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Use of Resources in Second Language Writing Socialization

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Abstract

This study investigated five Korean ESL graduate students' access to and utilization of professional and social resources in the process of socializing into American academic writing discourse. As a pilot study for a larger scale research study, data for the present study were collected during a four-month period through interviews. Findings suggest that socialization into American academic writing discourse was difficult, frustrating, and disempowering as well as restricted by lack of coordination among resources. Based on their prior experience and second-hand information provided by peers, the participants remained legitimate peripheral passive users of university resources such as the writing center, an ESL program, and research courses designed to help them. They were, however, active users of intertextual resources they sought out themselves. Peer advice appears to be more influential in Korean L2 graduate students' resource use choices than their advisors' and departments' recommendations.

Background

Second language scholars have called for studies of linguistically and culturally diverse students' integration process into the North American academic community (e.g., Canagarajah, 2006, Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010, and Tran, 2009). Such a need continues with the renewed influx of international students. For example, in 2006-2007, the Institute of International Education reported particularly large increases in the number of students from South Korea, up 10% to 58,847 students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions compared to the previous year (IIE, 2006). South Korean

students ranked third in that year, comprising about 10.4% of the total international student population in the United States. Despite a tremendous investment of time, money, and effort, they face numerous difficulties, challenges, and constant struggles during their academic journey in the U.S. Most of all, as the students have difficulty accessing the cultural knowledge that plays a crucial role in their language socialization, and they are not often able to produce contextually adequate texts in the American academy (Hyland, 2003). According to Spack (1988), this is due to “a large gap between what students bring to the academic community and what the academic community expects of them” (p. 30).

Writing seems to be the greatest challenge for L2 students’ successful adaptation to their new academic culture (Zamel, 2002). This echoes Lee and Scarcella’s concern (1992) that writing is one of the most serious problems that prevent Korean students from achieving academic success in North America. In fact, writing is believed to play such a significant role in many activities, particularly in the graduate context (Lantolf & Appel, 1994), that “it is through writing that learners are judged academically fit or unfit relative to target academic discourse communities” (Krase, 2003, p. 20). According to Currie (1998), this is a frustrating experience for L2 students, who tend to blame themselves—and not their novice status—for not being able to construct the level of texts expected in their new academic communities. L2 students do not seem to understand that learning to write in L2 contexts is an important part of the process of becoming socialized into academic communities of practice (Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1992, 1995; Guo, 2006; Spack, 1997).

This qualitative pilot study for larger scale research investigated five Korean graduate students’—four doctoral and one master’s—socialization into American academic L2 writing discourse. Operationalizing socialization into American L2 academic writing discourse as learning how to write through use of professional and social resources, this study focused on the challenges the students faced and on their access to and utilization of professional and social resources at a large Midwestern university. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What issues, if any, do Korean L2 graduate students face in their socialization into American academic writing discourse?
2. What professional and social resources, if any, do Korean L2 graduate students have access to in their socialization into American academic writing discourse and how do they make use of them?

The notion of socialization comes from Ochs’ (1988) and Schieffelin and Ochs’ (1986a, 1986b) concept of language socialization, which stresses the role of sociocultural context where learning (e.g., language or writing) takes place through socialization. It also focuses on the process through which novice learners in an academic community become socialized into the community’s culture. In other words, the notion of language socialization involves “socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b, p. 163). Similarly, Heath (1996) stresses the importance of learners’ engagement in language-mediated activities when she claims

that “students cannot be expected to write academic essays of argumentation, laboratory reports, or biographical accounts unless they have learned these forms through oral practice and have had multiple opportunities to reshape such writing with immediate audience feedback” (p. 777). Language socialization is a useful framework for understanding the interactions and activities that take place in the environment where novice L2 learners strive to gain expertise in their new languages and contexts of language use.

Literature Review

While L2 students’ perceptions of first and second language writing instructions, textual analysis of their first and second language writing, and their writing process have been explored, the students’ access to and utilization of resources as a medium to facilitate their writing socialization into the academic community they wish to join remains an issue deserving further research.

L2 Writing Issues

According to Chon and Kim (2005) and Kim, S. (2001), there was an overall lack of writing instruction in L1 and L2 in Korea, which posed great challenges for their studies in the American academic context. Chon and Kim (2005) reported their participants feeling that the formal writing instruction they received in both their L1 and L2 were inadequate. These findings confirm Li’s (1998) claim that English education in Korea tends to focus on vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills, with little attention to writing. When writing is taught, a sentence-by-sentence translation from L1 to L2 is the common method of instruction (Kim, S., 2001; Kim, Y., 2001). The findings of previous research seem to indicate that the transition to the American academic context takes place without sufficient support.

Many text-based studies (e.g., Kim, K., 1996) have examined the written texts of L2 Korean writers. These studies found that the text structure of Koreans’ writing in English is characterized by indirectness. For example, Kim (1996) compared the rhetorical styles of Korean and American university students’ writings through an examination of student newspaper editorials in each country. Even though the newspaper editorial genre may not be representative of the rhetorical styles of general academic writing, the findings showed that most of the editorials written by Korean students, whether they were written in Korean or in English, had their thesis statements at the end of the editorial after a long introduction. Kim (1996) attributed differences in rhetorical patterns between Korean and English to the writers’ different cultural and historical backgrounds. Without the background knowledge required, it would seem difficult for Korean L2 students to learn the rhetorical patterns of the target language.

While such findings shed light on how Korean students write and lead to some pedagogical recommendations, they provide little information about the challenges L2 students face during socialization into American academic writing discourse. Understanding the socialization process is significant because, as Canagarajah (2002) emphasizes, L2 writing is situated “in the specific discourse communities one is writing

in/for” (p. 29). Based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice, he further asserts that “it is by participating in the activity of the community that one can become an insider in the knowledge and conventions of that circle” (p. 30).

Sociocultural theory in general maintains that it is important to acknowledge sociocultural settings and interactions as the primary factors in the process of socialization into academic communities of practice. More specifically, the theory of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) addresses the process by which newcomers gradually become full participants in a community of practice by interacting with more experienced community members. Lave and Wenger further state, “to become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation” (pp. 100-101). Since novice L2 students are not expert members of the L2 community, they do not have central participation. However, students should have legitimate access to the activities of the community. For L2 graduate students, collaborative interactions with resources appear to play a significant role in terms of enabling them to learn genre-specific writing skills. An investigation of L2 students’ collaboration with the resources specific to a university setting will provide a concrete picture of how old-timers assist newcomers in the appropriation of genre-specific language within the context of their writing tasks.

A number of studies (Flowerdew, 2000; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995; Spack, 1997; Zamel & Spack, 1998) have investigated the situated or socially constructed process of acquiring L2 writing by which newcomers become socialized into academic communities of practice, and a variety of challenges, conflicts, and tensions that L2 learners may experience when participating in L2 writing activities have been documented.

Professional and Social Resources

Professional resources include university ESL courses, writing center assistants, and research courses in students’ subject areas designed to facilitate socialization into university academic discourse. Researchers have studied ESL and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) classes and subject area requirements (Horowitz, 1986; Leki & Carson, 1994, 1997), but little research is available on how Korean ESL graduate students perceive and make use of ESL courses, writing center resources, and/or research courses in their socialization process. One relevant study is that of Yang and Rendon (1994), which found that Asian students in North Carolina’s community college system were more likely to follow their families’ and friends’ advice than the informational literature provided by their college or advice given by college administrators.

University writing centers are often considered to be helpful resources (Thonus, 2002), and many L1 and L2 students are referred to them. Some researchers have studied L2 students’ perceptions and use of writing centers (e.g., Cumming & So, 1996; Harris & Silva, 1993; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Williams & Severino, 2004). Harris and Silva’s (1993) study found that many L2 writers expect tutors to be authoritative “tellers” and

feel uncomfortable in casual interactions with tutors. They think of writing center services mainly in terms of editing and correcting errors. Assistance with word choice and sentence-level problems is the type of help L2 graduate students seek most often from writing centers (Cumming & So, 1996; Powers & Nelson, 1995). A related problem is that L2 students often seek out last-minute help when a paper is due, which limits the services tutors can provide to proofreading alone. This also prevents the active participation of L2 writers in revising and negotiating meaning that some studies suggest may facilitate their learning (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Williams, 2004). These studies also conclude that the approaches employed by writing centers to tutor native speakers were not always helpful for L2 writers (Harris & Silva, 1993). Powers and Nelson's (1995) survey of writing center staff about conferencing with graduate research writers in general and L2 graduate research writers in particular at 110 institutions across the U.S.A. sheds some light on the reasons for this. According to Powers and Nelson (1995), writing center staff, mostly peer tutors from the English departments, lacked specialized training in ESL and/or experience with graduate research writing in L2 students' subject areas. Their unfamiliarity with the content of tutees' writing caused more problems for L2 writers, who may also be unfamiliar with rhetorical context and organization or have difficulty explaining their problems to writing center staff. These findings point to a need for additional research on writing center practice regarding L2 writers and on collaboration between writing center staff and L2 instructors in general and Korean L2 graduate students' utilization of them in particular.

Use of social resources in L2 writing socialization has emerged as a major theme in second language writing research (Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1995; Guo, 2006; Li, 2005, 2007; Casanave & Li, 2008; Riazi, 1997). Belcher's (1994) study of mentoring relationships between nonnative graduate dissertation writers and their advisors concludes that advisors play an important role in the students' writing socialization. Similarly, Guo's (2006) autobiographical account of L2 writing socialization attributed her successful transition from "a timid peripheral participant" into "a legitimate participant" to the interaction with and assistance she received from her supportive peers and professors. Riazi (1997) found that the participants in his study "relied extensively on interacting with other members of their academic community as strategies" (p. 127) for seeking clarification and comments. Li's (2005) case study of a Chinese doctoral student's disciplinary enculturation is particularly notable for being conducted at a major Chinese university and for investigating the student's enculturation into a research community where English is the primary language of publication. The findings show that the student utilized the published literature such as research articles in his field as models and borrowed its rhetorical structure and some linguistic expressions for his own writing. The student also benefited from interacting with his fellow students and submitting English papers for publication. Above all, unlike the unsuccessful cases in Belcher's (1994) study of students' relationships with their academic advisors, the student in Li's study benefited greatly from the hierarchical relationship with his advisor.

While the studies cited above have contributed greatly to our understanding of L2 graduate students' socialization into American academic writing discourse, most of them involve Chinese or Japanese students. Furthermore, the studies dealing with Korean ESL/EFL students' writing issues are focused more on contrastive rhetoric and less on language socialization that can address socioculturally embedded writing issues (Belcher & Braine, 1995; Mohan & Smith, 1992; Riazi, 1997). This study contributes to the literature addressing this gap by investigating Korean L2 graduate students' L2 writing socialization issues and their access to and utilization of professional and social resources during their socialization into American academic writing discourse.

Methodology

We employed a qualitative case study approach in seeking to understand participants' perceptions (van Lier, 2005). Five participants from a large Midwestern research-intensive university were recruited through purposeful sampling to gain an indepth understanding (Patton, 2002) of the issues under investigation. Two of the students (Jin and Namjoo) were from the Political Science department, two (Juyoung and Kim) were from Music Composition, and one (Younghee) was from Teaching English as a Second Language. All the names here are pseudonyms used to ensure the anonymity of the participants. All the participants had less than three years of U.S. residency at the beginning of the study, and all were still taking courses to complete their program requirements. Juyoung was a new entrant to graduate school as a PhD student with no prior experience in U.S. academia other than a three-month ESL experience at another institution. Jin and Younghee had been enrolled at this university for one year, Jin as a PhD student and Younghee as a master's student, at the beginning of the study. Namjoo and Kim were in their third year at the university; they had completed their master's degrees there and were working toward their doctoral degrees, Namjoo in her first year and Kim in her second.

Data for the study were collected by the first author from September, 2006 to January, 2007. Data sources included one-hour semi-structured initial interviews and 30-minute to one-hour follow-up interviews with each participant. Open-ended interview questions were administered to capture the participants' individual perspectives, and the in-depth follow-up interviews were prepared for each participant individually, focusing on responses they had given at the first interview session. The interview questions were asked in Korean because it was believed that this practice was helpful in enhancing clarity, communication, and rapport between the researcher and the participants during the interviews (Patton, 2002). All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. When the first author translated the participants' interviews from Korean to English, she did it through member checking – “going back to participants and asking them, ‘Have I got it right?’” – for accurate descriptions and interpretations of their meaning (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 28). Also, the first author worked closely with the second author, as well as with fellow doctoral students speaking different languages and from different regions of the world, particularly when developing interview questions and analyzing data, which made it possible to accommodate different points of view.

All the data were analyzed inductively to discover recurring themes and patterns (Patton, 2002). As themes and patterns became evident, they were organized into categories and subcategories. Two major categories were identified: L2 writing socialization difficulties, challenges, and frustrations (corresponding to research question 1) and access to and use of resources (corresponding to research question 2). The second category was further sub-categorized into professional resources and social and intertextual resources.

Findings

L2 Writing Socialization Difficulties and Frustrations

Analysis of the data suggested that socialization into American academic writing discourse was a difficult, frustrating, and even upsetting process for the Korean L2 graduate students who participated in the study. These students made tremendous efforts preparing to study abroad, taking reading and writing courses and studying TOEFL and GRE, for example. These efforts did not seem to be sufficient, however. These highly educated graduate students faced issues not much different from those faced by undergraduate L2 students.

The participants attributed their difficulties and frustrations to limited English language proficiency, lack of prior knowledge of or experience with academic writing, and to the host university's expectation that they should have been proficient in academic writing prior to entering their graduate programs. Younghee represents the participants' overall view of L2 writing, saying "it [writing] is tremendously time consuming" and "writing one page was just a struggle." Their limited oral language proficiency made it difficult for them to use social resources wisely. This lack of proficiency hindered their ability to develop social relationships with advisors and peers in order to establish more productive sources for systematic and continuous help. For example, whenever Juyoung's advisor asked how things were going, she always said "good," even when things were not going well. She explained that she did this "because my English is not good enough to express the problems. If I say there is a problem, that means I have to say more about it. But if you say just good, you don't need to explain more." Thus Juyoung failed to capitalize on these casual encounters with her advisor to discuss her writing problems. Kim also experienced language-related problems. She said that when she wrote she looked for and made use of expressions, phrases, or formats from her readings rather than coming up with them on her own. Kim questioned this practice and expressed some fear about employing it:

It is like stealing the sentence structure from source readings, one sentence after another, even if the content is different from theirs. I doubt it is okay to do so, you know, I ask myself. What if I just copy and borrow others' thoughts, not my own, for the rest of my life?

Juyoung discussed a crisis of confidence in her English that she experienced at the end of her first quarter of study. (It is important to note that, at this time, Juyoung no longer considered herself a newcomer and believed that her English should have been much better than it was.)

It has been a quarter. For the first two weeks, as a newcomer, everything was so new and I was nervous all the time, and I couldn't speak English well. . . . By the fifth week, I felt that my English is improving, talking more, got better at listening, speaking is still limited, but feel more comfortable with people and less nervous. . . . These days, I think I care more about how others would think about me. Being a newcomer, everything could be understandable to others, you know, they understand you because you are new. But after one quarter, what if they think my English should be better by now. Because of that, I am afraid that my English is getting worse, not improving.

Other participants had similar experiences, and they found them to be equally frustrating, upsetting, and disempowering. Namjoo, for example, who was a confident writer in L1, felt "angry, and frustrated about not being able to express what I think. I'm not an active writer anymore and I have no confidence in myself."

In addition, differences in writing structure and organization between L1 and L2 (e.g., the location of thesis statements), lack of skills in writing mechanics and editing ability, no prior experience with academic genres such as literature reviews, and overall unfamiliarity with academic language also posed significant difficulties in the participants' socialization process. Jin said, "I don't have any prior experience with literature review, but had to write anyway even though I didn't know how to write it."

Youngee described her experience of writing her first course paper:

It was a reflection paper and it was hard to put my position or thoughts in English. I read other samples written by those who took the course before. I referred to the format to learn how to organize it like introduction, body, and conclusion. . . . The professor didn't tell us how to write and I just relied on the sample I got because I had no clue how to write it.

Kim also shared an incident that occurred as a result of her unfamiliarity with academic writing:

At first I didn't know that the thesis statement comes first and I just wrote my thoughts. I didn't get a good grade so I went to see the TA, who told me that "you need introduction, body, and conclusion." Later I realized that the format is similar to that of TOEFL [writing].

So what did the participants do to address the issues they faced? Analysis of the interview data with Jin, Kim, and Youngee revealed that they thought it was their responsibility to solve the problems themselves. They seemed to think that making a greater effort and spending more time studying was the way to address the issues. Jin's assertion below is representative of the participants' views:

If I practice and put more time and effort, then there is no need to ask for help. . . . In the end, you can't expect something from the school. Unless you work hard on your own, it [writing] is never going to improve. You have to intentionally spare some time for it. There isn't any other way. Writing and asking for feedback, asking friends to read yours doesn't need that much time. I mean that's what you should do. The problem is I am not doing it.

It is important to point out here that the participants' university has a writing center, an ESL center, and research courses designed to provide the kind of help these students need. The research writing course that is required of masters' students in the Music Department is one such course. However, the participants did not make use of these resources because their peers had characterized them as very demanding. Thus they feared they would not adequately fulfill the course requirements and earn a poor grade. As a result, most Korean students delayed taking these courses until the end of their program, despite the fact that their department recommended that they take the courses earlier. It appears that the participants understood the need to socialize themselves into American academic writing discourse to meet the university's requirements. Despite wanting to address the issues they faced during such socialization and against their departments' recommendations, however, not all of the students made use of the resources provided. In the next section, we discuss why the students did not make use of the resources available to them.

Access to Resources

Professional resources. The professional discourse socialization process can be difficult for both first and second language students, a fact the participants' university and departments seemed to be aware of. The university has an ESL center and offers courses that include introduction to academic writing, editing skills for international students, and a second language writers' desk designed specifically for ESL graduate students. The ESL center also provides free and paid tutoring services for any international student who needs them. Furthermore, the university has a writing center that provides services for any student, including L2 graduate students, on campus. In addition, many departments have various research courses designed to help students enhance their writing skills.

An analysis of interview data revealed that the participants in the study were aware of these resources but did not use them regularly because they found the ESL and writing center services to be too general for their discipline-specific writing needs and the discipline-specific courses to be inappropriate for their L2 needs. Although Kim was the only participant who had used the writing center prior to the first interview, most of the participants, including Kim, had negative perceptions of both the writing center and the ESL classes. Jin used writing center services once between the first and second interviews because his Korean friends told him the center was useful. He seemed to be satisfied with the editing help he got with his grammar and with some of the non-native-like English expressions he used. He said:

I am pretty much satisfied with their editing. It was good in a way that they could help me with grammar that I don't know or couldn't figure out even after I have looked at the paper more than ten times. It was also helpful in terms of those expressions that I used not appropriately.

Kim, on the other hand, was disappointed with the help she got from writing center assistants, as they seemed to be unfamiliar with her area of study, which was music, and unaware of the commonly used phrases and style guides used in music. She therefore

discontinued seeking the writing center's assistance. Younghee had a similar experience with the writing center. She said:

I knew there was a writing center here on campus from the beginning, but I thought it would not be a great help because the tutors there are not from my field. Other than the grammatical correction or proof reading, I didn't think I could get the help that I needed, like logically organizing texts or making sense to native speakers. I made a few appointments but didn't use it.

In addition, the participants also said that they were too busy to use the writing center as they often work on papers right up to the deadline and therefore have no time to have their papers checked.

Juyoung and Younghee were the only two students who took as many as three courses from the ESL center. Both of them thought the courses were useful, particularly because they felt more comfortable in ESL classes with TAs and other international students than in "regular" classes with professors and native English speaking classmates. The other three participants did not consider the ESL program's services to be useful. For example, Namjoo decided not to take ESL courses because her previous experience at a private ESL institute was not satisfying. Jin signed up for one ESL class but dropped it after the first class, because "the TA, he might be a native speaker but he was a Japanese guy. He wasn't a fluent speaker. It was a presentation class." Younghee and Juyoung wished the ESL TAs had more teaching experience and Juyoung wished the class sizes were smaller. Even though Juyoung and Younghee thought ESL courses were relatively useful, Namjoo, Younghee, and Juyoung all indicated that they would have preferred to have a one-to-one writing mentor or tutor to receive more content-specific and focused assistance. They considered ESL classes "extra" work that was not as important as the work in their discipline area classes. As such, they were unwilling to invest time and effort in them. Namjoo's statement below captures this sentiment:

In ESL, the topics are more or less broad and don't match with the kind of writing I do in my area. That is basically why I haven't taken any ESL classes here. Another reason is that taking required courses, keeping up with them, I feel like I have no time to the degree that taking ESL courses sounds like a luxury. It [taking ESL classes] is maybe what I need most but unless I write about topics closely related to the courses that I am taking, hearing from my friends who have taken ESL courses, since students are from various departments, the topics are very wide ranging. . . . That is what I heard from the political science student who took the course.

As pointed out earlier, the participants' university also offers various research courses designed to help all students, including L2 graduate students, to improve their writing skills. Our findings show that the participants were aware of this service but did not take advantage of it either. Kim explains:

I was afraid to take it, so put it off until the last quarter of my masters. It was relatively easy after all those writing for other classes. . . . They [Korean students] take it right before they graduate. They usually take it at the last

quarter or if there is a really really good teacher who gives all A to the class, then they will. We're just waiting for a really nice teacher or just take it at the last quarter. . . . We are kind of burdened to get an A for the UGS [University Graduate Scholarship] thing and everyone loves A, you know, so we just don't take the class at the beginning. . . . Because of the fear. We just listen to others who had already taken or already finished their master's degree here. Their advice is that take it later. . . . just hearing about that, we've got fear so we just step back usually.

Juyoung also talked about why she did not take the course at the beginning of her program of study:

I heard that the course instructor is a tough grader, gives no good grade, so better take it once your English gets improved. There has been such a rumor among Korean students. So, students can't take it from the beginning. It is not even required as a prerequisite to take other doctoral level courses.

Later, we found out that Juyoung registered for the course in winter quarter 2007 but decided to drop it and take it the following summer. She explained the reason behind her decision:

This course is being offered every quarter and just one class not a sequence. So, I can take it anytime. Students tend to postpone, because they don't need to take it at a certain time and can take it anytime. Besides, I have been writing for other classes just fine without having taken that class, even though it would have been helpful. Students who took it told me that taking that class helped for other classes. One of them who took it in summer strongly recommend to take it in summer when it's only three weeks and particularly because there is no exam in summer and less assignments, compared to taking it in a regular academic quarter.

Younghee's comments below represent the participants' overall perceptions of research courses:

I took two research courses. Research courses were helpful in a way that we learn how to do research. I thought that if I am writing a doctoral dissertation, I will do research like this. . . . Not much about how to write academically. Don't teach how to write literature review. It is not designed to teach non-natives. So, international students should figure things out by themselves. It is their own problem.

Departmental research courses seem to teach writing for specific purposes (e.g., literature reviews or research papers), assuming that students are already well equipped with general academic writing skills. As Younghee pointed out, these courses were not necessarily designed to teach academic writing for beginners like her or L2 students in general who have limited prior writing experience.

It is clear that on-campus services such as the writing center, ESL classes, and research courses were not used effectively by these Korean students. They seemed to give

considerable weight to what their Korean peers said about these services and courses, and they based their decisions about using them largely on the information provided by peers. It is interesting to note as well that the courses designed to teach them how to write academically were perceived as being too demanding academically, and that participants were more concerned about getting a bad grade than learning what the courses had to offer.

Social and intertextual resources. Professors, peers, private tutors, and intertextual resources emerged as other important themes in the data analysis, but the roles these played varied depending on the participants' personalities and on their relationships with them. Most of the participants made an attempt to interact with their advisors and with course professors by seeking feedback and advice. They described these social resources as being open, willing to help, and generous, but the problem was that their relationships with them were limited and not particularly useful.

Like Juyoung who did not know how to extend social interactions with her advisor into genuine learning opportunities, Younghee refrained from approaching her advisor more often mainly because she was ambivalent about receiving feedback. She believed that "professors don't teach you how to write" and thus she relied to a great extent on writing samples on a similar topic to the one she was writing about to get tips on discourse organizing strategies and grammatical choices. She observed that, "I haven't thought about asking professors for samples because I wasn't sure how they would think about it, I mean, whether they would think it's okay or not." She said it was difficult to ask professors for help in her writing, and mentioned cultural differences as the reason. She further elaborated on her reluctance to seek out this kind of help from professors:

Writing is taken for granted as a requirement for graduate study. There is no extra advice or considerations given to international students. But it seems that professors show their understanding by admitting international students' lack of English proficiency and writing abilities. For them being generous or making accommodations and all that, it could be beneficial on the one hand, or not, I mean it could be disadvantageous on the other hand because if they don't tell you the problems in your writing, you can't get the kind of help you need and therefore you can't learn much.

All participants, except Jin, also saw their native English speaker peers and friends as social resources and made attempts to seek their assistance and found them willing, but their help was usually limited to superficial things such as proofreading the participants' papers. Furthermore, their peers often appeared to be too busy to provide much support, which the participants found disappointing and limiting. All of the participants also perceived their Korean peers as social resources and turned to them for assistance as well, but only Younghee said that Korean peers in her department were helpful. Although most of the participants did not consider their Korean peers helpful in improving their writing, on a social level they consulted them for advice or information about other issues such as course choices (Kim and Juyoung) and ESL or writing center services (Jin, Namjoo, and Younghee).

Another resource the participants reported using was private tutoring services they arranged for themselves. Younghee mentioned the effectiveness of having a private tutor who was in the same field of study or had at least some knowledge of the field:

I haven't gotten any feedback on my writing problems [from professors]. When it comes to writing itself, it was rather, was much more helpful when I went to see Cherry [pseudonym, a private tutor] and going over the paper together with her. In that case, rather than giving my paper and ask her to edit it, it was better for me to sit next to her and explaining the purpose and why I wrote that way with what intent and see her edit it closely. That method was more helpful.

Juyoung also believed that privately-arranged tutoring services were of more value to her than those provided by the university. When she was preparing for graduate study, she had paid an Internet tutoring agency to edit her writing samples for the GRE written test, and she was considering using that service again once she started taking courses which made heavy demands on her writing such as theory and history courses because the cost was reasonable compared to hiring a private tutor. [1]

Intertextual resources seemed to have been the major contributor to the participants' socialization into American academic writing discourse. All of the participants believed that it was through reading and writing that they learned the most about academic writing discourse. They said that they improved their writing primarily through reading books, journal articles, and classmates' messages posted on online discussion boards, and through writing their own papers or imitating samples they obtained from their peers. Jin said:

I improved a lot from reading others' papers, reading their papers and looking at how they wrote and then I write. . . . since writing is continuously required, and writing itself is practice and writing itself is the effort to improve writing so to speak.

Namjoo also turned to intertextual resources by "looking for information on pros and cons about certain topics through websites, like disputable scholars' websites, well-known individual blogs, and reading newspapers and magazines." She developed and extended her thinking by comparing her own ideas and arguments with ideas and arguments she found online. She also identified the connection between thinking skills and writing, saying "even with writing techniques, without thinking we can't write," and used the online resources as a kind of writing reference: when she found expressions that matched her thoughts, she copied and saved them, later paraphrasing them for use in her own papers. Younghee also explained her reading and writing strategy by noting that "writing wouldn't be much of a problem after reading a lot. It is also important to read my papers over and over again while writing and question myself whether it would be making sense to others."

Even though the students preferred one-on-one interactions with their advisors or native English speaker friends and tutors, problems such as accessibility and availability appeared to limit the number of interactions. Furthermore, both their cultural and their linguistic insecurity—particularly with professors—inhibited their

capitalizing on their interactions with these social resources and develop them into more important sources of help. Also, not satisfied with on-campus services, some participants made their own arrangements to cope with their problems in L2 writing. It was discovered that almost all the participants believed that they learned a lot about academic discourse through self-directed reading and reading and writing for degree-related course work. Given how time-consuming this was, however, it is worth considering whether self-directed reading specifically for a certain type of writing assignment would help L2 students enhance their overall writing abilities.

Discussion

While data for the present study came from interviews with only five students, the findings make important contributions to our knowledge about Korean students' resource use in L2 academic writing socialization. We wanted to explore the students' perspectives, and no one could tell us what they wanted and what they experienced better than the students themselves.

Being on the periphery, these students' socialization into American academic writing discourse was a frustrating experience, just as it has been shown to be in other studies (Chon & Kim, 2005; Kim, S., 2001; Kim, Y., 2001; Li, 1998). Furthermore, the students' socialization process appears to be inhibited by lack of coordination among resources. Lave and Wenger (1991) believe that newcomers must have access to "information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (p. 101) to become members of a target community of practice. As the findings from the present study show, the participants were provided with basic services including a writing center, ESL program, and research courses designed to help them and which were recommended by their departments. The participants, however, remained legitimate peripheral (Lave & Wenger, 1991) passive users of their university's resources and did not actively take advantage of them. Not satisfied with the limitations of surface-level writing help they got from ESL resources and feeling ill-prepared regarding the taken-for-granted writing expectations of their discipline-specific resources, these L2 students seemed to be caught in an impossible bind. Clearly, there is a need to do more than just making the resources available.

The language that plays a critical role as a medium of learning content and culture in socialization theory (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b) emerged as a major problem for the participants in the present study. Even though they acknowledged the importance of peers, advisors, and professors as social resources, the findings of this study contradict the findings of other studies (e.g., Guo, 2006 and Riazi, 1997), in which the participants found their peers and professors helpful and they attributed their successful initiation into L2 writing communities largely to them. In making efforts to use such resources, this study's participants' lack of L2 proficiency inhibited smooth and effective communication with the resources, which further hindered their ability to capitalize on and develop them as more frequent and productive sources of help. As a result, they often relied on intertextual resources they sought out themselves. As in other studies (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1991; Li, 2005, 2007; Spack, 1997), the participants in this study familiarized themselves with academic writing conventions

through reading and writing without being formally mentored in writing. More research on how critically L2 students utilize such intertextual resources would shed additional light on our understanding of L2 writing socialization.

Lack of cooperation among the resources available to L2 students at the university emerged as another major problem that needs to be addressed. While a body of research on L2 students' problems and struggles in writing exists (Canagarajah, 2006; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010; Tran, 2009), little has been documented on L2 students' use of on- and off-campus resources. In this regard, the findings of this study contribute to the literature and provide further evidence of the need for a more comprehensive analysis of university-wide resource networks. The students in this study attempted to create language-mediated activities to socialize into their target academic community, resulting in the many issues discussed so far.

L2 students need to be provided with multiple opportunities for language-mediated activities in order to learn about the writing expectations of their new academic community and to practice them. The activities they participate in onsite are very important for their rapid integration. The longer it takes them to integrate into the community, the less they can benefit from and contribute to that community. As shown in Tran's (2009) study, in which L2 students exercised agency in revealing their intentions and potential choices in writing texts at the graduate context, exploring how the Korean L2 students position themselves while trying out different types of resources would provide useful insights.

Implications for Research and Practice

The findings reported here suggest that professional and social resource providers might want to examine their services to see what can be done to better serve all students, including Korean L2 graduate students. Basic college-level research courses and/or writing workshops for novice L2 writers to teach how to write an essay, a literature review, or a research paper can be helpful for L2 students in receiving the discipline-specific assistance they need. Required pass/no pass research courses for novice L2 students would be useful to relieve the pressure on their GPA and to underscore pragmatically the reality of what will be for many students a long writing socialization process. Also, it would be very effective if there were writing centers at the college level to provide L2 students with more frequent and more constructive discipline-specific assistance. Clearly, this would afford students more accessibility. However, if an individual college finds it difficult to establish its own writing center or services, the on-campus writing center can hire tutors from various disciplines, or at least more tutors with ESL teaching experience. Furthermore, tutors should be trained to address L2 students' writing needs beyond their sentence-level writing problems.

As for Korean L2 graduate students, they should know that taking full advantage of their advisors, departments, and university programs can make the process of socialization into American academic writing discourse much easier and much less frustrating. As the findings of this study indicate, these students should consider taking advice from people other than their peers. In order to avoid judging the usefulness of

resources based on misinformation or misconceptions, the students need to be well informed about the resources available to them and how they can be used to meet their specific needs. It is particularly important for Korean L2 graduate students to interact more with their advisors and course professors in order to receive more frequent discipline-specific assistance. Faculty also can enhance their role in L2 students' socialization to academic discourse by being accessible to students and being explicit in conveying their expectations. As our graduate student population becomes more culturally and linguistically diverse, faculty and advisors also need to adjust their approaches to best meet all L2 students' writing needs.

Similar investigations of resource usage by other L2 student groups, and even by native English speaker students, can reveal further insights, and taken together, these studies can give us a broader view of academic writing socialization. More specifically, based on the findings of this pilot study, we call for a longitudinal study that explores multiple perspectives using multiple methods that includes more students, writing center administrators and assistants, ESL center administrators and instructors, as well as research course instructors, and analysis of documents such as course syllabi and student writing samples. Analysis of course documents, policy statements of university services (e.g., ESL centers and writing centers), and related documents (e.g., writing center tutorial guides) need to be included to investigate the resources that the L2 students have access to and also to observe whether there is any mismatch between students' needs and the services that the resource providers offer. In addition, students' written samples need to be examined to determine the extent to which resource providers' feedback or services are related to academic discourse socialization. More details on L2 students' previous L1 and L2 writing experiences need to be also included. Such a longitudinal study can shed a stronger light on the issues investigated in the presented study and on other relevant issues that may be addressed in further research. It can provide us with different perspectives and inform us about the policies and procedures of different services and the rationales behind them. Such findings could lend themselves to comparisons and triangulations.

Note

[1] The problem here, of course, is that not all students can afford private tutors. Moreover, private tutors do not often have the needed discipline-specific knowledge nor are they necessarily imbedded in the student's academic culture. These tutors can help with surface problems, but they may not be able to draw students into the larger academic writing environment.

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