities while learning the processes of the new language in a context. Students engage in multiple community memberships and do not have to sacrifice one for the other. That is to say, students enjoy their membership in the new country while they preserve their own primary identity in communication. While Canagarajah sees SP as an advance on EAP and CR, he feels that SP does not take into account notions of power. For example, if "students are uncomfortable with representing their identities through academic discourses", they are often unable to maintain their vernacular (home) identity in the new community (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 37). In this approach, multilingualism is still a mechanism to learn and adapt to academic English.

2.4.3.5 Transculturation model

Canagarajah (2002) moves on to the Transculturation Model (TM), which he describes as merging boundaries. He argues that people do not have distinct communities and identities. Communities and identities shift, get remade and reform all the time. Disciplinary discourses are not discrete and separate but continually overlap and merge (p .37). Zamel (1997) states that

comparing one language to another augments the idea that languages are disconnected and even in opposition to each other and keeps instructors from understanding the complex ways in which languages intersect and mingle (p. 341). She believes that students with multicultural backgrounds may combine discourse boundaries, which will produce creative writing with mixed genres. There are multiple spaces for student agency in this model: "Students do not have to be restricted by their native linguistic or cultural backgrounds or the exclusionary practices of dominant groups, in their communicative life" (p. 38). This is a much more complex approach to writing, discourses and communities. In this approach, multilingual writers fuse their home discourse with the new academic one, and they "don't have to be restricted by their native linguistic or cultural backgrounds" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 38). However, Canagarajah criticizes TM as it lacks "a critical orientation to this boundary crossing process" (p. 38). Despite having some agency, student writers will always be occupying positions of less equality.

2.4.3.6 Contact zones

Contact Zones (CZ) is the final approach that was addressed by Canagarajah (2002). This concept was introduced by Mary Louise Pratt who stated, "I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). This approach recognizes that negotiations and struggles always take place over writing. Some writers are able to negotiate agency and power in some instances. It recognizes that multilingual writers have unequal power: "Because of the unequal relationship, multilingual writers have to adopt many subtle and creative strategies of communication to construct their oppositional forms of knowledge and discourses" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 40). Students adopt creative strategies to remake academic conventions

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and practices to represent their own interests and values. In this approach multilingual students can appropriate: "dominant discourses according their interests and values in order to gain voice" (p. 40). In other words, they can change, academic discourses through transcultural critique (challenging the dominant ways of doing things), through narrative and through vernacular usage. Multilingual students should maintain their practices, experiences and values while they engage with academic discourse. As such, "the job of a student writer is not to leave one discourse in order to enter another, but to take things that are usually kept apart and bring them together" (Harris, 1995, p. 31). They should be conscious of the state being partially 'outsider' in dealing with texts, and activities. They do not have to become totally insiders and give up their own experiences (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 41).

All of these approaches are schools of thought on how multilingual writers engage in their new academic communities and are based on the idea that writing is a social practice. Each model is useful to guide our understanding on identity and academic writing. While EAP and CR preserve their boundaries, SP and TM provide multilingual students with a chance to cross the discourse boundaries. These models are very helpful explore how multilingual students write academically in a particular discipline.

2.5 Summary

This study focuses on the main challenges that international graduate students encounter while writing academic papers. This chapter provided a discussion about the topic from the existing literature. The chapter contains several parts that provided an overview of the literature related to: (a) international students in Canadian academic milieu and their linguistic barriers, (b) a general overview of academic writing and the theory of literacies, (c) multilingual graduate

students in relation to their academic backgrounds (d) dominant models in writing practices, and (e) the shift from second language writing to multilingualism.

In the literature, multilingual students find academic writing very challenging because they belong to different communities of practice, and already come with membership in other communities of practice (Canagarajah, 2002, p.31). From the literature, we can see that debates have shifted from an emphasis on individual' skills' deficit to understanding the complexity of the matter and that other factors come into play such as language, curriculum, writing pedagogies, literacy practices, disciplinary knowledge, etc.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of this study. A description of qualitative research will be provided, followed by the main characteristics of the case-study method selected. Then the sampling procedures, data collection methods and data analysis will be outlined. I will then discuss the trustworthiness of the data and the role of the researcher in this study. The last part of this section focuses on the relevant ethical considerations. My research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What do multilingual graduate students in Education *experience* with their academic writing at MUN?
2. What are the *challenges* they encounter?
3. What are the *strategies* applied by multilingual students in writing their academic papers?

The aim of this study was to examine the experiences and challenges of graduate international students in writing their academic papers and what strategies they use to overcome their challenges. For this purpose, a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach was employed.

3.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research focuses on an in-depth probing of people's beliefs, assumptions, understandings, opinions, actions, or interactions (Doyle, 2014). Creswell (2012) described a qualitative approach as the best way "to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore" (p.17). Qualitative research is "interested in how meaning is

constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24).

This is particularly relevant to understand how graduate students think and write academically.

Since this study aims to explore student experiences, a qualitative approach seemed the most

appropriate.

3.2.1 Case study

A case study method has been used for this research design. The value of a case study is

to understand a larger issue through a specific case, which may comprise a smaller context or

number of people. It inquires about how people build their reality in depth and in context. This

contrasts with a quantitative approach that collects "numeric data from a large number of people

using instruments with preset questions and responses" (Creswell, 2012, p. 26). Hence, the case

study approach enables the researcher to go beyond large statistical data and understand the

behavioral situations within a specific context (Zainal, 2007).

A case study "provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling

readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or

principles" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 289).

3.3 Context and Sampling

My research study took place at Memorial University, which has witnessed a large

increase of international students from 978 in 2007 (Fowler, 2007) to more than 2,123 in 2014

(Fowler, 2014). These students come from more than 90 countries around the world, and they are

enrolled in over 100 graduate diplomas, master's degree programs, and doctoral degree

programs, which comprise 11% of the total student population at Memorial (www.mun.ca/isa).

In 2015, according to the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) at MUN, 2312

international students from all over the world registered as graduate and undergraduate. The highest number of students (575) came from China. The second largest group came from Nigeria with 214 students. The third largest group came from Bangladesh with 158 students, then India with 156 and after that Iran with 112 (27th annual Fact Book).

In employing a qualitative approach, researchers can choose the participants and places that will help them to understand the case being examined. In this case, "the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals and sites" (Creswell, 2009, p. 206).

The researcher selected the Faculty of Education because there are a large number of international students in the Faculty, and most of the graduate students in this Faculty are required to write academic papers for their assignments unlike other disciplines such as Engineering. The goal was to recruit past and current international students, about 6 to 10 (males and females) at master's and doctoral level in the Education Faculty. The participants could be from different countries and everyone would represent his or her point of view from their own backgrounds. Finally, seven international graduate students were recruited at the master's (5 students) and doctoral (2 students) level. Students were invited to be interviewed one-on-one, which means that participants were asked questions and answers were recorded from only one participant in the study at a time.

The main purpose of conducting sampling in educational research is to permit the researcher to conduct a detailed study of a part, rather than the whole, of the population (Ross, 2005). In this study, I applied two main strategies of purposeful sampling: maximal variation, and snowball sampling.

Maximal variation is defined as a "strategy in which the researcher samples cases or

individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait" (Creswell, 2012, p. 207). Source texts

suggest that it is very useful, in the beginning of the study, to locate participants that represent

the phenomenon. Participants for the study were recruited by sending emails through the ISA

(International Student Advising) listserv at MUN. This medium is a significant communication

means for international students. Moreover, the Faculty of Education has a gradsociety listserv

for graduate students, and this was used to circulate the information about the research project

and invite participation.

Snowball sampling was also applied in order to locate "a few key participants who easily

meet the criteria you have established for participation in the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). In

snowball sampling, participants invite people they know who meet the characteristics of the

sample to contact the researcher (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011). This method of sampling

relies on participants' existing social networks.

3.4 Data collection: Interviews

To collect data, interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and

open-ended to give more freedom to the participants to discuss and to "identify any comments

people might have that are beyond the responses to the closed-ended questions" (Creswell, 2012,

p. 220). Interviews were employed because it "is necessary when we cannot observe behavior,

feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). This gave the

informant the space to express meaning in his or her own words (Brenner, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to enter "the psychological and social world

of the respondent" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 59). Furthermore, this method of collecting data

also gives voice, authority, and freedom to the participants to express their perceptions but also

allows the researcher to be more objective. As a result, important themes can emerge in the

course of the semi-structured interviews "through collaboration between the interviewee and the researcher" (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003, p. 140).

These face-to-face interviews with international students did, indeed, provide detailed insights into their experiences, and challenges regarding their academic writing and the strategies they used to overcome their problems. This approach allowed the participants to express their thoughts and experiences freely. It also gave them chance to put forward their own ideas including suggestions on how to improve university services.

Since the focus of the research was to capture student's perspectives on their experiences, and challenges in academic writing and the strategies they used, this type of interview was the most appropriate method of data collection. This research method provided the researcher with rich data on the difficulties that international graduate students encounter in writing academically.

Interviews were audio-recorded and lasted for approximately one hour each. After completing all the interviews with participants, data were subsequently transcribed for analysis, and saved in word documents. After that, the participants were sent a follow-up email with the transcript attached. They were requested to review their transcripts to make sure that the information reflected their thoughts and was an accurate depiction of the interview.

Most of the interviews took place in the graduate room in the Faculty of Education. This location was chosen because it is a quiet and comfortable room and the interviews would not be interrupted. Five graduate students were interviewed in this room since this was a familiar room for them and they found it convenient. The two other interviews were conducted at the Queen

Elizabeth Library of Memorial University. The library has a group study rooms which, was

chosen by the other two interviewees as the graduate room was not vacant at that time.

After recruiting seven interested participants, the informed consent form (Appendix A)

and interview questions (Appendix B) were sent to them couple of days before the day of the

interview so that participants had enough time to read it carefully and go through all the essential

points. The researcher contacted all the participants through emails to set the date, time, and

location of the interviews. In the beginning of each interview, the researcher had to break the ice

with the participants and build conditions of mutual trust and comfort. This was done through

chatting about home, and academic life at MUN, since the researcher and the participants were in

the same field of study. Before each interview, the researcher explained the main points of the

informed consent form and gave time for participants to ask questions if they had any. The

participants were informed that interviews would be audio-recorded and would last for

approximately one hour. Participants were also informed that pseudonyms would be used to

cover their identity. Names or identifying makers would not be used in any publication or

presentation. Participants were also informed that they could member-check the interview

transcript before it was included in the study. In addition, all the participants would receive a

copy of the audio and transcript for their own files after the interview.

After that, both the researcher and the participants signed the informed consent form.

During the interview, the researcher also wrote notes to make sure he fully understood the

interviewees. All the audio files were recorded using two phones in case one did not function.

Then, the mp3 files were transferred to a personal computer.

There were 17 interview questions (Appendix B). Most of the questions were open-ended

and covered the main research questions of the study. The questions were developed based on

the broad analysis of three overarching research questions. These questions covered the participants home language, previous degree, future plans, work experience, challenges, strategies etc. For example: When did you write academically for the first time? How would you describe your academic writing back home? Was it here or back home? How did you feel? What were the specific problems that you encountered in your writings? Can you give an example? Can you identify one key solution for your writing problems? (See questions N 2, 3, 8, and 16 in Appendix B)

Open-ended questions lead the participants to "best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researchers or past research findings" (Creswell, 2009, p.218).

3.5 Data analysis

My research questions covered three main themes explored in this study: students' experiences in a new academic environment, challenges they face in academic writing, and strategies they used to overcome these obstacles. The bulk of the data to address these questions was collected from the interviews. Merriam (2009) stated "Data analysis is the process used to answer your research questions," (p.176). After completing data collection, the next step was to organize the data and make sense of texts though analysis, then to form answers to the research questions. This process of analyzing the data allowed certain themes and patterns to emerge from the transcriptions. The responses were categorized and coded into themes generally around the research questions. In this case, we adopted Merriam's constant comparative method to analyze data. This method was used by the researcher to develop understandings of data by generating codes (Kolb, 2012, p. 83). This method contains several steps. First, each interview transcript was divided into segments. These segments of data were then collected into categories

based on similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009, p. 30). Then, comments, observations, and notes were jotted down in the margins. This process of coding is often called open coding. It is a "process of making notations next to bits of data that strike you as potentially relevant for answering your research questions" (p. 178). This step focused on giving codes to pieces of data and collecting them in categories. This process of grouping open codes is called axial or analytical coding. This step has to do with finding connections between categories and creating comparisons.

The second step is sorting categories and data. In this process, the categories and subcategories are rearranged and renamed to reflect the codes emerging in the data. Then, a file folder is created and named with a category name and contains data that is coded according to its theme. The researcher then can print any category desired.

All the codes are listed and attached to every transcript (Appendix C). Then, the same procedure was applied with all the transcriptions. Finally, the lists of themes were compared to one another. This process was repeated until the seventh transcription was completed. All the codes were categorized to form the final main themes and concepts.

NVivo 11 software was used to conduct the qualitative data analysis. This gave more clarity to the process of coding.

3.6 Trustworthiness

This study included strategies to improve trustworthiness and validate the accuracy of data. Creswell (2012) stated three procedures to ensure the credibility of findings in qualitative research: triangulation, member checking, and external audit.

Creswell (2012) defined triangulation as "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (p. 259). In this study, there is triangulation from different individuals who were interviewed. – It was clear to see similar issues emerging from the data analysis.

Member checking was employed to guarantee the accuracy of data. It is "a process in which the researchers ask one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). All the participants were given a copy of their own files (audio and transcripts) after the interview and asked to member-check their transcripts for accuracy before the start of data analysis. They were all satisfied with the transcripts.

The last strategy that is used in the study is an external audit. A researcher may "ask a person outside the project to conduct a thorough review of the study and report back" (Creswell, 2012, p. 260). In this case, the researcher's supervisor played the role of external auditor.

3.7 Role of the researcher

The researcher is considered an instrument in qualitative research (Doyle, 2014). This means that data are mediated through the human instrument rather than machines. As I mentioned, I am an international student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. During my graduate coursework, I became interested in examining international students' challenges in coming to new academic environment.   As a result of this growing interest I developed in this subject, I decided to focus my thesis on academic writing challenges.

I recognize that I am playing two roles in this research: One as researcher and the other as an international student. I was very concerned about being as objective as possible. I developed a rigorous data analysis strategy to aid me in this objectivity and I constantly

questioned my own bias. I kept my focus on the transcription documents and sought to express only what participants had to say.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was received from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) of MUN. The materials reviewed by the ICEHR encompassed a research proposal, informed consent form, interviews questions, recruitment and posting letter employed in conducting this study. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were asked to sign the informed consent form which briefly outlined the objectives, benefits, and risks of the study and ensured them that their names will be kept anonymous using pseudonyms. In addition, all the interviewees were informed of their rights and their option to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the generation of findings.

The audio files were recorded using my phones and transferred to my personal computer. Also the transcriptions were stored into my computer as well. After the research is finished, all the data will be kept in a protected USB device. All data (audio, consent forms, transcripts) will be kept for a minimum of five years and will be stored securely. A copy of the consent form, interview protocol, and recruitment forms are provided in Appendix A and B.

3.9 Summary

A qualitative case study research design was chosen as the best way to explore the lived knowledge and feelings of the participants. The aim of the study was to understand the experiences, challenges, and strategies of graduate international students in academic writing. Seven participants were recruited using maximal variation and snowball sampling. This chapter explained the research design, methods, and the steps used in data analysis along with the

strategies followed by the researcher to locate participants, ensure trustworthiness of data and

abide by ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This findings chapter discusses the various categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Three research questions guided the analysis:

1. What do multilingual graduate students in Education *experience* with their academic writing at MUN?

2. What are the *challenges* they encounter?

3. What are the *strategies* applied by multilingual students in writing their academic papers?

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, challenges and strategies of multilingual graduate students with academic writing in Faculty of Education at Memorial University. The data were collected from interviews with seven participants. Five of them are master's students and two are doctoral candidates.

The first section of this chapter presents briefly the participants' profiles and perceptions. The purpose of the second section is to report the results of this study in detail. The analysis of data led in the emergence of several categories. Themes and sub-themes within these categories have been described in detail as well. Figure 1 provides a summary of the findings and as an overview of the data and Figure 2 is a word diagram that shows the most repeated words in the interviews.
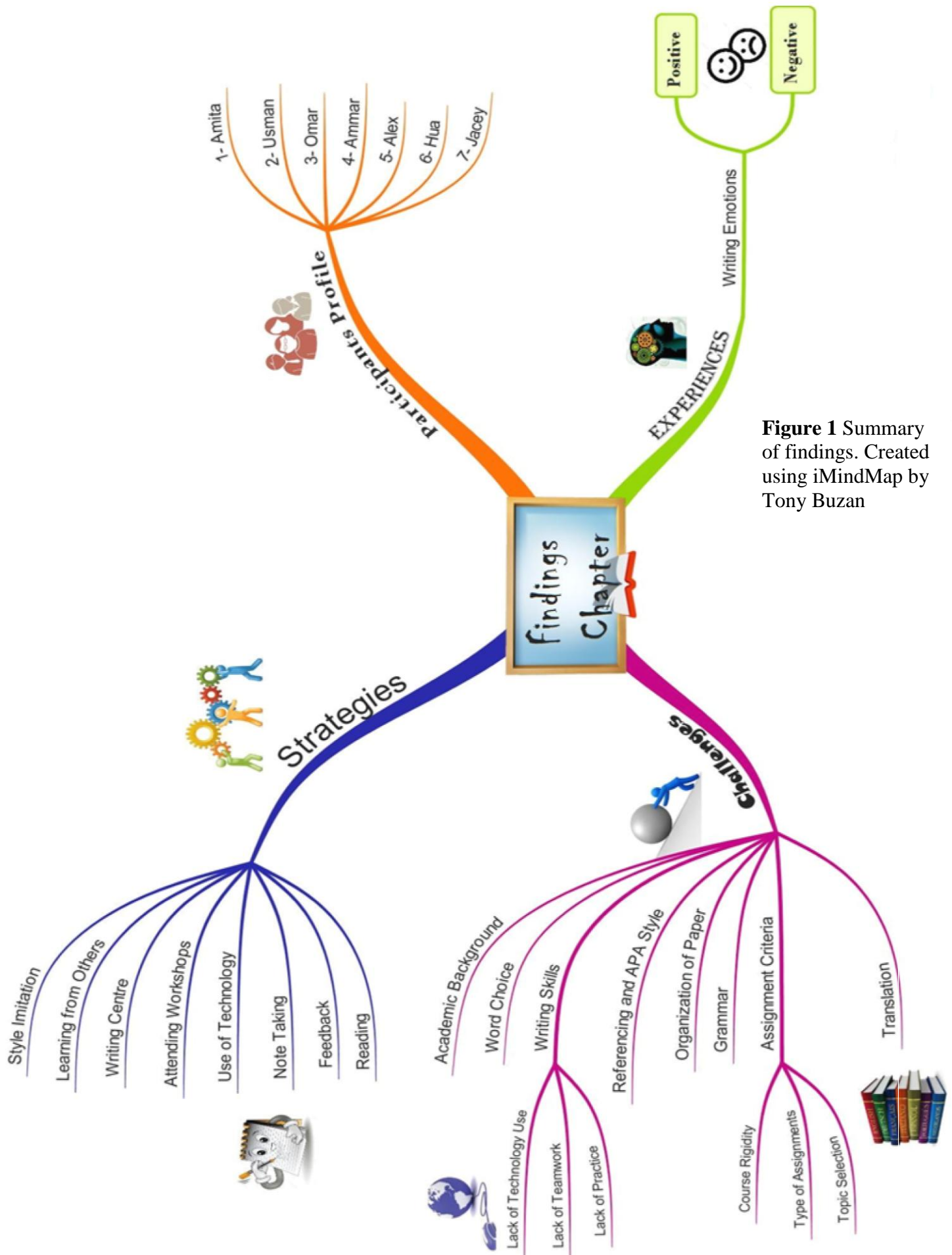
Figure 1 Summary of findings. Created using iMindMap by Tony Buzan

Participants Profile
1- Amita
2- Usman
3- Omar
4- Ammar
5- Alex
6- Hua
7- Jacey

EXPERIENCES
Writing Emotions
Positive
Negative

findings Chapter

Strategies
Style Imitation
Learning from Others
Writing Centre
Attending Workshops
Use of Technology
Note Taking
Feedback
Reading

Challenges
Academic Background
Word Choice
Writing Skills
Lack of Technology Use
Lack of Teamwork
Lack of Practice
Referencing and APA Style
Organization of Paper
Grammar
Assignment Criteria
Course Rigidity
Type of Assignments
Topic Selection
Translation

Figure 3 Tree image of the most repeated words in the interviews. Generated by NVivo starter 11

4.2 Respondent Profiles

Respondent one: Amita* is from India. Her mother tongue is Punjabi. She has completed her Master in Educational Leadership from Memorial University. Most of her education at home was in English-based courses. Amita wrote academically for the first time, her first paper, in Canada. This was one of her assignments. Before this paper she said she did not even know what writing academically means.

Amita wrote essays at home however she was not required to follow academic standards such as APA style or referencing. She thought writing academically is like any piece of writing. When she was enrolled in her Master of Educational Leadership, she had to write academically in a particular way; beginning from the first course in the program of the study to finally writing her master's thesis. At some point in her master's program, she decided to drop the idea of doing thesis and switched to course-based program. This she says was largely due to APA referencing. She made a lot of mistakes in her academic writing and received corrections from her professor, and she felt she was not doing good job and quitted the thesis route.

Amita identified three challenges in academic writing: word choice, APA style, and assignment criteria. After she went through trial and error in her assignments, she became more satisfied with her academic writing, and went back on the thesis route, she completed successfully her thesis. Currently, she is working in a professional job related to her Education degree and she is happy in the position she working. Amita suggested three solutions to her writing problems: read, compare, and analyse.

Respondent two: Usman is a graduate student from Pakistan. He did his first master's degree, a Master of English in his home country, and a second master's degree from Memorial University

*Names have been changed

in Curriculum Teaching and Learning studies. Usman's first language is Urdu; English is taught in Pakistan as a second language. He wants to pursue a career in academia either in Canada or anywhere around the world.

In Canada, he wrote and published nine papers while in his graduate program at MUN, and whenever he reads his papers again, he feels he could now do better. The 9 papers are in the areas of E-learning, rural education, and second language learning through technology. Usman's has two major problems in academic writing: Articles and cohesion. He identified one key solution to the writing problems that students encounter, this was a course in academic writing at the graduate level that Faculty of Education offers. Unfortunately, it was not offered when he could take it.

Respondent three: In 2016, Omar completed his Master of Education from Memorial University in Curriculum Teaching and Learning Studies. He is from Turkey and his mother language is Turkish. His future plan is to find a teaching job in Canada. Omar has many years of experience in teaching at home. He was a high school math teacher for 12 years. He did his first master's degree in Secondary Science and Math Education about fourteen years ago, and all the courses were taught in English. Omar's major obstacle in writing was related to the assignments criteria. He compared his previous master's program and the one he has now completed at MUN and found that most of the assignments topics at MUN, were not within his area of interest.

Omar never had any kind of training in writing at home, and even in Canada. His previous degree was a project-based program which means he was familiar with writing short project reports. In other words, at the end of each project he wrote a report about what he did on the project. He stated that almost of all his assignments at Memorial University were

papers/essays. He said he chose a technical course titled "Technology Use in Math Education" and was asked to write a paper of about three to five thousand words. He reported that it was his worst grade on an assignment he had ever had.

Omar believes that writing is a talent like music, or sport and he does not feel he has that talent. It was very frustrating for him to write academic papers, and he had to work patiently for days in order to complete even one-page of an assignment at the beginning of his program. At the end of his degree, he felt that he knew the basics about academic writing, although he felt he was still not a good academic writer. His major challenges were related to APA style, shyness, and assignment criteria.

Respondent four: Ammar is a graduate student from the Middle East. Ammar's first language is Arabic. He came to Memorial University to do his graduate degree in Education. Ammar was a teacher back home and shifted to work as a researcher in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. His future plan is to be a faculty member in a university back home.

Although he did his bachelors and master's degree in English at his home university, he did not get that much exposure to English. As most of his courses were in Arabic, only 20 percent were in English, so he decided to write his master's thesis in Arabic language at home. At that time, Ammar felt that his academic writing needed to be improved. At MUN, he faced issues of translating from first to second language, and, of course, English grammar.

Before Ammar came to Memorial University, he decided to study academic writing at the Canadian Language Learning College in Halifax for about a year and half. Now, he feels satisfied about his level of academic writing, even though he still has issues with translating. He

recently wrote a paper and it has been accepted for publication. He identified one key solution for his writing problems which is learning from the feedback he received.

Respondent five: Alex is originally from Ghana. He came to Memorial University to do his Master of Education in Curriculum Teaching and Learning Studies with a focus on mathematics. His future plan is to teach k-12 classes back in Ghana. Fanti is his mother tongue, even though English is considered as official language in Ghana. Alex wrote his first paper in group assignments when he was doing his undergraduate degree in Ghana. He reported that group assignment was easy compared to individual writing assignments which were difficult.

Alex's first assignment in Canada was in a course called "Teaching and Learning". He was required to write about 350 words after reading four-chapters of a book. At the beginning, he did not know how to start and had to ask one of his Canadian classmates who gave him some guidance on how to do the paper. In addition, Alex attended an academic writing workshop organized by a Faculty member which was crucial in his understanding of academic writing. He also focused on teachers' feedback to improve his academic writing.

Alex encountered three major obstacles in academic writing: organization, referencing, and word choice. His most recent piece of writing for a course called "Critical Issues in Mathematics Education" which he got a very good grade. He felt it was his greatest achievement in the whole program – a twelve-page final paper. He got good feedback from his professors; he said "one prof called me and he said wow! you really write good, I have had that from three professors". Alex indicated that the workshop he attended about academic writing was the key solution to all of his problems.

Respondent six: Hua is from China and he got his second Master of Education from Memorial University. He went to the United Kingdom to do his first Master of Applied Linguistics in 2003. Hua's future plan is either to pursue a doctoral degree in Canada or in another country. Otherwise he intends to find a job in his field of study.

Hua tried to write and publish a paper when he was doing his first master's degree in the United Kingdom; unfortunately, it was not accepted by The New York Times. He received some training on APA style and academic writing genres in the UK. That experience in the UK gave him a good understanding about academic writing in general.

Hua reported that he is slow to compose an academic piece of writing. He has to think about the word choice, grammar and he spends a long time revising his thesis. He sets a high standard for himself and wants to write with perfection. Hua indicated that he was imitating a famous philosopher's writing style. This was one of the strategies that Hua followed to improve his academic writing.

For now, Hua believes he is not a very good writer yet. He found writing the findings and analysis chapter of his thesis a struggle. He indicated that he had ideas but he did not know how to put them together. He always paid attention to his choice of words and used a dictionary to help with this. However, he identified that revising his thesis using support from the writing centre became the major solution to his writing problems.

Respondent seven: Jacey is from China; she is doing her master's degree in Educational Leadership. Although she has a bachelor's degree in English, she had not learned how to write assignments. After her graduation, she intends to work on a TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) program. She wants to travel to Vancouver because she finding a job in Newfoundland is hard. She was exposed to writing in English when she was in China preparing

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for IELTS (International English Language Testing System). At first, she got mark 4.5 on her writing test. She wrote the IELTS exam a number of times. Finally, she got mark 6.5 after ten times of trying.

Jacey highlighted an experience in a group assignment. She was given feedback on her writing and was asked to write more academically and in a native-like fashion. She was told that her word choice was not specific, and not appropriate. She was aware, however, that the thinking patterns of Asian and Western people are different. Jacey had to send her paper to the writing center to be proofread. She was shocked when she received the feedback because every sentence of her paper had been marked.

Jacey's major problem was sentence structure and word choice. She overcame this challenge in academic writing by taking notes, and borrowing words and expressions from articles and Ted Talks. For now, she feels better about her academic writing. She thought that seeking help from native speakers was an effective solution to overcome her problems with writing.

Emergent Categories and Themes

The aim of this section is to discuss the various categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis. The presentation of data is accompanied by verbatim quotes from the participants to support these themes. Direct quotations from the respondents are presented to provide validation for the themes.

The chapter is divided into three main categories: The first is students' experiences in academic writing. The second section is about students' challenges with academic writing. The third section discusses students' strategies in overcoming challenges with academic writing. This

study explores why master's students and doctoral candidates find the process of writing academic papers such a challenge. How they overcome those challenges and what strategies they used to improve their academic writing.

4.3. Students' Experiences of Academic Writing

Writing Emotions

Participants in the study were asked questions about their experiences of writing academically at home and in Canada. The main point of those questions is to determine their emotions and levels of satisfaction when engaging with academic papers from the beginning to the end of their program. It is important to establish students' mood and mental state about writing to see how these factors might affect them in their personal and professional lives. This is what makes the study valuable and meaningful. Hence, two sub-themes of emotional responses emerged from the study: negative emotions and positive emotions.

a. Negative Emotions

Most of the participants showed emotions when they described their experiences of writing academic papers. In the beginning of their program, most of the students were not satisfied about their academic writing levels. At the end of their programs, some of the students felt more positive about their ability to write academically, while others did not feel that they improved much. On the whole, most felt "frustrated" that academic writing was "difficult", and "uncomfortable".
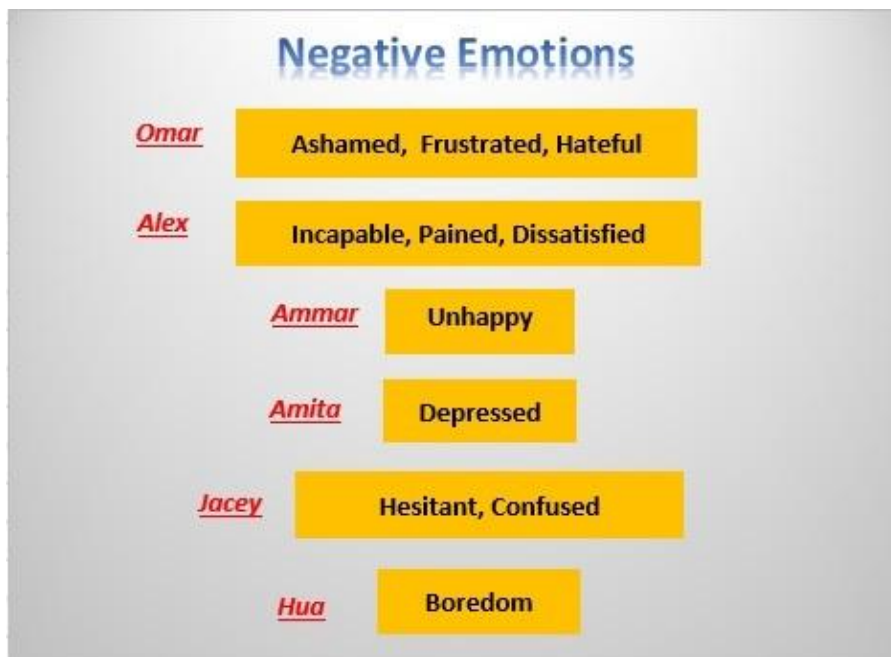
Figure 4 Chart of negative emotions that six students expressed on their writing difficulties.

Of the seven participants, six of them, Omar, Alex, Ammar, Amita, Jacey, and Hua expressed negative emotions about their academic writing. Figure 3 shows emotions from participants that describe their feelings when they write.

Due to the lack of experience in writing academic papers at home, Omar indicated that writing in English is not an easy task. He considered writing as his weakest proficiency in English:

> *I thought that I am not a good writer and I don't know when I can be a good writer in English. the writing part is very hard, actually the hardest part of using English even in my daily life. I mean I feel myself more comfortable in listening, speaking, and reading of course but writing is my weakest part in English in general.*

He added that writing is a "talent" which he feels he does not have:

It is a kind of talent; definitely writing is a kind of talent like: music, literature, and sport. I mean some people are good writers it does not matter which language they are writing in but some people are not that good writers still it can be improved but it is a kind of talent and I do not feel that I have that talent.

Participants felt that writing is a very long process and the writer has to be patient. For Omar, he found this frustrating. He felt disabled and even expressed that he "hated" himself:

It takes really a long time for me to write even sometimes one sentence, and I have to really be so patient about to complete even one-page paper. I remembered that even for just one paragraph I spent days not hours for just one paragraph. So imagine, if you have to write it weekly you have to write a paper after every class, I mean it is very frustrating you don't have enough time to write a good paper that you feel satisfied. This was my problem and most of the time I hated myself after when I read what I wrote, because I was feeling I am not talented. Even sometimes I was feeling that I was disable in writing, like it is kind of disable feeling, so I didn't like it at all.

In his online classes, Omar never wanted to share his writing in online discussions forums. He believed his writing was not good enough to be posted. He felt ashamed to write in online forums and as a result he never participated in online discussions even though he knew he lost marks on final grade:

We have to post our writings. I was feeling ashamed about my writings so I actually I did not want to post my writings…especially the online courses we were asked to discussed about that topic in online discussions… it was around 10 percent in some courses… I did not want to participate in those discussions because even though I feel that I have

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something to write about, I did not want to write because I was kind feel shy about my

writing because I can not write as the other students

Alex had similar difficulties with writing assignments; at home he had experienced this

as well:

Back home for my bachelor degree, we had assignments group assignments and then we

have projects as well…we had some assignments where I have to write alone and that

became very tough…initially it was difficult I didn't know how to write.

He further noted that in addition to language proficiency problems, the nature of academic

writing itself was a challenge:

In the beginning I was not satisfied because I really did not know how to really organize

my papers… certain article has a whole lot of issues I didn't know which one to really

need to put in my paper…you don't know which one to add it and which one to combine

and which one you don't write at all so that was a little difficult for me.

Ammar indicated that his writing is "weak" and it still "needed to be improved". Overall,

he found academic discourse a challenge:

In English, I still feel my academic writing need to be improved and I still think seriously

back home it was very weak… and need more practice and more course development

working on that… because in Saudi Arabia…we don't concentrate on how to write

academically for publication.

Amita was not aware of the characteristics or genres of academic writing. Her

assignments were full of grammar mistakes as well. She felt depressed and dropped out of the

thesis route for her master's program:

I realized that it needed more than what I did, and what I actually wrote and I know that
there were a whole a lot of mistakes a whole a lot of corrections that my professor
suggested, and I did not feel that I did a good job, when at one point of time I was
thinking of thesis right from the beginning and I dropped this idea just because I knew
that I was not going to make it at all.

Jacey felt "confused" about how to structure her papers:

For the lay out or the outline of the paper…sometimes I am confused about which one is
better for my paper.

She felt that she was not confident when it came to participating in a group paper. She
mentioned:

I had an online course, which we have to do a group paper…when I got feedback, I found
my paragraph is totally changed in another way, but the meaning doesn't change but
language is changed…what you changed is better because you are a native speaker…I
am thinking oh my God what I am doing, how the professor is thinking when they are
reading my paper, maybe they want to change everything or every paragraph…when I
was in a group…I want to contribute more….if they correct my paper and correct my
paragraph I think maybe I didn't do any contribution to our group because of my
problem of language, because I didn't write in a native way.

Even though, Hua felt that he had spent much of his life learning English, he still found
academic writing difficult. He expressed his frustration:

I am not really satisfied with my writing, because I always think I've been learning
English for so many years…and I think almost all my life I spent in learning the language

but still I can't use it…I think language is something in our brains…I found it is still quite

difficult in my country.

Hua still spends a long time writing and revising when he writes academic papers now. He identified word choice as a big challenge. He admits that academic writing is time consuming and restrictive:

You know it can be very slow for me to compose a paragraph. So I need to think about

the word choice and the grammar and write. For instance, after writing a piece of paper,

I need to take a lot of time to revise it. I can't write very fast, I am really a slow person in

writing…I spent most of my time in writing almost all the time reading and writing. I

have no time for recreation…the academic writing made my life very boring.

These quotes show that participants described their negative emotions when they first started their program at MUN. Some of them felt depressed, not confident, and frustrated. The negative emotions were described in relation either to language proficiency problems and/or the nature of academic writing itself.

b. Positive Emotions

This sub-theme represents participants' feelings (at the time of the interviews) when they finished many of their required writing assignments. Figure 4 describes some of the positive emotions experienced by students.

Figure 5 Chart of positive emotions from participants about academic writing.

Figure 4 summarizes multilingual students' emotions during or after their graduate degree. Of the seven participants, only two, Omar and Hua had totally completed their graduate degrees. Both were not completely satisfied with their academic writing on completing their degrees. Omar's case is, however, different than Hua. Omar admitted that he knows the basic characteristics of academic writing. While Hua expressed his dissatisfaction because he set high standards for his academic writing.

Hua, who was mostly negative in his interview, was optimistic in one of his statements that his academic writing skills had improved based on what he learned in England, he commented:

> *In Canada my academic writing improved very quickly because when I came here in the first year I write a lot and I started to use what I have learned in England to analyze the writing styles of some scholars in England.*

After Alex completed his master's degree in Education, he felt good about his academic writing due to the training workshop he attended, and with regular feedback from professors over the course of his degree:

I think for now is been excellent because this some training that I had and feedbacks I always get from my professors which used to improve upon my next writing sometimes…I always learn from the feedback I used it to improve upon the next course I take.

Usman felt, it was more interesting to write something for leisure. He felt writing a story was much more fun compared to academic paper:

If you write just for the sake of fun, writing a story writing a novel or writing an incident that is very interesting and you love to write it, but if you have to write an assignment that is different thing.

Omar knew the basics of academic writing genres at the end of his master's program, yet he noted that he still struggled if what he had to write was not related to his interests:

I know the basics about academic writing I can say, but it does not mean that I can write better academically. I am still not a good academic writer…it depends on what you have to write about…if I will be asked about to write on a topic which is not in my interest area…I will have a lots of obstacles, but if it is in my interest area…it will be easy for me to write about it.

Ammar measured his current experience in academic writing as being improved from 50 to 80 percent:

I feel I am okay and I feel I am able to write about any topic but if I can measure myself before I come to Canada I was fifty percent in academic writing I can tell now I am okay like eighty percent.

Amita expresses that she has grown through her program:

I think I had a whole lot of exposure to writing academically, and beginning from the first course that I did and the papers I wrote…to the recent one I did which was my master's thesis. I think I feel that I have really grown up in terms of writing academically. I do feel a change in myself from what I did for the first time, and how I did it for my thesis.

Having said this, she added further:

Well now I am quite satisfied initially it was trial and error but yes I picked up

Jacey reported getting good grades in one of her courses which helped her confidence. She was unsure of some terms, but after her reading articles, taking notes and then writing her paper, she was finally happy with the results in the paper and her writing skills overall improved. She said:

I had a paper in a course "Education Policy" entitled "the school turn around". First of all, I did not understand what is the school turn around and I need to do some research…that paper is, I think, the best one, because I did some literature reviews…I will take the notes about words in the paper I think is important or is helpful for me to do the paper…the paper score is 86 so I think my writing skills improved and my thinking is more like the western style.

She expressed satisfaction about the way she wrote academic papers now:

Now I think it's better, in my first research paper…I was not very specific or academic

for…I am learning to use some academic words to make my paper more professional or

academic.

Clearly some participants were able to overcome their writing challenges and express

some positive emotions about their writing skills. It is important to acknowledge graduate

students' emotions of writing in order to establish how they felt overall from the beginning to the

end of their programs.

4.4 Students' challenges with Academic Writing

The next theme explored why master's students and doctoral candidates find the process

of writing such a challenge. The list of challenges is provided in Figure 5 below and each

challenge will be discussed in turn.
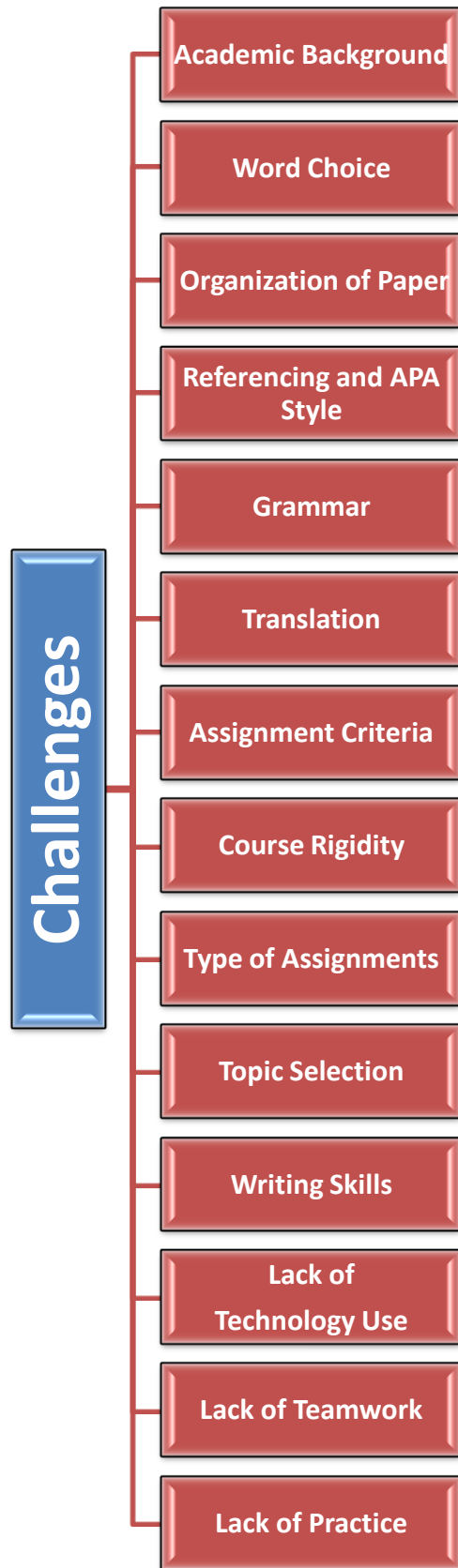
Figure 6 Students' challenges with academic writing

Students' academic background

Omar identified that there was a mismatch between his previous education and that which he was currently pursuing. For example, he could not find courses that were related to his background degree. He stated that:

The type of writing in my previous university was different then here. The department was also in my field because my education was in secondary science and math education. So everything we read and every course we had was somehow related with science and math education, not like here because I had to have two courses here in math education because my focus area was math education but the other courses were all in different fields, so it was little bit different for me to write about the articles in those courses because they were not actually in my interest area.

He also talked about the type of assignments:

That was the biggest difference of academic writing assignments here and back home, because in my home country I was asked to write about what I had done what I accomplished what I did by myself...the project, but here it was like just read the articles and write about them, read the articles and write about them without doing nothing practical.

He mentioned that the type of writing assignments he had done at MUN did not suit him or his previous writing experience:

It was the main difference I mean type of the writing assignments were different I mean reflective writing, essay writing, narrative writing, and report writing they are all different, maybe I am good at report writing because I feel that I did something and I

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write about it but other writing methods are not suitable for me, not compatible with my

skills

Alex described that in Ghana, their education system mainly emphasized tests:

Back home we normally focus on tests, tests, tests. So academic writing was once in a

semester for group work, so it was easier for me because we have about four or five

people combining so I just go and then give some points and then somebody will take it

from there and organize it there.

Amita mentioned in the interview that the expression *'cope up with'* was rejected by her professor because it is not an academic phrase. Amita could not work out the difference between academic writing and the English she spoke:

'To cope up with', I have read that ample of times in the books back home but I do not

know why it was such a new thing to the professor…definitely I think crisis at school to

your background what you have studied and how you have grown up and what kind of

exposure you have had of English as a language in writing and speaking back home

Having said this, she added:

If you are a graduate student, they take it that they would know everything and that is one

of the things that should not be there because there are a lot of international students

who would not know it, because that would have been their first ever exposure to

academic writing, thinking that graduate students they would know everything is not a

good idea.

Hua knew that his education system at home in China was totally different from those in

Western countries:

The educational system in china and western countries are completely different, in my country the focus on knowledge rather than research.

He kept explaining in detail the main differences between the two systems. He stated:

I found it is still quite difficult in my country language learning, we focus on receptive competence. For instance, memorize vocabulary, if you can memorize vocabulary there will be no problem for you to read anything and listening. But our culture I should say, our education system it does not really focus on writing in English. If you look at the result of IELTS examinations, you will found Chinese people, their writing section the score the average score for Chinese people you can say it was very low this is the problem.

Jacey is from China too, she similarly found the differences between the education system at home and in Canada a challenge:

Although my bachelor degree was in English, I did not think I learnt how to write academically…The thinking patterns Asian people and western people are different. For Chinese people we like to describe one thing not directly…I think the point is that we totally have different culture.

Word choice

Academic writing at the university levels requires the students to be careful in choosing appropriate academic words. Some of the participants felt they had issues with word choice. For instance, Alex and Amita were confused between Canadian, American or British English. In both

Ghana and India, British English was the dominant spoken language.

Alex described his confusion between those types of Englishes when writing his papers at Memorial University. He said:

I was confused about the kind of English they speaking whether Canadian English or American English or British. Back home we speak British English…I had one problem with one of my courses…back home we use tags like headmaster or head teacher…here, they will just use like principal to refer to the same person…we will use a term like school authorities…here will say educational leader or school leaders…because I found whenever I use a British term some professors got confused they give me question mark.

Amita experienced similar word choice challenges. She explains below how she struggled to understand different uses of words:

The word choice…I didn't even know you have to have certain words I mean you would have to use certain academic words…for example there is something called "annexure" that means some kind of attachment that you would put at the end…it is strange that my supervisor did not know what that word meant. He told me to use some other word…then I explain this is what it is, and he checked up Google, then he knew this is what it meant otherwise they called it "appendixes", that is the word they use, and I use "annexure" there was always a kind like a war what to use for what word my professor would say something and I would say something

In addition, Amita indicated that:

There were some grammatical issues ... it was basically about commas it was about the use of word "the" it was the use of words "like" I used to use a lot of likes...but they say no you can say "such as"

She added that it was difficult for her to explain to instructor's the differences between the various word choices:

It was sometimes difficult for me to explain to him the differences actually, to me if you tell me appendixes and annexure it is the same...you word choice is appendices, my word choice is annexure, I am okay with both, but I do not know why people would not say "annexure" as academic and why would people say "appendices" as academic.

She had a difficult time trying to understand what it meant to write academically. What made some words 'academic' in nature?

During my first paper that I was writing for this professor I wrote something for example "the student they are not able to cope up with something" ...what do you mean "to cope up with" he said no, I think you need to change this word...you need to write more academically. That does not make sense. What do you mean by writing academically...I was at lost to understand what do you mean by academic writing versus normal plain writing? That was difficult.

She explained that perhaps word choice struggle was due to the differences between Canadian and British English:

Most of my schooling had been in English I had never ever thought that I would get this kind of problem ever...Lately, I figured it out the reason could be we have differences in

English…Canadian English use something else, and the American English use something

else. We have grown up studying and following British English so sometimes when we

would say a thing or write a thing that would be kind of British usage.

Similarly, Hua found word choice difficult because he paid *too much* attention to the

choice of words. He commented:

It is very difficult for me to write academically because I pay much attention to the choice

of words. Sometimes I used dictionary and the dictionary will offer me several choices

and I can choose a better word…accurate word in writing still, it is very difficult…if you

want to write academically, native like, it is very difficult…You know it can be very slow

for me to compose a paragraph.

In addition, Jacey found it difficult to describe her thoughts with appropriate academic

words. She reported:

One of my teachers told me…Jacey the words you used are difficult but not specific and

not appropriate…I am learning to use some academic words to make my paper more

professional or academic.

She further added:

I think is the expressions, sometimes I want to express my ideas very academically or

appropriately but I don't know how to do it

She added that searching the literature for specific key words was also a challenge:

Sometimes I cannot find a good word to express…when I am searching the literature, the

first challenge is the key words…I don't know what kind of key words I can use to find

literature review teacher.

Organization of Paper

Alex reported organizing his papers was an obstacle for him. He found that writing an introduction and linking other paragraphs together was difficult:

For organization, you have to start with an introduction. Thus it gave you the background of what I am going to write. One paragraph should link to another paragraph, should link to the next paragraph to make meaning…it should flow…but it has been difficult how to even get the introduction to be able to link all the paragraphs. That was very difficult challenge getting that introduction and linking the rest of paragraph, that was very difficult.

Similarly, Hua had the same challenge in putting ideas together:

I feel still difficult in composing my thesis, it is very difficult. I have ideas but I do not know how to put them together…

He added to this initial statement and explained:

I collected abundant data for my research now I found it is very difficult to put some ideas together. The data I collected are wonderful but I just could not to put them together and discuss them and produce a good conclusion. It is really difficult when I was writing some assignments, it seems that it was not such kind of problem because in the assignments were not very long but for thesis it is very long. I have to be very careful and I don't know how to put the data, the different perceptions together, it is terrible.

Referencing and APA Style

Writing an academic paper following APA style is another challenge that multilingual students at MUN encounter. For instance, Omar, and Alex experienced several issues in

completing their references. Omar reported:

In my first paper I remember that I could not do any references, because I did not know

to refer those kind of basic academic writing skills. I did not have that but I learn one by

one by experiencing... the reference was little bit time taking it was little bit hard

Alex talked about his previous experience in using APA style. He said that:

After your academic writing you have to reference every article that you have used. That

was difficult for me... I was not referring to APA standards I was just writing their names

and I took the page number when the prof gave me feedback.

Alex added that finding references to support the writing assignment was also difficult:

The professor who said go beyond whatever references I have given you...and get

references related to whatever we are discussing...I did not know how to get those

references, the library helped me out how to academic papers to get articles to write my

academic papers so that was one of the main challenges.

Amita, reflected upon her experiences at home using APA:

I had seen the APA format in my home country, but it is not so much emphasized...it is

not so much stressed on APA.... never realized that it had a format, never realized that it

was a part of the academic writing, never realized that it was so important to be correct

... this was my first encounter with the academic writing and APA that I had here during

my first course.

She furthered describing her challenge with APA format:

I got the paper back with the feedback, and I found oh my God! it had a lot of mistakes in

it. The APA was horrible; the reference section was horrible.

This is when Amita decided to change from the thesis route to the course route at MUN. She describes this decision here:

APA was a big thing because of this APA once I actually decided not to do thesis I dropped the idea which I later picked on after. I think a year maybe I changed my mind completely I was thinking that I would do thesis because I wanted to enroll for my PhD and to be able to do PhD you need to have done some kind of academic writing piece ...so during my first course when I knew that APA I was not very good at, I was like NO! I am not doing thesis at all, I cannot do it.

Grammar

Two multilingual students identified grammar problems as challenges in writing their academic papers. For example, Ammar said:

To be honest with you we are not very great in grammar.

Usman had two main problems in his papers writing; the use of articles and cohesion:

In my case I feel two main problems: one is sometimes I do not use properly articles the use of "the", "a", "or" and sometimes I over use them, this is one issue the other one is cohesion, yes, these are two main issues that I encountered in my recent two years.

Translation

Translation is another challenge that participants mentioned. Here participants referred to the difficulty of thinking in one language and writing in another. Ammar reported:

It is related to translating or thinking in your first language, thinking by first language using the way of writing in Arabic language to the English language, this is an issue.

Similarly, Usman indicated:

I am multilingual I can speak 4, 5 languages and especially in Pakistan two are main languages in my part, Punjab is my mother tongue and then Urdu, you have to communicate with other people from Pakistan. In that case we cannot translate actual words from Punjabi or from Urdu to English or from English to Urdu. So I think there must be someone who can guide us to write properly academically in English.

In addition, Hua said that:

I think language is something in our brains and when I want to use something I need to think normally in Chinese first, and then translate into English so I always think unless something is simple I can think in English anyways.

Assignment Criteria

Three participants talked about various issues and concerns that they faced in their program of study. Some participants were concerned about assignment criteria in terms of the type of a) course rigidity, b) type of assignments, c) topic selection

a. Course Rigidity

Amita talked about course rigidity, she was upset with what happened in one of her papers:

One of the challenges that I faced one time was they give you a topic. Your perception of it could be something totally different then what they are expecting, so you write it in a manner that you best think it to be…the best perceived to be…then you submitted. Then you find NO!

This is actually not what your professor was thinking of it to be, because it happened with me that I was returning an email after three or four days of submission saying that this is not the way it should be WHY?! I questioned and they said because they don't see how it is related with the topic, then I had to actually send them an email saying this is what I feel and this is how the idea I feel is connected, so one of the challenges was sometimes when they give you a topic which actuality goes on really rigid path they are following ... I don't know why the professor felt that it was not aligned because probably what the professor was looking was a very rigid interpretation of the topic somehow I had to explain the professor. I think the rigidity should not be there it should be what you understand of it as long as it is related to the topic. It is your views it is your opinion, it is nothing hard and fast…the professor actually was too big on the book that was prescribed and if you talk anything out of the book you would be negated. That is what I am saying, the rigidity of the person or the evaluator was one of the problems that I faced during the papers because what I wrote based on my understanding not on what the book said ...It was mostly due to the experiences that I have written, and my own understanding, my own opinions.

b. Type of Assignments

Omar found that he disagreed with the type of assignments in most of his master's courses. He explained that:

Most of the assignments even they were in some cases inappropriate with the aspects of the course like "The Technology Use in Math Education" ...writing an essay about on that course is actually not appropriate, this is what I think, because I also had some courses about evaluation I mean if you put a test which is not appropriate or

incompatible with the skills you try to evaluate in any kind of education program I mean you will not evaluate at all.

He further added that he could not get the grade he felt deserved:

I screwed up in essay writing. In total, I couldn't get the mark that I actually deserved in that course, so this is not a good evaluation actually this is the best example of what should not be evaluation like this, so I mean academic writing is very important part especially in our department but it must be at the same time appropriate.

c. Topic Selection

Omar felt it painful to write papers on topics outside of his area of interest:

The topic is the most important part I guess, because if it is related to your area of interest, it makes it easy for you to write about it, and you will spend less time on that because that you have experiences and interest. And you have pre knowledge about writing on that topic so it is easy but if the topic is way different what you really interested in, so because that you don't have any kind of knowledge about that topic it makes it harder. OK, you can read about that topic and learn about that topic and then you can write about that topic but it will take time and if that topic is not in your interest area…I can't find any reason to read about that topic because it is not in my interest area. So I even do not want to read about and learn about it even writing about it was really senseless.

In addition, he said:

The topics were mostly in different area out of my interest… if I don't like the topic everything becomes painful.

Writing skills – general issues

Alex expressed challenges he faced with expectations around using technology. Whereas Omar felt academic writing was very solitary. Jacey found that she was unable to write academically after some time of being away from writing.

a. Lack of Technology Use

Alex felt that there were expectations about technology use and experience, he reported that:

Some professors wanted students to support their academic papers with some pictures or videos, that is if there is any relevant video that can be linked to what is been discussed to support whatever I write. I did not use technology back home, I even did not know that there was something called YouTube that has videos and all that. One of the computer instructor mentioned it to the class that YouTube is a good video program that compasses everything that you want to learn, but I didn't go to that.

b. Lack of teamwork

Omar expressed his concerns with regards to how isolating writing academic papers can be:

In our department at MUN, generally, we do our work by ourselves in courses just we are assigned to read articles and write about them. This is what we have done. There is no team work, there is no group work. All the work mostly read and write nothing other than that, because we do not see our colleagues outside of classroom generally there is no interaction there is no engagement not enough at least.

c. Lack of Practice

Jacey described some issues regarding her academic writing practices. When she does not write for a while, she feels that she forgets how to write academically. She said that:

last semester I had an online course in Vancouver for four months, and the professor did not ask us to do research papers, but only summaries or online presentation, so I did not do research paper around half year, and I went back to the research paper. I felt strange, I did not know how to start and I maybe some words have already forgotten. I cannot remember most of the academic words and I need to do research and take notes of the words inside the research paper.

4.5 Students' Strategies with Academic Writing

All the multilingual students I interviewed have some strategies they use to overcome their challenges in academic writing. Eight main strategies were identified: a) Reading, b) Note taking, c) Learning from others, d) Style imitation, e) Attending workshops, f) Feedback, g) Use of Technology, h) Writing Centre (See Figure 6)
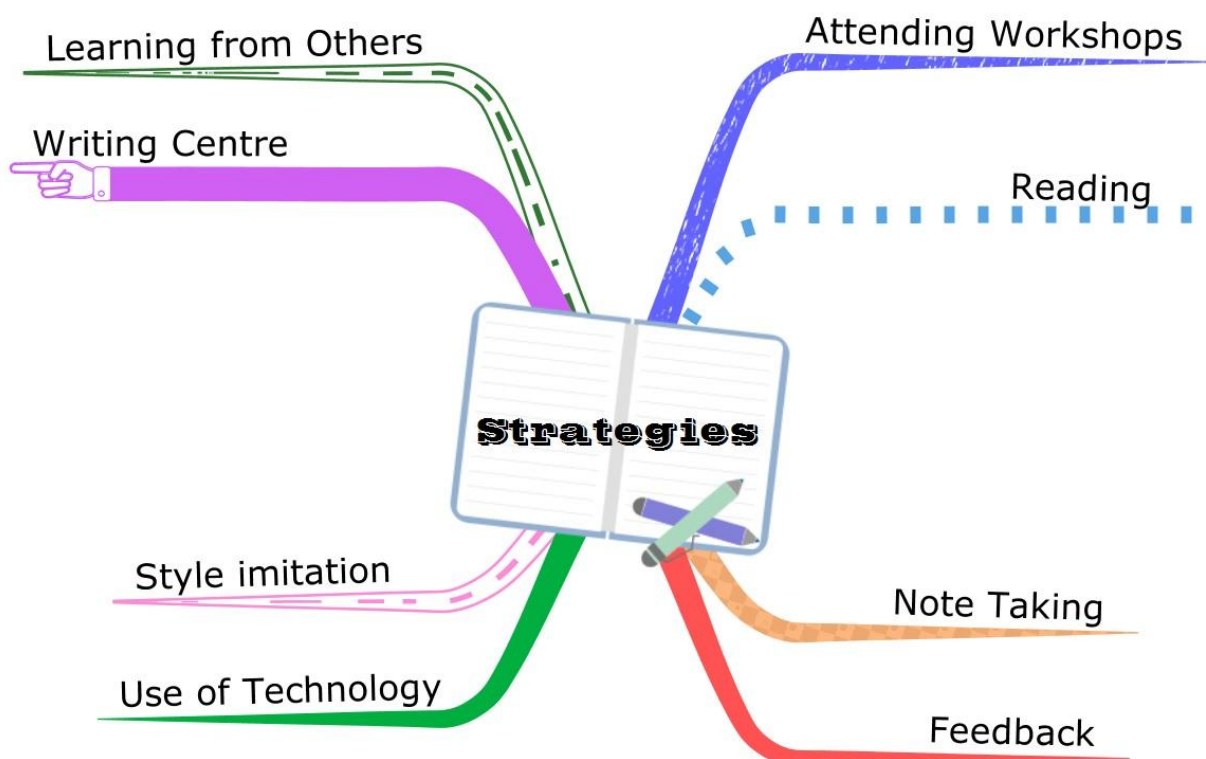
Figure 7 Summary of Students' strategies with academic writing

Reading

Omar used reading as a strategy to overcome his writing challenges. He said:

To make it easy for me to write about that topic I tried to read as much as I can

He further explained his way:

I tried to read more and then I can have a base knowledge. I tried to combine or to find

relations with my experience, so I can bring something from my experiences and I can

write about that topic. It is not that easy because it is not that always for you to relate

that topic with your experiences especially if it is really far away from your experiences

or your interest areas

Similarly, Alex used this strategy to get a general idea about a topic he was unfamiliar

with:

I read all the articles and see what they are talking about some articles they are talking about one common thing but in a different way, so I organize those articles into a common theme after reading article summarize that into just one sentence.

Ammar also read a lot of academic papers to understand his field:

So to improve your writing you need to read more academic papers scholarly works and specifically how to write research…First I tried to read at least twenty to thirty articles the latest articles between 2005 to 2016 in the field.

Amita also suggested reading as her one 'golden rule' to improve her academic writing:

The more you read the more you come to know to see the pattern how they follow how they write the things and then you come to know you definitely learn word choice and I do not know why, but I feel academic writing is all about word choice

She further added:

About the word choice, the more you read articles papers the more you read books then it makes actually like aware of how different academic writing is, than the normal writing that really helped me a lot I used to read a lot definitely.

Hua's strategy was also to read and take notes:

I always read all those articles and took notes and then produce my own opinion.

Note taking

Three participants mentioned taking notes while reading to improve their academic writing. Omar for instance indicated:

> *First…I read about that topic and I take notes. It can be from our text book in that course or from the articles that our professors assigned us to read*

He further added:

> *If I can find any useful information and interesting points, I take notes and then I start to arrange all that information and notes that I took in the text book, in the articles, and from other recourses, from internet online recourses. Then, I spent some time on thinking about those points and also try to think about my experiences and try to find relations and try to combine all that knowledge in a meaningful way.*

Moreover, Hua said that:

> *I always read all those articles and took notes and then produce my own opinion.*

Jacey also relied on taking notes while reading or watching TV, even though she did not like that method. She felt it was helpful for her in overcoming her challenge of choosing appropriate academic words. She reported:

> *First of all, if I see some sentence structure or words sentences, some expressions are very good in a paper, I will take notes so taking notes is what I always do.*

Having said this, she added further:

> *I only use it when I do papers but I only do papers three or four times in a semester, so I feel strange to find the word, every time I need to find the notes I took before to refresh my memory OK I need to use these words in my paper, and I do not like that way but I have no choice.*

She also said that:

I have a very good approach to overcome my challenge is watching TED Talks.

Learning from others

Learning from others was one of the methods used by some participants to overcome their writing challenges. Omar, for instance, realised that asking native English speakers for help would be useful. He indicated that:

A couple times, I asked my friends…home mates who are native English speakers to just read my articles and sometime they give me grammar correction and I had it couple of times I guess.

Alex used the same method with his Canadian classmate who gave him some guidelines on one of his papers on how to do references and provide evidence to every argument. He said that:

I have to learn through my classmates one Canadian who gave me some guidelines. She says everything that I say at least I should make a reference to the book and make a quote to support whatever I say…she also advised me that I can disagree with author maybe based on your experiences in the classroom as well, it dose not mean what the author has written is all correct. You can sometime challenge and also even provide a counter article…what I have read from the book and just I provide my reflection and my classroom experiences.

Alex also sought help from his Canadian roommate when he wrote a paper:

Whenever I am writing my academic papers I have to ask my roommate who is also Canadian like how do you call this in your north American system so he will tell me and

then I will use that to write my article, because I found whenever I use a British term

some professors got confused they give me a question mark.

In the UK, Hua relied on his supervisor, outside of the classroom, to help with academic

writing:

In UK… there was a supervisor of the program and she just you know brought us

together actually outside the classroom, there was a hall way tables and chairs and sat

there and she showed us a piece of academic writing which was written by a native

speaker of the language and she showed us how to write academically.

He also said that:

 I used a friend of mine, he proofread my thesis.

Similarly, Jacey gave her paper to her Canadian landlord to read it:

I remember the other day; I showed my paper to my landlord who is a local Canadian.

There was a topic of one of my papers "in service" which means training and I am

confused and I looked at the word in dictionary in service but there is no explanation and

asked him "X, do you know what's the meaning of in service?" and he told me oh it means

something like training half day training which is not very professional.

Alex learned how to do the APA style from the librarian at MUN. He got referred to

some books and videos. He said that:

I contacted the library and get to know how to use APA referencing, and how also to

search articles related to whatever the course is about… I came to the librarian, they

referred me to some of the books, pages and even videos that also helped me to know how

to reference in text reference out of text this kind of things.

Style imitation

Hua described another strategy to overcome his writing obstacles. He said that:

After coming to Canada, I composed a lot of assignments. I got very high marks. I started

to imitate the writing style of a Chinese philosopher…he was trained in UK, so I started

to write logically and my grammar in writing was perfect.

He further explained in detail that:

It is a quite strange; the philosopher died about a hundred years ago …his philosophy

was quite interesting I should say…so his way of writing was a quite traditional in

English because he always writes in a linear way; in a logical way. I think I leant a lot

from his way of writing …I think I learned a lot from him, I tried my best to imitate him

for a period of time but now I quite that idea because his language is a little bit awkward

I have to say, because his language belongs to another writing style in about hundred

years ago but his way of writing logically…in a linear way always helped me in writing

my own assignments or academic writing.

Hua believed that imitating one writer's style is beneficial in improving academic

writing. He claimed that:

We need to imitate the writers writing style. We should not imitate more writers but I

think probably…to focus on one writer one scholar at the beginning but then read widely

to take different ways of expressions…I think to imitate one writer is a practical way to

improve our writing skills and I tried to do something like native speakers

Whereas, Jacey tried to borrow authors' expressions from various articles and from TED Talks:

If I see some sentence structure or words sentences some expressions are very good in a paper. I will take notes so take notes is what I always do, and before I do my paper I will do a revision of this kind of sentences and words and I will use the sentences structure in my paper.

I have a very good approach to overcome my challenge that is watching TED Talks, because TED Talks is specific for some certain fields something related to technology, education, health, culture… they need to be more academic or use specific word and some of the sentences are very helpful for writing because even though it is a speech but their sentences can totally be used in the academic paper. So I also take notes about sentences in TED Talks.

Attending Workshops

Alex had attended a workshop in academic writing organized by a faculty member in Education. He described this in more detail:

I had an email that there is going to be an academic writing seminar for graduate students organized by X on the Faculty of Education, so I said that is a good opportunity for me to learn about how to write… I want to be part of the training in one of classrooms of Faculty of Education and we taught how to organize our thoughts also how to read critically and get information from all the articles …how to begin our writing freely whatever comes to mind just put in paper, so we taught stages of how to write, write freely then second thing is organize and edit then you get a perfect piece… you learn how to identify the common themes from the various articles you read, and that

really helped and from there I will be using whatever X has taught us and I use it to organize my academic papers… I have always gotten a good feedback from my profs…he said wow you really write good, I have had that from three professors, …you really write well and that was through the benefits of the training I had from X, it was one seminar and it was really, really beneficial.

Hua also attended the workshop organized by the Education Faculty member. He indicated:

I have taken something like that for X she gives some presentations about academic writing and also the writing center organize kind of workshops and invite professors like X and other teachers, so the students there we sit together and write own writing and sometimes we have kind of discussion about what our progress in writing so yeah I think that is helpful.

He also attended academic writing workshop when he was in the UK. He said that:

In UK, I do believe the training in academic writing was very good…because in UK I took kind of cohort program, it is one-year program of MA in applied linguistics, so all the students we took classes together almost the same courses, but there are a few electives but most courses are compulsory.

Amita planned to attend five-day workshop at MUN. Unfortunately, she could attend only one day and she described her experience:

They were a five-day workshop …I have attended one day about academic writing maybe or how to write down your thesis, or how to do plain writing. I did that and I remember it was a bit of help because the way they say it when you write … just write what you feel…

then go over it and then see is it what actually tried to say? is this the way it should be written? do you want to modify it? if yes reword the sentence but the first time when you writing it do not worry about the grammar your idea is more important first time, second time arrange it right if you think actually reword your sentences and then go for the grammar thing.

Lastly, Ammar was also one of the attendees in the workshop organized by the Education Faculty member:

Actually I have attended the workshop with X about academic writing…the workshop was for three hours, but it was very beneficial, it helped me how to write the purpose statement in my research, … again I would like to thank faculty of education for their support and X again she gave us a fantastic workshop but I hope this workshops will continue providing even monthly by semester or course in summer or fall.

Feedback

Hua used feedback on his writing as a way to improve. He indicated:

Some tutors in our faculty revised our assignments very carefully. For instance, they revised my assignment and I will see where they change it so I can learn how to use the words for the next time. Kind of learning by using. I remembered different teachers have different specialties, for instance, one tutor one professor X she was so great in helping me to write my assignments to use APA. She was so careful when she corrects my writing so my next time I won't make mistake like that it is quite good for me to compose a better assignment or piece of writing.

He further explained:

Some teachers just as I mentioned earlier some they offer us a lot of feedbacks in our

writing so I always have those feedbacks printed I put them in one file so when I read

them again I will remember how to write for the next time I think the feedback from the

teachers are quite beneficial for me.

Similarly, Jacey used to visit one of her professors in his office to show her how to do

APA references. She said that:

I remember we have an assignment three articles with three different methodologies, and

do summaries of the paper, and you need to use directly and indirectly quotations. I went

to my instructor in his office and taught me how to do quotations and page number, the

references everything about APA.

She also sent an outline of the paper to her professor to read before submitting it.

Sometimes I will send outline to my professor and ask her for some feedback because

sometimes I am afraid to go out of the track I think outline is very important.

Alex had received some feedback about his assignments. He reported that:

I have been receiving feedback from my profs since I started my course so I always use

my prof's feedback to improve my academic writing, so I just combine all the feedbacks I

had to make a better final writing for this academic paper and it was great for me

because it happens to be the highest course so far.

He further added:

Normally I have done assignment in every course and they give me feedback. Sometimes

maybe one professor will say you did not provide me with a conclusion at the end of your

assignment so on my next writing I have to provide conclusion so during my last

assignment, the feedback the prof gave me was I did not begin with an indent paragraph.

For Alex, feedback had a great impact on improving his academic writing skills. At the

interview, he was asked about his current feelings about his level of academic writing. He said that:

> *I think for now is been excellent because this some training that I had and feedbacks I*
> *always get from my professors which used to improve upon my next writing sometimes*
> *the references and so on so I always learn from the feedback I used it to improve upon*
> *the next course I take.*

Ammar hired a professional editor to proofread his academic writing papers. He was satisfied with this strategy in improving his style of writing in the future.

> *I gave editor my work, I asked him to write in blue his editing then he submitted*
> *back to me. I compare between my sentences or my paragraph and his paragraph and try*
> *to see his writing more academically and more clearly…Then in the future I really use*
> *some of his way of writing, it was fantastic for me but it was very expensive.*

Amita had help editing her writing from her supervisor. She said:

> *I got help, a lot of help I would say from my supervisor I would kind write the first draft*
> *then modified it and edited it then once I was not sure that was the best of what I could do*
> *I would send it to my supervisor he would kind like go through it and he would have*
> *edited and send it back to me saying these are kind errors you would have to change that*
> *is how it went and I was able to finish my thesis.*

Use of Technology

Three participants used technology tools to improve their academic writing. Ammar, for example, stated that he used the Grammarly website to check his grammar and plagiarism before he sent it to an editor. He said that the website was "fantastic".

Another strategy I use a website called Grammarly, it's a website a paid website they will give you a trial for one month…you post it there and its fantastic program it will correct for you. It will give you choices underlying by different color green blue orange and the right of screen you will give you some recommendations, you should use this instead of this if it is a verb form…then you will have to change it yourself so they are teaching you by editing for yourself actually. I use it before I submit my paper to the editor to edit it in the second stage…I access to it then it was fantastic for me…even it does not check just the grammar and writing style it checked also plagiarism.

Similarly, Jacey used the Grammarly website as well:

I have some application to correct your grammar you just need to upload your paper online and it will help you to correct your grammar automatically "Grammarly".

Amita had used Google Scholar to help her generate APA citations. She indicated:

Google scholar I used to use that a lot that gives you kind like pre made APA citation, so if you do not know how to do that, you would just be going there typing the book name, author, the article, year, and everything and would automatically generate the APA citing but they were not hundred percent ok which I realize later what you do I go back to those resources that the professor have given me and try to arrange as for those and this is about the APA.

Writing Centre

One out of five participants used Writing Centre services. Hua used it often even though he felt that some tutors were not qualified. He said that:

I used the writing center very often and some of tutors they were not very good in grammar but any way they were native speakers and they offer me the way of a writing a kind of perspective about writing I mean writing from a native language sometimes I took their advice and I found it was very good …I always think that writing center is quite good.

However, most of the participants (four of them) were unhappy with the Writing Centre services for several reasons.

Ammar described his experience of visiting the Writing Center as ineffective. He painted this image of his experience:

Unfortunately, yes, I visited them in 2011 for one of my assignments and I remember that paper was between 20 to 30 pages…I submit my paper one day in advance before you go there so you give the editor the chance to read it and edit it…I was excited they will read and edit it …then when I went there you sign your name and wait in that table and somebody shows up and gave me a pencil for me and him …my paper was printed off and he gave it to me and started to explain my way of writing, then he underlined many sentences, I felt there is no benefit because you are focusing on Articles 'the', 'a' … they focus on this simple things, it is come to practice but I want you here to let me know about the coherence the ideas thoughts then the next step is the grammar mistakes, so they focus on grammar however thirty pages they have been editing the first five pages and they said its okay we are sorry, you have chance for one hour if you would like to keep working on this paper you have to make an appointment again, so it is a big problem to be there. I decided not to go there anymore, but in 2014 I said maybe they change or they have improved, so I visited them again with my paper and the same or

worse than in 2011 and I meant worse…I am 100 percent sure people there are very

qualified to write but they don't have the ability to express or to teach the academic

writing.

Amita's supervisor suggested that she visit the Writing Center. However, she was not satisfied with the services. She said:

Yes I have visited the writing center and my professor actually recommended that I

should go and see them but this was of no use and I would be very honest because I went

there and who I find there they are not experts they are students like you and me they are

students probably who do masters in English or literature or maybe some kind English

based language …they are graduate students they can actually yes point out a lot of

grammatical errors in your text but because they do not know the context that you are

writing in, they would sometimes changed the sentence by making those additions. I think

that was the big problem that I faced …even whatever additions they did, I submitted to

my professor, my professor actually pointed errors in that too that means it is not a full

proofread process.

Usman was not satisfied with the Writing Center services either. He felt that he received little help regarding grammar. He also felt that it is not what an international student wants. These students need someone to tell them how to improve their writing. He said that:

I visited the writing center when I was doing my masters here at Memorial University

and each time I feel is that the students who are over there to help you they are not

specialized in your area. If you go there to take an assignment in education, they might

be from arts they might be from sociology or social work, so you cannot get proper

guidance in your area. Secondly, in terms of writing, in my experience whenever I go

there they just provided me with very little help regarding grammatical writing or maybe

something very few very little help but as international students we need to improve so I

think they should be someone who can tell us how to improve your writing, so I went two

or three times later, I decided that is not much help and I stop going there and then I

started working on my assignment by myself reading it editing revising proofreading

revisions.

Likewise, Jacey had the same opinion as Usman regarding the Writing Center. She believed that they did not help her. She wanted someone to teach her how to write and improve her skills. She did not want her grammar to be corrected as she relied on the Grammarly website to do the that:

I do not think they are big help, I do not think so, the problem is they can help to correct

the paper for one time, but I do not know what is the problem because if I write another

paper maybe I will have the same problem again…They are responsible to correct your

papers but nobody will teach you how to improve, how to avoid these problems in the

next writing. I think they can be improved …if they can teach me how to make my paper

better if they teach me how to avoid the same problem… for the most of the time they

correct the grammar. It is not what I want I think international students want to write as

the native speaker does. I want to get more knowledge… not in grammar, because I have

some application to correct your grammar you just need to upload your paper online and

it will help you to correct your grammar automatically: Grammarly.

The other two participants had never visited the Writing Centre. One of them is Omar. He stated that because of the way he felt about his writing, he was too shy to share what he wrote

with others:

> *Never been there, I do not know actually a couple of friends who very often visiting the writing center I had never been. Probably again I was feeling shy about my writings I did not want even anybody to correct or see my paper but I think it would be helpful definitely because this is what we need as international students.*

Similarly, Alex had never visited the Writing Centre. At first, he thought it was for undergraduate students but later when he realized it was for everybody he had already gotten help from the library and a writing workshop.

> *I have never visited the university writing center (Is there any reason?) no there was no reason, initially I think when I came I thought that writing center was for undergraduate students seeking help but later on I saw that Oh! It is for everybody graduates and undergraduates, but at that time I realized for both and I have gotten help from the library and X workshop, so I was okay.*

4.6 Summary

This chapter presented the data collected through the interviews. The data was presented under three categories that related to each of the research questions. The first section of this chapter briefly presented the participants' profiles and their academic background. The purpose of the second section was to report the results of the analysis of the interview data including categories, themes, and sub-themes. Direct quotes from interviews were provided as evidence.

Themes emerged from participants noting what was significant for them. In the next chapter, an interpretation will be conducted on these themes.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore multilingual graduate students' experiences, challenges, and strategies with academic writing. This study, will hopefully contribute to the teaching and learning of academic writing for international students as well as relevant university services.

Seven multilingual students were invited to participate in the study and share their experiences, challenges and strategies in academic writing. Five of them were master's students: Omar from Turkey, Alex from Ghana, Amita from India, Jacey and Hua from China, and two doctoral candidates: Ammar from Saudi Arabia and Usman from Pakistan. All the participants had their bachelor's degree from their home country; five of them completed their first masters' degree at home and enrolled in a second master at MUN. At the time of the interview, three Masters students had completed their Master degree in Education, and two of them had not completed yet. The two doctoral students were still enrolled in their programs.

It was found that these multilingual students experienced both negative and positive emotions before, and during their graduate program. Six participants experienced unhappiness, anxiety, frustration, depression, confusion, shame, pain, and boredom before and during their completion of graduate degree. Most of the challenges multilingual students encountered can be explained by two themes: academic discourse and language proficiency. There were seven main challenges: translation, assignment criteria, grammar, organization of paper, referencing and APA style, writing skills, and word choice. The strategies applied by these students to solve their writing problems were: style imitation, learning from others, writing center, attending writing workshops, use of technology, note taking, feedback and reading.

In the following chapter, the findings will be interpreted and discussed according to the emerging themes and in the light of the literature. Conclusions and recommendations for multilingual graduate students' academic writing are offered at the end of this chapter.

Answers to the Research Questions

Question 1: What do multilingual graduate students in Education experience with their academic writing at MUN?

During the interviews, participants described their experiences of academic writing. Writing emotions was the emerged theme from students' interview data. Two sub-themes, positive and negative emotions, depicted a clear picture of these participants' writing experiences before and during the completion of their graduate program.

5.2. Emotions

The participants were asked to describe their experiences in writing academic papers (questions 2-3-5-6, Appendix B). The majority of these graduate students experienced both negative and positive emotions over writing academic papers. They experienced the transition of their feelings when writing in the beginning and at the end of their graduate program. They felt confused, anxious and frustrated at the beginning. This finding supports Fores's (2016) study. As he found, graduate students experienced high anxiety in writing academic papers. However, as they became used to writing assignments and begin developing their own strategies for coping with writing, they began to relax and feel improved, satisfied and optimistic.

The transition from negative emotions to positive emotions is one of decreasing anxiety to increasing levels of self-satisfaction in writing. These multilingual students acknowledged their writing challenges and identified several strategies to solve their struggles with writing. At

the end of their program, the majority of participants had less difficulty and generally felt positive and satisfied about their level of academic writing. Omar, for example, did not overcome his shyness and he never consulted his professors or Writing Centre on any of his written assignments. Whenever he had a writing assignment, he would spend a lot of time and energy to produce something. On the whole, academic writing provoked high emotional reactions for these graduate students and those reactions were mostly negative. Most of the participants indicated they experienced anxiety with their writing. Positive experiences were only achieved after prolonged negative experiences

High anxiety around writing is a theme that is prevalent in the research literature. Cameron, Nairn and Higgins (2009) for example, highlight the emotional damage graduate student's experience when they struggle with writing. Writing is not just a reflection of what they know, they feel that it becomes a reflection of their self-worth. Cameron, et al (2009) suggest that it is important to recognize the emotional toil students experience in order to help them through these hurdles.

Question 2: What challenges do they encounter?

5.3 Challenges

It is clear from the response to questions 7-8 (Appendix B) that multilingual students encounter several challenges in academic writing. The challenges can be grouped into two main categories: 1) Language proficiency which contains World Englishes, grammar, translation. 2) Academic discourse and genres which includes students' academic background, organization of paper, APA style and referencing, assignment criteria, and writing skills.

1) **Language proficiency**

World Englishes

The multilingual students in this study reported that they were confused between Canadian, American or British English. Amita used some words in her thesis that were not acceptable by her instructor. She believed that "annexure" and "appendixes" were two different words that meant the same thing. She could not understand the difference between the two, and added that she wanted to use her own terms. This is because English is used differently in each context. Kachru (1996) used three circles to describe the varieties of English spoken around the world. The first one is Inner Circle which includes the Native English speaking countries. The second one is the Outer Circle which includes the colonized territories. The third one is Expanding Circle which includes the countries that believe English is important language in their daily life (p. 4). The instructor is inside the Inner circle; he did not accommodate the different words that were coming from the Outer Circle of multilingual students. These words were not from his familiar repertoires of English. He had one standard of English and the varieties of English are still treated as inappropriate for classroom context (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 588). Amita and Alex are two multilingual students from two different communities. They brought their English varieties to the Canadian classroom which has monolingual norms at its base. Canagarajah (2006) claimed that "a classroom based on 'standard' English and formal instruction limits the linguistic acquisition, creativity, and production among students" (p. 592). Multilingual students might feel disabled in monolingual classrooms as their varieties of English are not accommodated.

It is predicted that in 2050, there will be 30 million more multilingual users of English than the native speakers (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 589). In this case, multilingual speakers have

much larger speech community and they will be able to use their own varieties in English with more confidence as there are other millions around the world would share with them the same varieties. It means that "their reference point is not British or American communities anymore" (p. 589). These changes suggest we need to rethink English as plural language that encompasses multiple norms and standards. Canagarajah (2006) believed that "English should be treated as multinational language, one that belongs to diverse communities and not owned only by the metropolitan communities" (p. 589). This theme is grouped under language proficiency because these students would be seen by their professors as deficient in English. However, in their home context, their variety of English would be seen as the norm.

In this study, multilingual students often find it difficult to access appropriate academic words in their writings. Hua, for instance, found word choice difficult and relied heavily on his dictionary. Similarly, Jacey had the same problem with the word choice. She felt she had limited vocabulary to use in her writing. To help her, she used to write down and memorize academic words so she could use them in her academic writing. This finding supports Angelova and Riazantseva's (1999) study where participants in this study also identified limited vocabulary as a key problem with their writing. Furthermore, Zhang's (2011) study also found that word choice was a major problem that multilingual students encountered in three Canadian universities. Similarly, Murshidi (2014) found that multilingual students from Middle East had similar difficulty with word choice.

Grammar

Understanding grammar for these multilingual students was also a challenge. They felt they need to learn correct grammar to convey what they wanted to say. The interview data indicated that two multilingual students, Ammar and Usman, identified grammar problems in

their writings more than the others. The issue of grammar in academic writing appears in the research literature. For example, Zhang (2011) found that multilingual students in Canadian universities suffered from grammar errors in their writing. They perceived themselves as lacking in grammar skills. Murshidi (2014) also reported that Emirati and Saudi students found English grammar difficult. Similarly, Morton, Storch and Thompson (2015) conducted a study at an Australian university and they tracked three multilingual students. They found that participants were not confident in academic writing and grammar errors were a challenge.

It is important to see the role of grammar within the context of academic writing. All of these students had studied English grammar and had achieved the required English Language test scores. This indicates that they were regarded as being proficient in English to be admitted into a graduate program. Lea and Street (1998) raised the issue of grammar in one of their three models of learning to write. It is called *'writing as study skills'* which is the most dominant approach in university settings. With this approach, writing requires the mastery of rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling (Russell et al., 2009, p. 400) that can be transferred from one context to another (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158). However, in an academic context, complex grammar structures are required and cannot be seen in isolation from the broader academic culture. In contrast, "writing should place greater importance on learners' ideas and creativity rather than on teaching grammar" (Fujieda, 2006, p. 65). In other words, if students were taught the unwritten rules of academic writing, the rules and conventions, perhaps the grammar issues would be less significant.

Translation

Translation was identified as another challenge that participants encountered. Three multilingual students (Ammar, Usman, and Hua) indicated that they think in their first language

and then translate to English. The same thing was found in Al Murshidi's (2014) study. He reported that multilingual students relied on the dictionary to translate from their first language to English or the reverse (p. 92). Similarly, Singh (2015) found that multilingual students write in their first language first then they translate into English (p. 18). For instance, Ammar is an Arab student who thinks and composes first in his L1 and then translates into L2. Likewise, Chinese students indicated that they struggled because of the effect of Chinese translation (Fores, 2016, p. 6). One obvious consideration arising from this finding is that multilingual students have distinct characteristics that differ from monolingual peers such as translation and codeswitching (Franceschini, 2011, p. 348). This is also possibly why grammar errors and sentence structure problems emerge as students shift from L1 to English.

2) **Academic discourse and genres**

Academic background

For the students in this study, academic writing is heavily influenced by cultural background in the home country and in the new country. In other words, student's identified that the way of writing, the language, the conventions were different in Canada from their home country. These are cultural differences that indicate a discourse change. Even if one studied Education in a home country, the way Education is studied in the new context is very different. However, many universities categorize multilingual writers as deficient and do not recognize that the issue is a change in discourse – the way things are done (Haggis, 2006, p. 526). The cause of writing problems is seen to be students' weak academic backgrounds or disadvantaged cultural backgrounds. In this study, five of the respondents reported that their academic writing challenges were associated with their previous home degree. That is to say, multilingual students

were aware that their education system at home was totally different from those in Western countries.

They found themselves influenced by their home academic discourse background. They reported being challenged to understand the genres (the ways of writing) and academic ways of thinking at MUN. For instance, some students showed that type of writing assignments - reflective, narrative or critical – were very different from the genres they wrote at home. Using APA formatting and referencing, word choice, structure, etc. were all different. This is where the notion of Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) is useful. CR shows how students' first language and culture influences their writing and that many of the struggles students face relate to these cultural differences and not issues of language. This approach is key to understanding the importance of cultural context on writing (Fujieda, 2006, p.64). That is to say, CR takes into account the cultural differences in writing and the different communities a multilingual writer may belong to. Research also shows that many multilingual graduate students - whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from the rest of the students in the English academic environment (Morton, Storch & Thompson, 2015, p. 1) - would write very differently in their home country.

The multilingual students in this study found themselves to be in need socialization into the discourses and genres of the new context and to learn the practices of the new community. This is a particular challenge because they continue to belong to their own linguistic communities or communities of practice. However, once these multilingual writers begin to learn how to participate in the new community and learn how to write in the new context, they can become "good writers" (Fernsten & Reda, 2011, p. 172).

Organization of paper

Alex and Hua indicated that they had difficulties organizing their writing. For example, Alex found it difficult to connect the paragraphs. Hua struggled to put ideas together. Al Murshidi (2014) similarly found the organization of a paper was a challenge that multilingual students found when completing their writing assignments. Zhang's (2011) findings also showed that multilingual students found structure and paragraph organization difficult. Organization of writing, while seemly simplistic is also indicative of academic discourse and genres. Academic papers have specific formats and organization. A newcomer to the discourse would find it difficult to know this unless explicitly taught. Amita talked about overcoming her writing difficulties through "trial and error" and many participants reported how feedback helped them overcome writing difficulties. Without explicit instruction on academic ways of writing, students have to learn painstakingly through trial and error, or if they are lucky through mentors who give them detailed feedback.

Referencing and APA

Three multilingual students (Omar, Alex, and Amita) reported that they encountered challenges in APA (American Psychological Association) format and referencing. APA style is among the nine existing styles of referencing (Neville, 2008, p. 17). The Faculty of Education at MUN requires students to use APA style. In this study, multilingual students found APA confusing and difficult to pick up without instruction. One participant, Amita, found using APA so stressful that she changed from the thesis route to an all-course route in her master's program. Again, the use of APA is indicative of academic discourse and conventions that were unfamiliar to these newcomers. Citing and referencing is part of the 'language' of academic writing and without instruction, it is very difficult to decipher this language.

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Assignment Criteria

Some participants explained some issues regarding assignments criteria in terms of course rigidity, type of assignments and topic selection. These challenges are also related to academic discourses and genres. Amita, who came from India, described an incident where she had a totally different response to the assignment topic than her instructor. She attributed this is the rigidity of the professor. She explained that her professor could not see her point of view even though she tried to explain her knowledge and experience of life in relation to the subject discussed in the assignment. It is obvious that multilingual students learn to write differently because of cultural differences. If we view this in relation to Canagarajah's (2002) approaches to multilingual student writing, we can see that this student had no agency. She was expected to drop her own culture, her own way of viewing the world, her style and writing and fit in to the monolingual new context. There was no room for boundary crossing or contact zones. In other words, there were no spaces for cultures to meet or where she could contribute her background experience.

Writing Skills

Three participants identified some other challenges, loosely grouped here as 'writing skills', relating to lack of technology use, lack of teamwork, and lack of practice. Technology literacy plays an important role in writing. Alex had faced technology problems at home and at MUN. He was unable to support his academic papers with picture or videos because of a lack of technology use in his home academic discourse. Omar expressed his concerns about feeling isolated and cot connected. As multilingual student at MUN, he needed interaction with community of practice to move from the periphery, further into the community. He needed classmates to act as mentors if needed. However, the structures of the classroom, supported little

group work and encouraged individual isolation. Lastly, Jacey mentioned her difficulty regarding being out of the academic discourse and then come back again. It was a challenge for her to come back to the discourse after being away from writing. This is obvious for multilingual students; they need to be immersed in the discourse to adopt the practices of the community.

Question 3: What are the strategies applied by multilingual students when writing their academic papers?

5.4 Strategies

In addressing our third research question, it is clear from the response to questions 9-10 (Appendix) that multilingual students were able to overcome some of their challenges in academic writing although this success was achieved at great cost. However, it is important to note that these multilingual were not helpless bystanders. Instead they actively sought whatever help they could find. They developed effective solutions and techniques to address their problems. Each student found different routes to success and many problems remained unresolved. Four main categories were interpreted to categorize the strategies used by participants: 1) The first one related to accessing academic discourse which encompasses reading, note taking, style imitation. 2) The second category related to explicit pedagogy which includes feedback, attending writing workshops, and writing center. 3) The third category discusses the literacy brokers which shed light on the importance of learning from others. 4) The final category discussed the language proficiency in relation to the use of technology tools.

1) Accessing academic discourse

Reading

At the beginning of his master's degree, Omar relied a lot on reading journal articles to overcome his problems with writing. He emphasized the need to read widely to have the

theoretical background in his subject area. Similarly, Alex used this strategy to have a general

idea about the topic been discussed. He compared different themes and opinions about articles

and summarized them in sentences. Ammar also relied heavily on reading academic papers to

understand his field of study. In addition, Amita considered reading as her one golden rule to

improve her academic writing. She attempted to read more and more to learn the ways of

speaking in the new academic discourse. Both Ammar and Amita stated that the only way to

improve writing is through reading academic papers. Finally, Hua used to read number of articles

and take notes as well. All the five participants highlighted the role of reading in helping them

learn the new academic discourse requirements. The result of my study contradicts Nambiar's

(2010) study who found that many international students did not benefit from the reading

strategy in which they were given a list of articles to read. He concluded that reading is one of

the students' weakest parts (p. 630). In this study, reading was definitely seen by participants as a

way of learning academic language, ways of thinking, and styles of writing.

Note Taking

Note taking was another strategy that three participants used to overcome their challenges

with academic writing in their new academic discourse. Omar for example, read and took notes

from the textbook, the assigned list of articles, or online resources. My study confirms

Mendelsohn's (2002) results who found that reading and note taking from the textbook were

beneficial strategies to improve multilingual students' academic writing (p. 70). Hua explained

his strategy of reading several articles about a subject before starting to write. Jacey relied

heavily on her note taking strategy and she considered it the best method to overcome her

challenges. She borrowed words, expressions, and sentence structures from journal articles and

TED Talks. This note-taking strategy indicates a dedication and an active participation in their own learning. Like reading, note taking, allows a writer to practice the language of the discourse.

Style imitation

Imitation is considered an effective strategy to learn academic writing. It is a useful strategy for non-English speakers to adapt their writing to the new academic discourse. In my study, two Chinese participants, Hua and Jacey, adopted this strategy to overcome their challenges in academic writing. Hua began imitating the writing style of a Chinese philosopher, and he felt it helpful to learn how to write logically with perfect grammar. He felt that imitating a writing style of an authority was a practical way to improve his writing skills. Similarly, Jacey borrowed sentence structure and expressions from various articles and TED Talks in her sub-discipline. This strategy is common among multilingual newcomers as the new writers model their language, formats and style on experienced writers in the discourse. The research literature also shows that Asian cultures, particularly, prefer to imitate other's writing styles since this shows a respect for the knowledge (Shukri, 2014). Research also shows that imitation is a successful method which, leads to understanding different types of genres, styles, as well as linguistic forms (Jones & Freeman, 2003). I believe that multilingual students should have some model texts to imitate in doing their assignments. They "can be encouraged to imitate phrase structure rather than copying phrases intact" (p. 182).

2) **Explicit pedagogy**

Feedback

Feedback was another strategy used by multilingual students to overcome their challenges in academic writing. Feedback is, effectively, explicit pedagogy where an instructor tells the writer explicitly what they are doing wrong and how they can correct it. The importance

of feedback is to guide and direct multilingual students to develop and write their academic papers in specific ways. However, these students might have a different interpretation or find it hard to make sense of what is written in the feedback comments. In my study, multilingual students were aware of the importance of feedback in developing writing skills. Similarly, Morton's (2015) study found that multilingual students recognized the importance of feedback and that lead to increased self-confidence (p. 6). Jones and Freeman (2003) observed that a significant number of international students wanted more feedback on writing (p. 174).

The results of my study indicated that Hua benefited most and learned from his professors' feedback. He mentioned that "the feedbacks from the teachers are quite beneficial". Similarly, Jacey visited one of her professors to learn how to do APA and referencing. Sometimes she sent the outline of her assignments to her professor to receive feedback. Furthermore, Alex also received feedback from his professors and used it to improve his academic writing. For Alex, feedback had a large impact on improving his academic writing skills. Ammar hired a professional editor to proofread his academic writing and but he used the editing to learn what he was doing wrong. Lastly, Amita received a lot of help from her supervisor to edit her academic writing. Without feedback, multilingual students believed their piece of academic writing was well constructed and when they discovered that they had received a low grade and negative feedback, they often felt confused and not sure what they had done wrong in the paper (Lea & street, 1998). In addition, Fernsten and Reda (2011) found that many students did not receive any positive feedback or encouragement about their academic writing and this affected their confidence.

Attending writing workshops

Multilingual students should be supported with an explicit pedagogy in writing instruction (Hyland, 2003). Writing workshops helped multilingual students in this study to enhance their writing skills. Participants identified that the writing workshops they attended were remarkably valuable. Four participants of the study attended writing workshops organized by a faculty member in Education Department. For example, Alex expressed the benefits of the academic writing workshop. He was totally satisfied of the outcomes of this workshop in terms of free writing, organization, editing. He said the workshop was "really beneficial". Hua also attended the writing workshop and he identified its benefits on improving academic writing skills. Furthermore, Amita could attend one-day workshop and described her experience as good. Lastly, Ammar attended the writing workshop of three hours and described it as "very beneficial". These multilingual students liked the writing workshops and found them beneficial. In another study, it was found that international students "want more input and earlier instruction on writing skills" (Jones & Freeman, 2003, p. 174). My study confirms Cameron and Higgins's (2009) study who found that writing workshops make graduate students feel more confident about academic writing (p. 280). They found that writing workshops are a good intervention to develop students' academic skills.

It is very beneficial for multilingual students to learn, discuss, deconstruct, and analyze their language and writing in an academic writing workshop. Both students and teachers in the writing workshops share the responsibility in negotiation and production of texts (Hyland, 2003, p. 26). In order for multilingual students to achieve proficiency in academic writing, it "requires explicit pedagogy in grammar and lexis and is important because one's linguistic repertoire and

writing skills often determine one's social, economic, and political choices" (Hinkel, 2006, p. 124).

The Writing Centre

The results of my study indicated that some multilingual students went to the Writing Centre to have their papers edited. The Writing Center is another potential source of effective explicit pedagogy. Five out of seven students used the Writing Center services. Although Hua found some tutors did not have good grammar, he thought that the Writing Center was helpful. However, four participants were very unhappy with the Writing Center services. Ammar described his experience of visiting the Writing Center as ineffective. He needed to learn the coherence of ideas rather than focusing on grammar mistakes only. Amita was also not satisfied with the services because of the focus on grammatical errors. Usman added that tutors are not specialized in the topic area. Jacey believed that the Writing Center services were "not a big help". She wanted to learn how to write instead of only having her grammar corrected. The results of my study support Al Murshidi's (2014) research who found that multilingual students attempted to overcome their writing difficulties by visiting a Writing Center. However, most were not satisfied of the services provided. The Writing Center can provide multilingual students with continuous interaction with English native speakers; however, their services could be improved to meet the multilingual graduate student needs.

3) **Literacy brokers**

Learning from others

The results of my study indicated that multilingual student involved others - "literacy brokers" in their academic text production. The range of literacy brokers can be arranged under three categories: academic professionals, language professionals, and non-professionals (Lillis

& Curry, 2006, p. 14). Multilingual students sought help from academic professionals like professors and from language professionals such as librarians and lastly from non-professionals such as classmates, roommates, and landlords. This is considered a key strategy to achieve success with academic writing. Omar, for instance, asked his Canadian roommate to proofread his articles. Similarly, Alex received support from one of his Canadian classmates who gave him guidance with referencing and explained to him the way to organize ideas into a coherent paper. Alex also received help from a librarian who referred him to some books and videos about APA style and how to search articles. Hua met his supervisor outside of the classroom to get help with academic writing. Jacey showed her paper to her Canadian landlord who helped her with editing and word choice. Literacy brokers play an important role in helping multilingual writers to achieve success and meet their writing goals. It is not surprising that the students in this study used this mechanism of support.

4) **Use of Technology Tools**

Three participants used some kind of technology tools to overcome their struggles with academic writing. Ammar and Jacey both relied on the Grammarly website to check their grammar and plagiarism. Ammar used this website before he submitted his paper to an editor. Amita also used Google Scholar website to help her generate APA citations. Similar to my results, Singh (2015) found that international graduate students referred to the internet to provide them with information and support on academic writing techniques. Using technology tools as a support for academic writing is a new and emerging area in the research literature.

Limitations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Limitations

The study was limited to seven participants, and as such the data collected for this study cannot be generalized to all graduate international students attending Memorial University or other universities in Canada. In this case, the researcher is not able to generate assumptions concerning a particular cultural group because the sample is not representative of all the nationalities attending Memorial University. Other considerations to be included in future research include variations between Masters and Doctoral students; whether graduate students are studying face-to-face or online; and whether particular cultural groups experience specific writing challenges and supports

Conclusions

This study is significant because it is very important to understand and identify multilingual students' problems of learning to adjust to the requirements of a Canadian academic writing discourse. Firstly, these multilingual students showed great potential to adapt to the new academic discourse. Secondly, the analysis of data showed that these international graduate students encountered challenges and identified strategies that are related mainly to language proficiency and academic discourse. Thirdly, it was found that many of the strategies employed by the students in this study are similar to those found in the research literature.

1. Multilingual students in this study proved to have strong sense of metadiscourse. This is one of the strengths of multilingualism. One of the benefits of metadiscourse is to help multilingual students comprehend their challenges and identify strategies to overcome their obstacles in academic writing. Similarly, Briguglio and Smith (2012) found that multilingual students in an Australian University "were able to reflect on their experience and draw some of

their own conclusions about what they had done well and what they could perhaps do better" (p. 29). Metadiscourse "is based on a view of writing as social engagement" (Hyland, 2004, p. 156). Multilingual students' cultural, and academic backgrounds do not prevent them from becoming successful academic writers in English, it actually strengthens their ability to quickly adapt and master the new academic discourse. Canagarajah (2013b) called it a difference-as-resource perspective (p. 13). In this study, almost all multilingual students indicated that their academic writing was improved by the end of their graduate degree, and they were able to identify their own strategies to overcome their challenges. It is because they "transfer many skills from their traditions of vernacular communication" (p. 13) and apply them in their new community of practice. In sum, the results of this study contradict with "deficit perspective" which viewed multilingual students as unfit in their new academic discourse. This deficit view has proved to be less than helpful and, indeed, wrong.

2. The results of this study indicated that two main themes emerged in the analysis of the challenges and the strategies. The first theme is related to language proficiency. The second theme is related to academic discourse. International graduate students found several problems in relation to language proficiency. For instance, several participants struggled with grammar, word choice, and translation. In contrast, some faced problems that were more related to the Canadian academic discourse such as: APA style, assignment criteria, and writing skills. Moreover, for the strategies, participants highlighted the importance of reading, note taking and style imitation to improve their academic writing and adopt into the new academic discourse. For example, reading was the most dominant strategy that multilingual students emphasized on to overcome their challenges in writing. Obviously, all the five participants highlighted the role of reading in helping them learn the new academic discourse requirements. In addition, multilingual students

relied on literacy brokers to help them achieve their writing goals. It was found that multilingual students sought help from professors, librarians, roommates, classmates and landlords. Briguglio and Smith (2012) found that multilingual students sought help from tutors as well.

3. There have been numerous studies conducted in the literature that identified strategies employed by multilingual students to overcome their challenges in academic writing. Similarly, in my study, it was found that multilingual students identified several strategies to overcome their difficulties in academic writing such as note taking, imitate the writing styles, attending writing workshops, feedback, the writing center, and the use of technology. For example, a study conducted by Mendelsohn (2002) found that a note taking strategy is essential to improve multilingual academic writing. Shukri (2014) also found that Asian students imitate the writing styles of others to improve their writing. Cameron and Higgins's (2009) found that attending writing workshop is beneficial for multilingual students to enhance their skills in academic wiring. In my study, it was found that feedback is a significant key strategy that multilingual students relied on to edit and write academic papers, this is in line with Morton's (2015), Jones and Freeman's (2003) study. It was found that visiting the Writing Center was another strategy that multilingual writers relied on to proofread their academic papers. This supports Al Murshidi's (2014) results who found that multilingual students attempted to overcome their writing difficulty through visiting the Writing Center. Lastly, multilingual students used technology to improve their academic writing. This confirms Singh's (2015) study who found that multilingual students referred to the use of internet to provide them with information on the academic writing techniques.

In spite of the fact that multilingual students encountered numerous problems in academic writing, the data also revealed that they discovered effective strategies to solve their

problems. It was necessary for the multilingual students to make all these adjustments to succeed in the new academic discourse.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, some recommendations are provided that may prove to be helpful for policymakers, administrators, faculty and staff to help multilingual graduate students be academically successful at Memorial University:

- Provide detailed information, rubrics, and course outlines to students prior to their class on how to write. This should include information and links to other resources such as videos and articles. More specifically, this information should guide students on how to use APA style, and writing structures. It should mention the Writing Center services for students. It should also include explanations and examples on different writing genres. This information should be mailed to each student prior to arrival at MUN and kept it posted on the front page of the MUN website.

- Provide multilingual students with explicit feedback on writing from their instructors.

- Organize more and regular academic writing workshops. Some students recommended that there should be a mandatory course of academic writing for all graduate students at least once a semester.

- Provide students in a D2L platform with training on how to write with good examples of writing, such as proposals, for example. The training should explain the components of a good paper.

- Enhance Writing Center services. This should include the use of technology to save time. Tutors need to explain what they are editing and highlight the recommendations in the margins. The limit of one hour per week is not enough for a master's thesis and doctoral

dissertation. Furthermore, the Writing Center should hire experienced tutors from each faculty, and students should be assigned tutors according to their fields of study.

- Assist graduate multilingual students' academic writing difficulties by creating opportunities to meet professional writers and editors at the writing center for advance help in academic writing.

- Create opportunities for international students to interact within the university and the community. Memorial University should develop programs and strategies that encourage the interaction of Canadian and international students.

- Encourage international students to come together and discuss their challenges in academic writing.

In sum, it is without doubt that writing is a very complex task when carried out in a foreign language. It was found that graduate multilingual students' writing was influenced by their home academic discourse. It is significant to note that graduate multilingual students learned to overcome their own problems in the absence of support provided for them. As this study suggest, all seven of the interviewed students noted that they suffer from numerous challenges in academic writing and at the same time they identified and applied some strategies that can help them to overcome challenges. Successful strategies found useful among the participants such as: reading, note taking, learning from others, style imitation, attending writing workshops, feedback, the Writing Center and the use of technology.

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Appendix A Informed Consent Form

Title: Experiences, Challenges, and Strategies of Multilingual Graduate Students in English Academic Writing

Researcher(s):   Mr Mohammed Kasmi, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, mk7485@mun.ca, 709-770-9222

Supervisor(s):   Dr Cecile Badenhorst, Associate Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland, E 5034, G.A Hickman Building, cbadenhorst@mun.ca.

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "Experiences, Challenges, and Strategies of Multilingual Graduate Students in English Academic Writing."

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Mr Mohammed Kasmi , if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

As part of my Master's thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst about Experiences, Challenges, and Strategies of Multilingual Graduate Students in

English Academic Writing. The study involves graduate international students and their challenges and experiences in academic writing.

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences, challenges and strategies of multilingual graduate students in academic writing at MUN. This study, hopefully will contribute to the teaching and learning of academic writing for international students as well as various university services.

You are invited to be interviewed one-to-one. The interview will be up to an hour long and will occur at a place and time of your convenience. There are no risks involved due to participation in the study. Your participation will result in understanding the difficulties international graduate students experience with writing which would be helpful to future researchers.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained with the data. Interviews will be audio-recorded but you may stop me from doing so if you want to. The data will be stored for a period of five years according to the policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research at MUN and then shredded. The electronic data will be kept in password protected files.

The results of the study will be published in a scholarly journal and presented as a paper in a conference. The data will be reported using direct quotations and in an aggregated or summarized form using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. The participants will provided with an e-copy of the final thesis after examination. The participants have the right to withdraw from the project at anytime until the member-checking of transcripts is complete (April 1st, 2016). Once the participants have checked their interview transcripts, they can no longer withdraw from the study as the data from that point will be analyzed and developed into findings.

Your name will kept anonymous in the whole process of the study. Once the interviews are transcribed and the member-checks completed, all identifying markers will be removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used instead of names. All the data collected will be kept under lock and key at my supervisor's office (Ed-5034) in the Education building at MUN for 5 years accessible only to me or my supervisor. Audio tape and transcripts on my laptop will be kept under password protected folders. The participants will also have the right to access their own files (audio or transcripts) after the interview; otherwise all the data will be confidential.

Participation in this study is absolutely voluntary. Although there are no foreseeable negative consequences to your participation, you may choose not to answer any question(s), if you decide to withdraw from the study, the digital data will be destroyed and the paper data will be shredded and not be included in the study. The withdrawal from the study will not affect them and will have no consequences for the participants

You are welcome to ask questions concerning matters related to this research at any time before, during, or after your participation. Please contact: Mohammed Kasmi (Researcher), Telephone: 709-770-9222, email: mk7485@mun.ca, or Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Telephone: 709- 864-7654, email: cbadenhorst@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation during data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw after data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to April 1st, 2016.

I agree to be audio-recorded   ☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to the use of direct quotations   ☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your signature confirms:

☐ I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____

_____

Signature of participant   Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Appendix B Interview Questions

Project: Experiences, Challenges, and Strategies of Multilingual Graduate Students in English Academic Writing

Time of Interview: 1 hour

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Mohammed Kasmi

Interviewee:

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences, challenges, and strategies of multilingual graduate students in academic writing at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This study, hopefully will contribute to the teaching and learning of academic writing for international students as well as contribute to various university services. The interview takes approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded.

Questions

1. Can you introduce yourself in terms of your education, home country, and future plan?
2. When did you write academically for the first time? Was it here or back home? How did you feel?
3. How would you describe your academic writing back home?
4. Did you receive any training on academic writing at home?
5. Describe your most recent piece of academic writing in your program of study? Was it in a course? Which course?
6. How do you feel about your academic writing?
7. Were you satisfied with writing your academic papers? If not, tell me why?
8. What were the specific problems that you encountered in your writings? Can you give an example?
9. What were the challenges you faced when you write your academic papers? Can you explain in details?
10. What methods or strategies did you use to overcome these problems?
11. What did you do to solve these problems?
12. What steps do you take in writing your academic papers? Describe how you go about writing a paper.

13. Have faculty in the courses you have taken prepare you to overcome your challenges in academic writing? If yes, in what ways?

14. Have you ever visited the university writing center? If yes, describe your experience?

15. What advice would you give new multilingual international students on academic writing?

16. Can you identify one key solution for your writing problems?

17. In your opinion, what writing services are needed on campus for multilingual international students? How can existing services on campus be improved?

Appendix C Nodes and Tree Nodes

Nodes

- Nodes
  - Themes
  - Cases

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections

Themes

Name	Sources	References
Academic Backgrounds	5	12
Faculty Resourses	1	3
Mandatory Workshop	1	1
Writing Challenges	0	0
academic words or word ch	4	12
APA style	3	7
assignments	1	2
cohesion	1	1
course regidity	1	3
editing	1	1
financial	2	2
grammar	3	3
identity	1	2
lack of guidance	1	1
lack of networks	1	1
lack of practice	1	1
lack of technology use	2	2
linguistics	2	2
organization	2	4
shame or shy	1	1
topic selection	1	3
translation	3	4

Nodes

- Nodes
  - Themes
  - Cases

Sources
Nodes
Classifications

Themes

Name	Sources	References
Academic Backgrounds	5	12
Faculty Resourses	1	3
Mandatory Workshop	1	1
Writing Challenges	0	0
Writing Experiences	0	0
not satisfied	5	10
satisfied	5	9
Writing Steps	0	0
Writing Strategies	0	0
editor	2	3
faculty strategy	3	6
learn from others seek help	4	6
library	1	2
professor feedback	2	3
reading	5	8
revision	1	1
style immitation borrow expr	2	8
take notes	3	5
technology	3	5
workshops attendance	3	5
writing centre	1	2