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## **A Blog-Mediated Curriculum for Teaching Academic Genres in an Urban Classroom: Second Grade ELL Students' Emergent Pathways to Literacy Development**

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**A BLOG-MEDIATED CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING ACADEMIC GENRES  
IN AN URBAN CLASSROOM: SECOND GRADE ELL STUDENTS'  
EMERGENT PATHWAYS TO LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

A Dissertation Presented

by

DONG-SHIN SHIN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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School of Education

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Margaret Gebhard, Chair

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Flávio S. Azevedo, Member

---

Donal Carbaugh, Member

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Jerri Willett, Member

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Christine B. McCormick, Dean  
School of Education

## **DEDICATION**

To Tony, always.

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This dissertation grew from my collaborative work with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and researchers who participated in the ACCELA Alliance. It was my honor to work with these dedicated students and educators, who inspired me in completing my doctoral work. Specifically, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to “Wanda Simpson” and her second grade students, who welcomed me into their classroom and shared their lives from school and home worlds. I really enjoyed and learned a lot about teaching and learning in urban schools from my collaborative work with Wanda.

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## ABSTRACT

### A BLOG-MEDIATED CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING ACADEMIC GENRES IN AN URBAN CLASSROOM: SECOND GRADE ELL STUDENTS' EMERGENT PATHWAYS TO LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 2009

DONG-SHIN SHIN, B.A., CHUNGBUK NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

M.Ed., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTES AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Margaret Gebhard

This dissertation examines the academic and social goals that three second-grade English language learners in a U.S. urban school bring to their blog-mediated academic writing practices, and the interrelated nature of those goals. This study aims to bridge the dichotomy between approaches to studying computer-mediated language and literacy development that are oriented toward academic goals inside school, and those that are oriented toward social goals outside school. The study also aims to investigate connections between language use and language development by highlighting linguistic features of semiotic choices that the students made for their texts. This builds upon recent research studies of literacy practices that focus only on situated uses of literacy in various social and cultural contexts (Christie & Martin, 2007).

In this study, learning is defined as appropriation and language is defined as a semiotic system, from sociocultural perspectives that capture the transformative nature of tool-mediated practices (Bakhtin, 1981; Halliday, 1985; Kress, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Ethnographic data collected over the course of a year include students' texts, blog comments, videotaped classroom interactions, interviews, instructional materials, and school documents. Analysis of the data examines student goals, semiotic choices

employed by the students, and roles adopted by the students, in the social processes of learning academic genres. Systemic functional linguistics is used to analyze register variables across texts and blogging comments, to examine changes in the students' uses of linguistic resources. The findings demonstrate that students appropriate blogging for both academic and social goals, and compose their texts by drawing on linguistic features appropriate for goals related to the audiences reading their blog posts. Writing for meaningful goals and for wider audiences encourages ELLs to become more invested in learning, and to use linguistic patterns in context-dependent ways. The study concludes with a discussion of the significance of social goals in developing critical academic literacies (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007), and implications for K-12 educators who are attempting to open up curricular spaces in which all stakeholders collaboratively work toward transformative learning experiences for ELLs (Willett & Rosenberger, 2005).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW.....	1
1.1 How did I enter the field?.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Learners' Experiences with Computer-Mediated Language Learning.....	6
1.3.1 Production-Oriented Positive Experiences.....	7
1.3.2 Context-Dependent Situated Experiences.....	9
1.3.3 Discursively Constructed Experiences.....	10
1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study.....	12
1.5 Main Questions and Organization of the Dissertation.....	16
2. COMPUTER-MEDIATED LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.....	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Linguistic Interaction and Skill Development.....	21
2.3 Intercultural Communication.....	24
2.4 Multiliteracies and Identities.....	34
2.5 Summary.....	40
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.....	44
3.1 Introduction.....	44

3.2 Learning as Appropriating Processes.....	44
3.3 Appropriation in Language Use.....	51
3.4 Appropriation in Second Language and Literacy Development.....	61
3.5 Literacy, Discourse, and Identity.....	66
3.6 Summary.....	69
4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION.....	71
4.1 Research Design.....	71
4.1.1 Ethnography.....	72
4.1.2 Discourse Analysis.....	74
4.1.3 Register Analysis of Texts.....	75
4.2 Context.....	77
4.2.1 Researcher's Roles.....	77
4.2.2 The ACCELA Alliance.....	79
4.2.3 Fuentes Elementary School.....	81
4.2.4 The Second Grade Classroom and Learning Centers.....	84
4.2.5 Participants.....	85
4.2.6 Wanda's Blog-Mediated Writing Curriculum.....	92
4.3 Gathering Data.....	98
4.3.1 Phases 1 and 2: Orientation and Studying.....	99
General Theories before Entering the Field (May-August 2005)	
4.3.2 Phase 3: Studying a Socioculturally.....	100
Situated Practice in the Field (September 2005-June 2006)	
4.3.3 Phase 4: Evaluating the Socioculturally.....	102
Situated Practice during and after Fieldwork (September 2005-December 2006)	
4.4 Analytical Frameworks.....	103
4.5 Summary.....	105
5. RECOUNTS WRITING.....	108
5.1 Introduction.....	108

5.2 Context of Situation for Recounts Writing.....	109
5.2.1 Field: Expanding Audiences, Roles, and Semiotic Repertoires....	109
5.2.2 Tenor: Writing to Build Social Relationships.....	112
5.2.3 Mode: Co-constructing Genre Features in Focus of Meaning.....	114
5.3 Focal Students' Blog-Mediated Recount Writing Practices.....	118
5.3.1 Diany's Blog-Mediated Recount Writing.....	119
5.3.2 Jose's Blog-Mediated Recount Writing.....	134
5.3.3 Maria's Blog-Mediated Recount Writing.....	145
5.4 Summary.....	160
6. PERSUASIVE LETTER WRITING.....	163
6.1 Introduction.....	163
6.2 Context of Situation for Persuasive Letter Writing.....	164
6.2.1 Field: Transitivity Types Appropriate for Persuasion.....	165
6.2.2 Tenor: Formal Interpersonal Relationships.....	170
6.2.3 Mode: Formal Business Letter.....	173
6.3 Focal Students' Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing Practices.....	175
6.3.1 Diany's Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing.....	175
6.3.2 Jose's Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing.....	183
6.3.3 Maria's Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing.....	192
6.4 Collective Action for Obtaining Computers.....	202
6.5 Summary.....	204
7. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS.....	206
7.1 Introduction.....	206
7.2 Findings.....	209
7.2.1 Focal Students' Appropriation of Blogging.....	210
7.2.2 Register Features of Students' Blog-Mediated Interactions.....	212
7.2.3 Roles of Social Goals in Learning Academic Genres.....	213
7.2.4 Students' Textual and Social Identities.....	215
7.3 Discussions and Implications of This Study for L2 Literacy Education.....	216

7.3.1 Relationship between Academic and Social Goals.....217  
7.3.2 Explicit Instruction on Academic Genre and Register.....219  
7.3.3 Computer-Mediated Literacy Development.....223

7.4 Implications for K-12 Educators.....225

APPENDICES

A. TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS.....228  
B. MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM.....229  
    FRAMEWORK FOR SECOND GRADE WRITING  
C. SIX TRAITS THAT WANDA USED IN HER EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION.....230  
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....231

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1: Lexico-grammar, Discourse-semantics, and Context.....	60
4.1: Relevant Background Information on Focal Students.....	89
4.2: Register Features of Recounts and Persuasive Essay.....	94
4.3: Data Sources and Analyses.....	107
5.1: Diany's Recount.....	120
5.2: Changes across Diany's Recount Drafts.....	129
5.3: Register Changes across Diany's Recount Drafts.....	133
5.4: Jose's Newly Composed Recount.....	137
5.5: Jose's Recount.....	143
5.6: Register Features of Jose's Recount.....	145
5.7: Maria's Recount.....	147
5.8: Changes across Maria's Recount Drafts.....	156
5.9: Register Changes across Maria's Recount Drafts.....	160
6.1: First Draft of Diany's Letter.....	176
6.2: Drafts of Diany's Letter.....	180
6.3: Register Changes across Diany's Letter Drafts.....	183
6.4: First Draft of Jose's Letter.....	184
6.5: Drafts of Jose's Letter.....	189
6.6: Register Changes across Jose's Letter Drafts.....	192
6.7: First Draft of Maria's Letter.....	193
6.8: Drafts of Maria's Letter.....	198
6.9: Register Changes across Maria's Letter Drafts.....	202
6.10: Received Email from XYZ.....	203

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
3.1: Language Embedded in Contexts.....	58
4.1: Class Weblog .....	95
4.2: Blog-Mediated Writing Procedures.....	96
5.1: Recounts: Maria and Maria’s Mother .....	111
5.2: Introduction of Blog.....	113
5.3: Structural Organization of Recounts.....	115
5.4: Recounts: Jose and Jose’s Mother.....	135
6.1: Cover of <i>Hey, Little Ant</i> (Phillip & Hannah Hoose, 1992).....	166
6.2: Organizer for Brainstorming Persuasive Letter.....	174

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Stepping back, we can see a need to reconceive technologies for language arts, and perhaps, to reconceive language arts.... from “How effective are these new technologies in teaching the language?” to “How are they being used to accomplish pedagogical goals?” The latter question in turn leads us to consider the shift in practices as people find out new things, communicate with one another, make meaning, and express themselves.... rather than looking at technologies as simply a new method to be assessed. (Bruce & Levin, 2003, p. 650)

#### 1.1 How did I enter the field?

This quote captures the basis for why Wanda Simpson<sup>1</sup>, the classroom teacher in this dissertation study, made efforts to further use technologies in her Language Arts writing curriculum. She had used computer technologies for a writing project to create a “class magazine” of students’ writings and illustrations. Reporting on what she gained from using computer technologies, she focused not on the efficiency in making the magazine but on her students’ changes in attitude toward schoolwork. Indeed, the improvements she observed in her students’ learning inspired Wanda to continue seeking opportunities to utilize computer technologies as pedagogical tools for students’ academic achievement. This included pursuing a blog-mediated writing project with me, as I had the same interest in researching the use of computer technologies and new literacies for English language learners’ (ELLs’) language and literacy development.

With the momentum that Wanda had already built, in May 2005 I started my direct collaboration with her, assisting her in conducting an action-oriented research

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<sup>1</sup> All the names of participants, places, institutions, and organizations in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

project as part of her master's work in a teacher education program<sup>2</sup>, in which Wanda was an in-service teacher. In our initial meeting, during which we brainstormed uses of computer technologies in her teaching practice for the following school year, Wanda talked in detail about her previous experience using computer technologies in carrying out the "class magazine" writing project and her students' increased engagement in academic activities and the gains in writing that had resulted.

To offer a concrete example, Wanda mentioned the experiences of a boy who was an ELL student struggling with school-based writing. As a way of scaffolding the writing practices for the magazine project, she arranged e-mail exchanges between the boy and her own father. The boy and her father found they shared interest in baseball and that they had the same favorite team. The boy utilized e-mail as a forum to share knowledge, information, and collective items related to the team with another like-minded fan. These e-mail exchanges helped him to write about something that interested him for the magazine project and to portray himself as a baseball fan, not as a struggling ELL writer, to his peers and the teacher. Wanda added that he became more invested in writing and had a different attitude toward schoolwork because of the email exchanges with her father about their common hobby.

She concluded by describing challenges she faced pertaining to the lack of computer resources in her school and the students' limited computer expertise. For instance, the school did not have a computer lab nor did it offer any computer instruction

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<sup>2</sup>A brief explanation of the teacher education program in which Wanda participated, Access to Critical Contents and English Language Acquisition (ACCELA), is on the page 6; an in-depth explanation can be found in the Chapter 4.

for students. Each class had two outdated desktop computers (e.g., G3 Mac computer). For the most part, the only resources Wanda's class had for the magazine project were her own personal laptop and support from her family. Specifically, her father donated a printer to her class, and her daughters helped to finish the class magazine by typing students' texts. Wanda proudly commented on the achievements in overcoming material constraints to make computer technologies accessible to her students, highlighting changes in the students' improvement in their academic writing.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Wanda's account on her project confirmed for me that transforming education through the inclusion of instructional technologies is a daunting task that involves facing multiple issues related to material and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Warschauer, 2003a). For example, teachers who attempted to incorporate computer technology in their educational practices reported facing many challenges, including limited computer expertise, lack of technical resources, and difficulties keeping up-to-date with rapidly changing technologies (Gee, 2004; Luke, 2003; Meskill, Anthony, Hilliker-Vanstrander, Tseng, & You, 2006; Warschauer, 2006; Warschauer, Knobel, & Stone, 2004). Even though educational reports reflect that the "digital divide" is decreasing (Eamon, 2004; Warschauer, 2003a, 2003b), these challenges remain even more pressing for urban schoolteachers. In addition to obtaining expertise in using the new tools, teachers in urban schools are forced to teach standardized curricula under pressures of high-stakes testing and accountability and face a lack of time to incorporate computer-related new literacies into their curricula. Few teachers utilize computer technologies in their

instruction for transformative education experiences for ELLs (Meskill, Anthony, Hilliker-Vanstrander, Tseng, & You, 2006; Wallace, 2004; Warschauer, 2006).

Wanda, however, expressed her belief that these constraints were worth challenging considering her students' achievements in learning and improved attitudes toward schoolwork. Her desire to use computer technologies informed my investigation interests; that is, how computer-mediated literacy practices in environments with limited resources would affect ELL students' academic achievement? Put another way, what kinds of literacy experiences and social/textual identities are constructed when ELLs in urban schools use computer technologies to develop academic literacies? What kinds of academic and social interactions are they forming, what kinds of linguistic choices are they employing for their interactional processes, and how do these language uses support their ability to achieve their academic and social goals?

These questions necessitate a critical examination of learners' experiences with computer-mediated language learning and the learning contexts that shape and are shaped by their goals, interactions, social relations, and identities. This kind of critical examination has become even more necessary in light of rapid demographic changes in the K-12 and higher education student population in the United States, in particular the growing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students (August & Shanahan, 2006; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Tong, Lara-Alecio, Irby, Mathes, & Kwok, 2008). In the case of the school where this study was conducted, in the 2005-2006 school year 73% of the students were Hispanic, 36.2 % of the school population spoke English as a second language, and 27.6% of the students were designated as having limited English proficiency.

The influx of English language learners has put increasing pressure on schools that have to rely not only on ESL and bilingual teachers but mainstream teachers as well to support ELLs' language development. But educational data reflects that schools do not provide high quality learning contexts for linguistically and culturally diverse ELLs (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Pérez, 2008; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Ellen, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). ELLs do not receive the support necessary for language development and academic achievement, and as a result, they fail in school. In response to this crisis, U.S. policymakers have been trying to achieve educational reform through the implementation of No Child Left Behind and the high stakes testing required by the legislation, the passage of English-only referendums, and the adoption of mandated curriculum frameworks and instruction. But these educational policies have put many ELL students and their teachers in jeopardy. Even in early grades, students are designated as failing solely due to low test scores. And the numbers of students who are unable to pass the tests, the majority of which are ELLs, is significant. For example, in Massachusetts in 2005, 38% of 3rd grade students were designated below proficiency level on the state reading test. About 50% of 4th grade students were designated below proficiency on the state Language Arts test. At this research site in 2006, 91% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade LEP students failed the state reading test. When, in a school, the percentage of students passing the test falls below state requirements, the school is designated underperforming and is subject to mandatory state supervision. Teachers are forced to teach to the test because the quality of their teaching is judged primarily by the students' test performance.

Facing this educational crisis of supporting ELLs' academic achievement, educators and researchers have initiated critical dialogues about current high-stakes school reform policies and the anti-bilingual education movement. One such initiative is the Access to Critical Contents and English Language Acquisition Alliance (ACCELA). ACCELA, a federally funded partnership between the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and two urban school districts in Western Massachusetts, is a teacher education program that aims to provide ELLs resources for academic achievement through collaboration among schools, community and the university. The ACCELA Alliance offers teachers the opportunity to earn a degree through coursework and research they carry out about their own teaching practices. In addition, they are provided assistance in incorporating computer technologies in their instruction and research projects to facilitate transformative learning experiences of ELLs (Gebhard, Hafner, & Wright, 2004; Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Gebhard, Willett, Jimenez, & Piedra, in press; Harman, 2007; Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, in press; Willett & Rosenberger, 2005; Willett, Harman, Lozano, Hogan, & Rubeck, 2007).

### **1.3 Learners' Experiences with Computer-Mediated Language Learning**

In order to examine the range of gains or benefits of computer-mediated learning activities, one needs to consider learners' interests and processes involved in computer-mediated learning in addition to their experiences of achieving their goals. A growing body of research reflects that computer-related instructional technologies provide scaffolds for pedagogical practices (Kamil, Intrator, & Kim, 2003; Kinzer & Leander, 2003; Myers, Hammett, & Mckillop, 1998; Windschitl & Sahl, 2002; Wade, Fauske, & Thompson, 2008; Zhao & Frank, 2003). Naming just a few examples, studies note

increased multiple meaning-making resources in reading and writing, increased collaboration, the development of non-linear ways of thinking, increased language production, and easy access to target language speakers. Connecting the claimed benefits to learners' goals and roles, I briefly review key themes in research studies of learners' computer-mediated language learning experiences, which provides a conceptual background for questions I pose in studying ELLs' computer-based English learning experiences.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.3.1 Production-Oriented Positive Experiences**

Computer-mediated language learning research has focused, for the most part, on learners' language production ability. Drawing on computer-mediated interactions in networked language learning as linguistic outcome, research studies have explored discourses of learning practices of computer-mediated communication (CMC) by looking into linguistic features, turns at talk, and language functions in comparison with discussions in face-to-face settings (e.g., Chun, 1994; Cobb, 2007; Herring, 1996; Kern, 1995; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Ortega, 1997; Tudini, 2003; Warschauer 1996). Studies have reported that electronic discussion affords students more interactions using a greater variety of discourse functions with less attention to grammatical accuracy and discussion coherence as well as more opportunities for turns at talk. In addition, it is noted that teachers become less authoritative and less dominant in distribution and direction of turns at talk. In the area of writing, scholars have compared the use of word processors with paper-based writing to determine the effects on student attitudes and the quality of writing. Studies contend that integrating word processing programs into writing

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed literature review of research on computer-mediated language learning is in Chapter 2.

instruction encourages students to engage more effectively in writing (e.g., Bangert-Drowns, 1993; Rice, 1994; Snyder, 1993). Recently, web authoring tools and web logs (blogs) have been incorporated in writing instruction. Research studies have studied the use of these new media from a new literacy perspective focusing on the produced texts alone. They maintain that uses of new media are beneficial to writing development with affordances such as new meaning-making resources and direct interactions with audiences (e.g., Bloch, 2007; Bloch & Crosby, 2006; Carrington, 2005; Parks, Huot, Hamers, & H.-Lemonnier, 2005; Shaikh & Abbott, 2005).

The aforementioned studies have explored what learners can produce in relationship to the pedagogical goals of computer technology-mediated instruction. Regarding this line of research, some have started to address the need for shifting the focus of research away from the effectiveness of computer technologies for pedagogical production toward a critical evaluation on student processes (e.g., Beach & Lundell, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1991). Cochran-Smith specifies examining the use of technology as “something that interacts with the social processes of classroom—with the cultures of teaching and schools, people, conditions of learning, and teachers’ and children’s goals over time” (1991, p.109). Although the need to view computer technology use in language and literacy education as social practices was considered during the early stages of its use, the majority of studies then focused on questions regarding the effectiveness of using these new technologies in teaching the language (Bruce & Levin, 2003, p. 650).

Examining computer-mediated language learning in terms of its effectiveness for achieving instructional goals based solely on students’ produced texts out of contexts triggers questions concerning its validity. For example, is it sufficient enough for

understanding computer-mediated language learning to examine effectiveness of computer technologies based on productivity? In addition, is the inclusion of computer technology context-neutral in any learning situation? Opposed to conceiving computer-mediated learning as context-neutral, tool-based task production, scholars consider CMC as a situated practice affected by its social and cultural contexts.

### **1.3.2 Context-Dependent Situated Experiences**

A production-oriented, positivist view that embraces the use of computer technologies was a starting point in its pedagogy and research. Gradually, more attention has been paid to examining computer-mediated language learning as a context-dependent practice. Instead of simply accepting the view that use of computer technologies would in and of itself transform learning, researchers have begun to explore context-specific situated characteristics of computer-mediated language practices (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, 2001; Warschauer 1999). Examples of this type of research include studies that researched telecollaboration processes that took place in cross-national contexts, as a way to examine experiences with situated computer-mediated language learning (Belz, 2002, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Chun & Plass, 2000; Kern, 2000; Kinginger, 2000; Thorne, 2003; Ware, 2005). In studies such as these, researchers have shown that learning shapes and is shaped by broadened contexts of language learning that include not only the local curriculum and institutional logistics but also the social discourses of tools and genres.

For example, Belz (2002, 2003), and Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003), report that social-material and institutional contextual factors in collaborative communications between German and U.S. students, including “academic calendars, local patterns of

socialization into the teaching profession, institution-specific classroom scripts, systems of learning assessment, student workloads, and the physical layouts of local institutions and social forms of classroom collaboration” shaped learners’ affordances of the telecommunication project and situated experiences (p.71). In a similar vein, Thorne (2003) showed that broader social discourses of telecommunication shaped the use of communication tools and the genre of writing related to the tools (e.g., e-mail and Instant Messenger) in the context of a cross-national collaborative telecommunication project between French and U.S. students.

In sum, these studies indicate that what the learner gains or experiences academically regarding computer-mediated language learning is not uniform given the same use of a particular tool. Computer-mediated language learning is dependent on institutional, pedagogical, social, and cultural contexts. Social materials existing in institutions located in different countries were shown to be a focus for conceptualizing computer-mediated learning as context-dependent situated practices. Over time, researchers have come to focus on learners’ agency to reconfigure contexts for their academic and social goals. Studies have showed ways in which discourses operating in computer-mediated social practices shape learners' experiences.

### **1.3.3 Discursively Constructed Experiences**

Drawing on ethnographic studies, researchers have explored learners’ discursive experiences in CMC practices. Such explorations have focused on a few major questions, such as for what purposes language learners engage in virtual social interactions; how they compose digital texts; and how their participation in online interactions impacts their offline discursive lives in terms of cultural and ethnic identities, language, interests, and

gender (Hull & Katz, 2006; Kramersch, A’Ness, & Lam, 2000; Lam 2000, 2004; Nelson, 2006; Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, 2001; Warschauer, 1999). For example, Lam’s (2000) ethnographic case study of the virtual social life of a Chinese immigrant adolescent (e.g., his instant messaging with other English language learners, and participation in a Japanese pop music singer fan website), reflected that the youth was able to express himself freely with his online peers and that using semiotic modes of online environments enabled him to (re)design interactional discourses for his purposes. Through this kind of social interaction, he developed a new “identity that is not available to him in the social environment and institutions of his adopted country” (Lam, 2000, p. 475).

Nelson (2006) further examined how authorship was expanded or constrained in the multimedia writing practices of undergraduate ESL students’ digital storytelling about their culture, language, and identity. He analyzes the discourses that amplify or limit multimodal authorial voices and intentions for synthesizing various semiotic modes. Through his study, not only does Nelson demonstrate the potential for amplified authorship within digital writing practices, he also recognizes that students’ over-accommodation of audiences and genre norms can render their multimodal texts “genericized,” hindering authorial agentive voices (p. 67).

In sum, these studies have explored learners’ agency in computer-mediated multimodal literacy practice, in close association with the notion of authorship. Specifically, the studies show that language learners’ authorship is expanded by multimodal resources, and that their participations in online communications with like-minded peers help them to better achieve social goals. Furthermore, focusing on the

connectivity between online and offline activities, researchers have shown that language uses within online contexts impacts their offline language uses and identities. Learners' language practices are constructed by discourses of audience, language, gender, ethnicity, and social interests. Their discursive experiences are dependent on the time and space in the contexts of computer-mediated interactions.

#### **1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study**

As explained, research studies of computer-mediated language learning and literacy practice in and out of the classroom have demonstrated the diverse experiences that learners have through CMC practices. Most classroom-based studies have focused on how L2 learners achieve the academic goals of language learning as defined by the teacher or curricular lesson (Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Chun, 1994; Cobb, 2007; Herring, 1996; Tudini, 2003). Learners' experiences have been studied in relation to instructional contexts that have included institutional logistics, curriculum, pedagogical method, technological medium, and so on. On the other hand, research studies of L2 learners' computer-mediated activities outside classroom settings have explored how learners achieve their own social goals engaged in computer-mediated communication (Lam, 2000, 2004; Yi, 2007). Specifically, researchers examine L2 learners' processes of constructing social relationships and identities through networked interactions. Their focus is on the semiotic resources that learners employ for their social interactions and the discourses that operate in their uses of language. These kinds of examinations show learners' social goals and deepen understandings of what learners experience engaging in computer-mediated learning.

Considering the intertwined nature of learners' academic, social, and political goals (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Dyson & Genishi, 2007; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Harste, 2003; Solsken, Willett, & Wilson Keenan, 2000), however, there is also a need to examine both academic and social processes that learners engage in when participating in computer-mediated language learning. In addition, studies need to investigate how those interactional processes are interconnected with one another and impact learning. Such examinations necessitate moving beyond dichotomous views that separate the academic from the social. In addition, this approach rejects views that prioritize the application of computer technologies and instructional goals in understanding computer-mediated language and literacy education.

Moving away from a technical discourse foregrounding efficiency model, conceptualizing computer-mediated language and literacy development as social cultural practices necessitates an understanding of the complex contexts of technology use in literacy education. In addressing the complexity of context, this study argues that contexts are “dynamic streams of overlapping and integrated discourses, spaces, sociocultural practices, and power relations” (Kamberelis & Luna, 2004, p. 243), not simply containers within which actions, activities and practices occur (Duranti, & Goodwin, 1992; Gebhard, 1999; Kramsch, 1993; Shin, 2006). In addition, regarding contexts, researchers with social and political perspectives have raised the importance of examining how the “digital divide” impacts the incorporation and use of computer technologies to support ELLs' language and literacy development (Gee, 2004; Luke, 2003; Warschauer, 2006; Warschauer, Knobel, & Stone, 2004).

Specifically, studies report the learning opportunities that learners construe in uses of computer technologies are quite dependent on not only material capital but also the social and cultural capital to which learners have access. Namely, affordances with computer-mediated learning activities need to be understood in consideration of learners' access to available material resources and communities of practice in which the technology is used. In light of this, studying students' experiences with computer-mediated language and literacy learning in urban schools that have limited resources necessitates examining processes in which cultural and social resources are made accessible for their learning activities.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore ELLs' learning of academic genres in an urban school through mediation of blogging. I examine how they discover new things, communicate with one another, construct meaning, and express themselves in the new medium. This exploration is not intended to measure the specific effects or productive outcomes that computer technologies afford on ELLs' academic literacy development. Rather, drawing on ethnography and systemic functional linguistics, I seek to examine learners' goals, appropriations of blog-mediated writing, and textual identities. Specifically, in this study, I have the following research goals and social commitments:

To examine how second-grade ELLs', engaged in learning academic genres within blog-mediated practice in an U.S. urban school, interacted with each other, and how participation in blog-mediated practices created opportunities for ELLs' academic writing development;

To demonstrate how, in this process of collective text construction, students appropriated blogging and other texts in the social arena, borrowing and using language for academic and social goal achievement;

To illustrate how students formed new social and cultural relationships and identifications with people and materials in the social practices of blog-mediated learning, and how these textual experiences and identities supported their academic literacy development.

To discuss how students in a low-income urban school with limited computer technology resources were able to be provided with opportunities to gain expertise in computer literacy, and how these experiences provided the students with critical assets toward meeting future education and professional goals.

This ethnographic examination explores computer-mediated language learning experiences from learners' perspectives, focusing on how these practices influence their academic, social, and political goals. This approach to researching computer-mediated language learning allows the study to bridge the gap between classroom-based research approaches that focus on academic goals and non-classroom-based research approaches that focus on social goals. The use of systemic functional linguistics in examining learners' appropriation of computer-mediated writing for academic, social, and political goals illustrates linguistic and metalinguistic patterns in learners' uses of academic writing, something that studies of literacy practice have not addressed in situated uses of literacy (Christie & Martin, 2007). In addition, attention to the language of computer-mediated literacy practices shows specific linguistic and structural features that learners adopt in computer-mediated interactions, and what these language processes mean for ELLs' academic literacy development.

In regard to emergent literacy development, many studies have explored how children learn to write and to develop knowledge of academic genres (Dyson, 1993, 2003, 2008; Harste, 2003; Kamberelis, 1998; Kamberelis & Luna, 2004), but there are few studies looking into children's emerging literacy when mediated by computer technologies. Therefore, studying the academic literacy development of young children in

environments with computers will contribute to expanding understanding of young children's emerging literacy and multiple literacy development in the context of new literacy practice.

### **1.5 Main Questions and Organization of the Dissertation**

As noted above, this dissertation study examines how second-grade students learned school-mandated writing genres through mediation of blogging in an urban elementary school. Wanda Simpson, the classroom teacher carried out this project in collaboration with the ACCELA Alliance, in which she was enrolled as a master's student (Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, in press). This study explores how blog-mediated activities shape and are shaped by the contexts, goals, and practices of ELLs' learning academic genres. Such an examination integrates learners' academic and social goals in understanding computer-mediated literacy development.

From a sociocultural perspective of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998), it examines the discourses of language interactions that could lead to transformative experiences when ELLs learn academic genres through Internet-based activities. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics (Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1985; Schleppegrell, 2004), I investigate how situated contexts of blog-mediated academic writing are realized in students' texts, and how using certain linguistic patterns in those textual practices support ELLs' academic literacy development. The following are guiding research questions:

What interactional processes are ELLs engaged in while learning academic genres through blogging? In other words, in what ways do students appropriate blog-mediated writing to accomplish their academic and social goals?

What are the discourses and register features of linguistic choices the students make for their blogging interactions, and how do they interweave linguistic features of blog-mediated interactions into their texts?

How do these language uses support their academic and social goal achievement? For example, how do these language processes allow the students to understand that certain linguistic choices are valued in realizing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings that they intend to construe through academic texts, and to negotiate new textual and social identities as language learners if any?

To show how this study is connected to the previous research studies, Chapter 2 offers an overview of research studies of computer-mediated language and literacy development in the field of foreign and second language education, especially in regard to learners' roles, experiences, and the conceptualization of contexts that shape students' appropriation of computer-mediated language learning for their academic, social, and political goal achievement.

To answer the aforementioned research questions, in Chapter 3, I introduce the theoretical framework in which the study is grounded, discussing language learning and literacy development from sociocultural perspectives (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Christie & Martin, 2007; Gebhard, 1999, 2005; Gee, 1996, 2004; Halliday, 1979; Heath, 1983; Schleppegrell, 2004; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 2003; Wertsch, 1991; Willett, 1995). It is assumed that language and literacy are social and cultural properties realized in people's interactions and relationships, rather than as individual mental attributes. Having the ability to read and write is understood as the development of a contextualized literacy within specific social practices, not as literacy that is a decontextualized, autonomous ability to write or read. In other words, by participating in social practices, one learns certain ways of producing, using, interpreting, and valuing written texts for activities related to specific literacy events as members of social groups (e.g., as students in school, teachers in school, or members of a church). Hence, developing literacies through social

practices become processes of handling and appropriating multiple discourses attached to uses of literacies. This sociocultural approach to language and literacy development requires second language educators to review and reconstruct their perspectives on learning a new language and developing literacy as language socialization processes. That is, engaged in social practices of learning, learners gain knowledge of diverse values and ideologies and develop new identities. Within this theoretical framework, I explain the key constructs of learning as appropriation, the dialogic nature of language use, language as a system of semiotic choices, and social and textual identity formation in transformative semiotic practice, all of which shape the analytical framework for this study.

In Chapter 4, I present the research design of this study, with detailed descriptions of research contexts, participants, data collection, data sources, and analytical methods. The chapter explains why I use an ethnographic study for exploring ELLs' computer-mediated writing experiences in attempting to achieve academic and social goals in a school. It also explains why I examine dialogic relations among students' language interaction processes on the class blog, other classroom interactions, and their posted texts to investigate how students' texts and contexts are interconnected to each other. It describes ways in which I employ systemic functional linguistics as a tool for analyzing language features in ELLs' computer-mediated writing used for realizing academic and social goals.

In the chapters 5 and 6, I introduce the computer-mediated learning experiences of three ELLs—Diany, Jose, and Maria—in order to address the main research questions and theoretical concepts discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 5 relates the students'

experiences in the curricular unit of “recounts,” in which they appropriated writing about memorable life experiences on the class blog to accomplish academic and social goals such as constructing academic competence and increasing symbolic capital among peers. Chapter 6 explores the students’ experiences during the “persuasive letter writing” curricular unit, in which students wrote a grant application letter to acquire computers for the school. In discussing their interactions in blog-mediated writing, I show linguistic and metalinguistic patterns of language uses for their academic, social, and political goals. These chapters also provide a detailed explanation of the students’ developed knowledge of academic genres over a school year, drawing on register-based textual analysis of systemic functional linguistics.

The conclusion, Chapter 7, offers a discussion of the findings of this study, in light of related research studies, and implications for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers in the field of language and literacy education.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMPUTER-MEDIATED LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a review of existing literature in computer-mediated language learning to show how and where this study connects to previous work theoretically and pedagogically in the field of language and literacy education. Since the mid 1990s, language educators have incorporated the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in language and literacy education within their classrooms and as a form of cross-national collaboration. Research into these pedagogical practices has shown three main themes. Linguistic interaction and development were a starting point in pedagogy and research; later, attention shifted to intercultural communication. More recently, drawing on ethnographic approaches, researchers have been exploring how learners acquire multiliteracies and identities while participating in computer-mediated language learning practices.

Each theme accounts for different learner experiences in computer-mediated language learning. Within this research, computer technologies include synchronous (e.g., Internet-relay chat, instant messengers, MOOs) and asynchronous (e.g., web authoring tools, blogs) communication tools. The majority of CMC studies have been conducted by language instructors themselves as a way of examining CMC uses in their pedagogical practices<sup>1</sup>. In the following section, I will discuss the purposes of CMC practices, views

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<sup>1</sup> Within the themes of linguistic interaction and development, and of intercultural awareness and learning, language instructors who incorporated CMC into their teaching were researchers. Within the theme of multiliteracies and identities, language educators and researchers began to be differentiated.

of language learning, contexts, and embedded discourses within these themes. I then look into how conceptual understandings of purpose, context, and discourse in CMC practices are intertwined with learners' roles and agency in constructing learning experiences within each theme.

## **2.2 Linguistic Interaction and Skill Development**

First, I will discuss research studies focusing on how language learners can improve their proficiency with certain language skills and functions through CMC activities (Blake, 2000; Chun, 1994; Cobb, 2008; Kern, 1995; Ortega, 1997; Pellettieri, 2000; Smith, 2003; Sotillo, 2000; Toyoda & Harrison, 2003; Tudini, 2003; Warschauer, 1996). Oriented toward language production, increasing opportunities to generate interactions has been a goal for computer-mediated instruction from this perspective. Emphasizing linguistic interactions, researchers have investigated linguistic meaning negotiations and language outcomes. For instance, Blake (2000) studied various online tasks to evaluate how they support meaning negotiation, looking at 50 intermediate L2 Spanish learners' uses of synchronous CMC in the classroom and analyzing their online interactions. Students paired up and carried out jigsaw, information-gap, or decision-making tasks together using a chat program. Among the three tasks, Blake found that the jigsaw activities led to the greatest amount of meaning negotiation. Even though meaning negotiation did not take up a large portion of the overall conversational turns, the negotiations were predominantly about the meanings of words, not grammatical forms. In conclusion, Blake contends that CMC provides a good environment for generating meaning negotiation. In a similar vein, Smith (2003) also examined meaning negotiations among 28 intermediate English learners in their use of synchronous CMC during a series

of jigsaw and decision-making tasks. Smith found that meaning negotiations occurred when learners encountered new words, and that decision-making tasks supported students' meaning negotiations more than jigsaw tasks.

On the other hand, researchers have explored linguistic outcomes in relation to face-to-face communication learning practices. Specifically, they have investigated how language learning through CMC is transferred to face-to-face aural discussion and supports second language writing development (Abrams, 2003; Davis & Thiede, 2000; Schultz, 2000; Sotillo, 2000). For example, Sotillo (2000) studied differences between synchronous and asynchronous CMC interactions involving 25 ESL students in the areas of discourse functions and syntactic complexity. She found that synchronous CMC is more similar to face-to-face communication in terms of discourse functions (e.g., requests, apologies, complaints, responses), and asynchronous writing leads to more sustained interactions with syntactic complexity. In a similar study, Abrams (2003) also looked into how synchronous and asynchronous CMC modes of online language learning transferred to face-to-face oral interactions in a German foreign language course. She found that the group that used synchronous CMC interactions produced more language in the subsequent face-to-face course interactions than the group participating in an asynchronous conference, even though there were no significant differences in language quality in terms of lexical richness, diversity, or syntactic complexity.

Other researchers (Davis & Thiede, 2000; Schultz, 2000) also examined how asynchronous CMC writing as a pedagogical tool supporting second language writing development. Looking further into the effectiveness of CMC as a feedback tool, Schultz (2000) studied the relationship between second language writing development and CMC

activity in a more complex way. She contends that the interrelationship between CMC and second language writing is not a simple matter where one can claim that CMC is a medium that is superior or inferior to face-to-face communication for second language writing development. Rather, students' language proficiency levels, the types of activities, and media are all interconnected dynamically in computer-mediated language learning practices.

Focusing on linguistic products, researchers looked into a variety of areas related to CMC interactions. Such examinations include comparisons with face-to-face discussions, linguistic features and functions of CMC interactions, effectiveness of CMC as a feedback tool, and learning resources available through access to target language speakers (Bloch, 2007; Chun, 1994; Herring, 1996; Kern, 1995; Ortega, 1997; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996; Warschauer 1996). This kind of approach has been extended to more recent research of Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs and wiki's (e.g., Bloch, 2007; Bloch & Crosby, 2006; Lowe & Williams, 2004). These studies demonstrate that uses of newer communication technologies have made interactions increasingly complicated and dynamic, and have contributed to a reexamination of the current notion of meaning negotiation which has been based mainly on face-to-face interactions. It is noted that making online meaning negotiation is different from face-to-face negotiation, in that the medium of communication alters communication dynamics.

Overall, studies of linguistic products are typically based on a classroom teacher-researcher's interest in the use of computer technology as a pedagogical tool; learners' experiences are explained primarily by the amount of interactions they produce. These studies tend to quantify and categorize individual student's interactional production,

while focusing less on situated aspects that allow one to see the relationship between text and context dynamically. In addition, this research demonstrates that CMC provides a beneficial medium for students in that the mode of communication is written, enabling learners to reflect on the form and content of the communication. In this view, language learning is envisioned as practices of acquiring linguistic features and functions, which leads to CMC tools being utilized in ways that attempt to achieve these linguistic goals. Learners are constructed to have uniform interests in and relationships with computer-mediated language learning activities and tools. In addition, when studies of computer-mediated language education are primarily concerned with linguistic outcomes, understanding of computer-mediated pedagogical activities is confined to CMC linguistic texts produced in contexts that are defined exclusively by their temporal and spatial dimensions. Thus, in order to expand the understanding of CMC learning interactions, the notion of context in CMC language learning and teaching needs to be expanded to include also the sociocultural context in which computer-assisted language learning happens as a situated social practice.

### **2.3 Intercultural Communication**

The second theme to be addressed in CMC pedagogy and research involves intercultural communication practices in various cross-national settings. In such practices, learners' experiences are contingent upon the local contexts in which computer-mediated language learning is occurring. CMC uses in language learning and teaching focusing on intercultural experiences are aimed not only at linguistic development, but also at developing cultural and intercultural awareness in a dynamic examination of the cultural perspectives of both of the learning partners participating in the interactions. For

example, a number of studies have looked into long-distance collaboration projects between countries, such as foreign language program projects that took place between universities in Germany and the United States and between universities in France and the United States (Belz, 2002, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Chun & Plass, 2000; Kern, 2000; Kinginger, 2000; Liaw, 2006; Thorne, 2003; Ware, 2005). These intercultural communication projects have been studied through three main approaches—pedagogical tools, sociocultural dimensions of intercultural communication, and cross-cultural discourse studies.

First, researchers have studied intercultural collaborations incorporated into language classes as pedagogical tools to revamp their curricula and to provide students with different views of cultural contents (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001; Kinginger, Gourves-Hayward, & Simpson, 1999; Meskill & Ranglova, 2000; Müller-Hartmann, 2000). For instance, Müller-Hartmann (2000) carried out a literature-based project involving 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade high school classes from Germany, the United States, and Canada. In his study, he found that the instructional task of joint reading of literature supported the learners' interpersonal competence, positive attitudes toward each other's cultures, and interpretative skills. The project also demonstrated that instructional tasks, teacher's and students' roles, and exchanges of personal information influenced learners' attitudes toward and knowledge about one another's cultures, and interpretive skills.

Also along the lines of studying intercultural communication from pedagogical perspectives, Meskill and Ranglova (2000) examined how an EFL course at the University of Sofia in Bulgaria changed its curriculum using CMC tools—specifically e-

mail. A curriculum was developed around contemporary British and U.S. short stories. TESOL graduate students in the United States worked collaboratively with Bulgarian EFL students, exchanging perspectives on the readings with the Bulgarian students via e-mail. The American students also tape recorded dialogues and descriptive narratives from the readings for Bulgarian students' listening and class discussion.

Another example of CMC study with a pedagogical perspective can be found in an intercultural communication project at MIT. Exploring the notion of culture in language learning in a comprehensive way, Furstenberg and her colleagues (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001) embraced intercultural communication based on CMC in foreign language learning through the MIT Web-based platform, *Cultura*, which has been used primarily for intercultural communication between MIT and the Institut National des Télécommunications in France. The *Cultura* project offered MIT and French students the opportunity to explore materials offered by their communication partners (e.g., films, newspaper articles, opinion polls, passages from cross-cultural literature) as insiders and outsiders. The intercultural communication activities were designed based on the assumption that culture is not static but is instead an invisible, elusive phenomenon under dynamic processes of ongoing construction. This approach of *Cultura* led students to reciprocally construct their understanding of each other's cultures through observation, examinations of assumptions with juxtaposing materials and interpretations, and exchanges of viewpoints and perspectives.

These studies show that intercultural CMC as a pedagogy tool provides a forum for learners to exchange views and construct understandings of one another's cultures based on discourses available in the contexts of their own specific situations of learning.

With this type of approach, a teacher's new role is built around structuring, juxtaposing, interpreting, and reflecting on intercultural experiences. With the teacher in this new role, the students are engaged in processes of questioning, contradicting, and confirming their assumptions regarding others' culture with materials from the CMC electronic discussion forum. In addition, the studies show that the changes in the curriculum based on CMC tools brought about changes in the teacher's role, from "authoritative figure" to "facilitative coach."

Second, research studies on intercultural CMC have looked into the sociocultural dimensions of intercultural communication. Researchers (Belz, 2002, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003) have expanded contexts beyond the pedagogical aspects of curriculum to include institutional, logistical, social, and cultural contexts of cross-national settings, and have explored the broader aspects of context in language learning.

One example of these intercultural communication projects is the Penn State Telecollaboration Project, conducted with the Justus-Liebig-Universität in Giessen, Germany (Belz, 2002). This project aimed to develop learners' foreign language competence and intercultural awareness through discussions of their interpretations of German and American films and texts on the general theme of family via e-mail, synchronous chat, and websites. In Belz's study, U.S. students showed improvement in language proficiency and cultural knowledge, but their German counterparts did not show the same results. American students criticized the Germans' low level of participation, whereas the German students pointed out that American students were not forthcoming with personal information and also were more interested in completing the assigned tasks

than discussing topics. Belz illustrated that being connected with others from different cultures does not necessarily lead to the same experience of intercultural learning. She analyzed these findings in regard to the relationship between institutional affordances and students' interests and engagement. That is, she found that the German student participants had limited access to the Internet and had difficulties writing online outside of class time, which led them to have low levels of participation compared to their American counterparts. The difference in grades, accreditation, and academic calendars at the two institutions were additional institutional factors challenging the participants.

In another telecollaborative project between German and U.S. universities, Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) conducted a self-reflective case study of their ten-month collaboration. The researchers examined how social, cultural, and institutional affordances (opportunities/constraints) shaped levels of involvement and communication practices. Specifically, their reflections focused on social-material aspects of telecollaborative communication such as different “academic calendars, local patterns of socialization into the teaching profession, institution-specific classroom scripts, systems of learning assessment, student workloads, and the physical layouts of local institutions and social forms of classroom collaboration” within the constructivist paradigm.(p. 71). The teacher-researchers agreed that the tension in their collaborative work provided good teaching and learning opportunities for intercultural knowledge, rather than obstacles to be overcome. In their reflections, they also emphasized that the teacher's role in successful collaborative projects needed to go beyond the reductive stance of a “guide on the side,” to an active position of identifying and explaining intercultural features in electronic discourse (p. 106).

Along the lines of investigating the influence of social materials on computer-mediated practice, O'Dowd (2003) conducted a longitudinal study involving asynchronous communication between two classes in Spain and Britain. He reported that the participants showed varying degrees of success in their yearlong e-mail exchanges. The students who did not succeed found their stereotypes reinforced, and had their negative attitudes toward each other confirmed. Those who had positive experiences invested a lot of time in their messages, and also included some personal, "off-task" messages in acknowledging their partners' comments and in responding to their questions. The study argues that success is more dependent on the reactions that students receive when they introduce aspects of their culture to their partners, rather than on motivation, computer proficiency, and computer access. This finding contests the argument of previous studies that social materials in the instructional context affect students' engagement and interests in their intercultural communication (Belz, 2002; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003).

The third research approach looking at intercultural communication practices has focused on the social and cultural discourses shaping computer-mediated intercultural communication at the societal level. This approach expands the context of intercultural communication beyond the local level of institution to the macro level of society. Researchers (Kramersch & Thorne, 2002; Thorne, 2003) studied how social discourses shape intercultural CMC in respect to different communicative genres of CMC, linguistic styles, academic cultures, and cultural characteristics. Kramersch and Thorne (2002) studied MOO and e-mail exchanges between French students of English and American students of French to investigate what it means to be a competent communicator in

intercultural CMC. The findings of their study suggest that what causes tensions in students' cross-cultural understanding are differences in cultural frames and communicative genres of CMC, and not linguistic misunderstandings. For example, the students showed style discrepancies in asynchronous e-mail communication such as U.S. students' "personal" and "anecdotal" styles versus French students' "official" and "accurate" styles (p. 93), unlike synchronous MOO communication in which both American and French students favored "social and or phatic" interactions for positive self-presentation (p. 86). The researchers contend that what needs to be negotiated in CMC are stylistic conventions of the genre such as formal/informal, edited/unedited, and literate/orate. Referring to previous studies (Blake, 2000; Kötter, 2003; Pellettieri, 2000) which demonstrated that communicative competence and meaning negotiation were different on the Internet, they argue that these terms need to be reassessed in light of globalized intercultural communication.

Thorne (2003) further studied the discourses operating in CMC practice, focusing on the cultural uses of tools. He explains that even though CMC practices are closely related with the materiality and characteristics of the communication mediums, the norms and discourses associated with everyday use of a medium determine CMC communicative practices. In his study of e-mail exchanges between U.S. and French students, he found that the American students in the Penn State Foreign Language Project did not perceive e-mail as an appropriate medium for communication among peers. They preferred instant messaging to e-mailing and built better personal relationships with their French counterparts when they switched to instant messaging. Thorne contends that social and cultural discourses surrounding Internet communication tools (e.g., e-mail, chat

rooms, instant messaging) are varied across social, generational, institutional, and national groups.

Endorsing previous studies of operative discourses in CMC (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Thorne, 2003), Hanna and Nooy (2003) reemphasized the role of genre in intercultural communication through their study of British and U.S. students participating in the discussion forum of the French newspaper *Le Monde*. They maintain that attention to communicating with “native speakers” in CMC obfuscated different genres and discourse rules shaped by the cultural values existent in different social, generational and national groups. Approaching online communication from a comprehensive, critical perspective, Ware (2005) investigated a telecollaborative intercultural project between German university students who studied English to become EFL teachers and American university students who studied German as a major or minor. She defined moments of “missed communication” as moments of miscommunication, disengagement, or missed opportunities for intercultural learning, and studied how different genres and discourses of CMC were operating as causes for moments of “missed communication” in the telecollaboration project (p. 67). She found that computer-mediated interactions occurred in many forms with different styles of genre and discourse, which led to miscommunications, disengagement, and missed opportunities for intercultural learning. For instance, she argued that online communication discourse normally tended to be brief rather than sustained, and that it lacked the social consequences of dropping topics in online discussion. These discourse features hindered the participants from being engaging deeply in intercultural inquiry.

As I have explained above, these three approaches have emphasized curriculum,

local institution, and social discourse at the societal level as their respective contexts. First, curriculum-focused research studies have illustrated that long distance collaborative communication projects involving different universities in cross-cultural and cross-national settings have provided learners with access to target language speakers. In doing so, the projects were aimed to promote not only language development, but also cultural and intercultural competence through dynamic relationships that helped students to reflect on their own cultures through exposure to and appreciation of outsiders' perspectives (e.g., Cononelos & Oliva, 1993; Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Warschauer, 1996). More recently, research studies have incorporated a broadened context of language learning that includes logistical, curricular, and pedagogical aspects of local institutions, and broader social and cultural discourses of communication genres and tools (Belz, 2002, 2003; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; Chun & Plass, 2000; Kern, 2000; Kinginger, et al., 1999; Kramersch & Thorne, 2002; Meskill & Ranglova, 2000; Thorne, 2003). These studies have indicated that CMC uses in language learning and teaching are not uniform with the same use of a particular tool, but are socially and culturally situated practices that are shaped by contextual elements such as logistical, pedagogical, social and cultural factors.

Furthermore, one of the key findings of intercultural collaborative projects suggests caution against accepting widespread misconceptions of the teacher's role in CMC. At the beginning of CMC use in language learning and teaching and well into more recent days, the fact that students were able to be connected with "native speakers" provided many language educators with a reductive view of their own involvement in CMC practices. These studies have emphasized that successful computer-mediated intercultural communication requires active teacher involvement in identifying,

explaining, and reflecting upon culturally contingent patterns of interaction in electronic discourse, away from the common image of an instructor as “a guide on the side” in online classrooms. These studies suggest that online language learning is a complicated fabric with multi-layered contexts of pedagogical, institutional, social, and cultural materials, and discourse styles.

These research studies, however, have tended to foreground intercultural differences in the material aspects of CMC contexts, such as different academic calendars, Internet access, and institutional grade policies from social materialist perspectives. In doing so, an understanding of how students construed the contextual elements of their CMC activity and how human social agency played in the configured learning context of the activity was not paid enough attention. Such studies focused on the influence of social materials on learning experiences, and left room for exploring learners’ active social agent roles in learning.

Also, among the aforementioned studies examining social and cultural contexts in CMC uses, many have focused on cross-cultural issues in CMC activities, and have studied the mediating effects of nationally different institutional and societal contexts on CMC activities (Lee, 2004, p. 4). There is a need for more studies examining how learners in various local settings carry their perceptions, issues, interests, and concerns from discursive life into online interactions. Thus, further research is needed to explore how the learners construe the contextual elements and construct their affordances for CMC activities, to expand understanding of CMC uses in language education.

## 2.4 Multiliteracies and Identities

The third main theme of research studies of computer-mediated language learning and teaching focuses on the development of multiliteracies and their relationship to identities (Kramersch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000; Lam 2000, 2004; Nelson, 2006; Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, 2001; Warschauer 1999). Researchers have explored the kinds of language learning experiences CMC practices offer to learners and how CMC experiences address language learners' identities using ethnographic methods. They have expanded research studies of CMC to various language learning settings beyond university-based foreign language programs. These ethnographic approaches of researching online language learning are in an emergent stage. The published studies have approached CMC uses for language learning and teaching from perspectives of acquiring multiliteracies and expressing learners' multiple identities, as discussed in the following section.

Researchers of language and literacy education focusing on multiliteracy aspects of computer-mediated language have illustrated a range of differently situated practices of computer-mediated language learning across local contexts (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, 2001; Warschauer 1999). For example, Warschauer (1999) conducted an ethnographic study of how computer technologies were used in four different university writing classes. He coined the term *electronic literacy* as a metaphor for unique aspects of computer-mediated language learning practice, and researched the characteristics of its practice according to local situations and contexts. Specifically, his study shows that use of computer technologies for teaching and learning activities were shaped by individual teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning language and writing. The

teachers' beliefs were also influenced and formed by the educational underpinning of the departments of their respective colleges and universities. For example, in an ESL course at a private Christian college, the instructor considered writing as a matter of structure and convention and incorporated computer technologies for grammar exercises, editing for conventions, and sentence and paragraph structures. Another example of the study is uses of computers in a graduate course at a public university. The instructor viewed writing as engagement in academic apprenticeship, and used computer technology as a tool for her students to network with peers and the teacher, and to participate in professional discussions. Giving further explications of situated electronic literacies, Warschauer has continued to describe uses of computer technologies for the purpose of liberation at an undergraduate Hawaiian course in a public university, and for vocational applications in an undergraduate English course at a community college.

As such, Warschauer's study shows that teachers' underlying instructional approaches shape uses of computer technologies. As Kern (2006) puts it, its findings question widespread perceptions about the "symbolic or prestige dimension of using computers" (p. 189). In addition, the findings underscore the accounts of the overall effectiveness of technology use, restricted to yes-no answers, to be inadequate. Without considering content, people, setting, goals, procedures involved, or other elements of contexts, studies of computer-mediated teaching and learning English become studies focusing on the "computer's association with progress," rather than improving student learning (Kern, 2006, p. 189). Thus, the situated nature of electronic literacies is a projection of sociocultural contexts, in which computer technologies are used for teaching and learning English.

Kramersch et al. (2000) studied electronic literacy in focus of authorial practice in multimedia composition and Internet-based communication. The authors introduced a multimedia project in which American college students of Spanish created a Spanish-language CD-ROM on Latin-American culture. The students' authorial practice was captured in decision-making processes dealing with the local and global authenticity of the Virgin Mary as "an object of local religious practices," or as "an icon of Latin American culture" across different times and spaces (p. 96). Introducing a Chinese ESL high school student's Internet Relay Chat texts, Kramersch and her colleagues further explicate how the concept of authorship is changed in textual practices through an electronic medium. They demonstrate how the Chinese ESL learner presents a different textual self as "a competent user of global English," overcoming a self-image of "a deficient user of local English." The findings suggest that the notion of authorship needs to be reframed into concepts of agency, authenticity, and identity in computer-mediated language learning. To this point, they argue that "the reason why students believed that multimedia was more authentic than a written text may be because they had more power to author it, both as creators and as consumers" (p. 24). Namely, the learners see the consequences of semiotic choices that they have made for their purposes. It is noted that this kind of authorship in electronic textual practices allows learners the "possibilities of agency" in constructing new identities, and that "through the electronic medium, authorship becomes the privilege of any language user, at equal par with any other" (p. 24).

Nelson (2006) further examines how authorship is expanded or constrained in the multimedia writing practices of four undergraduate ESL students' digital storytelling. In

an experimental study, he examined how the students used different modes of representation (e.g., image, video, sound, music except linguistic text) in creating digital stories about their culture, language, and identity. He analyzed aspects of multimodal composition that amplify and limit authorial voices and intentions for synthesizing various modes. To this point, he showed how the students' authorial voices and intentions were expressed through "resemiotization" of an image through repetition and synaesthetic processes of shifting expression across modal boundaries. It is noted that this authorial practice led to the students' awareness of the relationship between language topology (e.g., "what it looks like") and typology (e.g., "what language says") in the semiotic meaning of language. Not only does he point out amplified authorship with digital writing practices, he also points out that the students' awareness of genre norms rendered their multimodal text production "genericized", an over-accommodation of targeted audiences that hindered their authorial voices (p. 67).

Another line of research on electronic literacy has explored how being engaged in CMC practices provides language learners with opportunities for expressing and developing identities. Research studies (Lam, 2000, 2004; Warschauer, 1999, 2002) started to give significant attention to the relationship between electronic literacies and identities, suggesting that engaging in electronic literacies allows language learners to express their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identities. For instance, Warschauer's studies (2000, 2002) illustrated how multimodal aspects of CMC communication suited multiethnic students' expressions of self and their ethnic identity as a venue for developing literacies and new identities. In this vein, Warschauer and his colleagues (Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002) also explored the relationship between online

communication and language learners' multiple identity development, drawing on data from the United States (Hawaii), Egypt, and Singapore. He and his colleagues further suggest that the Internet in the current global era has brought not only opportunities for expanding international interactions and global English, but also venues for users to express their local identities by forming diverse forms of grassroots communication and publishing in a variety of local languages and dialects.

Turning away from research into the CMC practices of formal university language programs toward out-of-school literacy practice, Lam (2000, 2004) carried out an ethnographic case study of the virtual social life of a Chinese immigrant high school senior named Almon, who had been in the States for 5 years and struggled with his English ability, leading him to have a lack of confidence in his social and academic lives. Lam's study demonstrated that virtual life experiences through instant messaging (e.g., ICQ) and his own website about a Japanese pop music singer (e.g., Ryoko Hirose) enabled Almon to express himself freely and establish a new social life with his Internet peers. Lam's (2000) examination of Almon's online interactions revealed that Almon used semiotic modes of online environments to (re)design interactional discourses for his purposes, which led her to claim that Almon developed a new "identity that is not available to him in the social environment and institutions of his adopted country" (p. 475). The study demonstrates how social contexts in online environments shape and are shaped by a participant's language uses and identity formation.

The aforementioned ethnographic studies have explored learners' experiences from the perspective of authorship in computer-mediated multimodal composition, in close association with the notion of new literacy development. They have shown ELLs'

experiences that are constructed based on discourses of audience, language, and ethnic backgrounds at different times and in different spaces while participating in computer-mediated language learning. Another line of research on learners' experiences with the new literacy practices of online communities has demonstrated that language learners bonded not through their national and ethnic backgrounds, but through common interests and similar mindsets. For instance, in Lam's study (2000), Japanese animation websites have become gathering spaces for English language learners who are fans of the genre. The CMC practices of those youth are formed around learner's developed transnational, trans-ethnic identities based on friendships built around common interests. ELLs' language socialization processes in CMC practices are not only learning how to read and write in "standardized" forms of the language, but also developing abilities to negotiate new roles and identities—processes of being positioned by a new language and positioning others by appropriating the language. Considering that socialization and identity construction can have either a facilitating or restrictive effect on language learning and literacy development (Ibrahim, 1999; Pierce, 1995; Lam, 2000, 2004; Willett, 1995), language educators need to guide learners to participate in online communication as critical users of new media and as agents of purposeful communication and action.

Another important implication for language pedagogy and research that these studies have posed is that educators need to reconsider norms of "standard" English education that value only a narrow range of semiotic resources. Learners speak a variety of versions of a language from subject positions in their discursive lives reflective of gender, race, language, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality, and age, rather than

speaking a standard version of a language. Teachers need to be advised to be more concerned with students' uses of the multiple linguistic, cognitive, and social resources that are available in online communication. Language learners need to be supported to use those resources in the process of negotiating the linguistic, cultural, and interactional demands of online discourse beyond the conventional norms of a "standard" language. Furthermore, this kind of pluralistic approach to online language use allows learners to negotiate their new roles and identities more creatively and critically in contexts where local interests, goals, and purposes are expressed and sought for in global settings.

To encourage learner identity negotiation, studies of multiliteracies and identities in CMC practices have been concerned with discursive experiences by showing connections between language learners' online and offline lives. That is, researchers have explored how their participants bring offline life issues and identities at local settings to online settings, and express and seek out different identities in global settings. Language learning is envisioned as practices geared toward acquiring the ability to express one's self, while appropriating available resources in online communication for interactional goals and interests. One important point that deserves notice regarding this theme is that researchers drawing on ethnography have started to investigate language learners' experiences in CMC practices from the perspectives of learners, rather than those of instructors.

## **2.5 Summary**

When learner experience is given greater importance in language learning and teaching, one can see not merely the social, cultural, and material contexts, but also the recontextualization that learners configure by appropriating and redesigning multiple

discourses and various semiotic resources. This view of context in language learning allows one to see how CMC practices are shaped by the dynamics between social materials (e.g., CMC technologies, institutional curricular conditions, and logistics) and human behaviors, rather than one-sided social materialist or individualist understandings of CMC practices. Furthermore, reconfigured contexts represent how learners appropriate CMC activities for their linguistic and social purposes, which allows researchers and teachers to avoid static, essentialized views of learning and its context. Exploring how learners jointly construct learning activities, one can see their identities/subjectivities in relation to co-constructed norms, rules, and goals. Moreover, this approach to studying computer-mediated language learning and teaching can also address the kinds of experiences language learners will face in a linguistically, culturally, and socially new environment, and how they will carry their life interests and stories over to online language learning spaces.

This literature review leads me to conclude that computer-mediated language learning is a socially situated semiotic practice. Therefore, for the current dissertation, I adopt sociocultural theories of language learning and use. Working from this theoretical perspective, I argue that language learning is a social practice that entails meaning-making processes, drawing on the semiotic resources available in social environments in contextually responsive ways (Bakhtin, 1981; Halliday, 1978; Lantolf, 2000; Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). These semiotic resources are cultural artifacts that are sociohistorically created by members of a social group. Learning how to use cultural semiotic artifacts comes about by participating in socialization practices that involve cultural artifacts as the tools that mediate social interactions. Developing

expertise in uses of cultural meaning-making resources is based on socialization processes of learning the cultural and social norms of a discourse community (Gee, 1996; Kress, 1993, 2003; Smagorinsky, 2001; Suhor, 1984; Whiting, 1996). As such, in computer-mediated language learning, learners engage in expressing themselves and understanding others within the cultural, social, and historical boundaries of the discourse community.

As described above, language learning that draws on sociocultural semiotic resources closely resembles language socialization practices. From the perspective of language socialization (Ochs, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Willett, 1995), language learning is not the acquisition of discrete linguistic features, but of the norms, values, beliefs, and hierarchies of a social group, in order to become competent members of the group. Learners dialogically engage with discourses surrounding the learning practice, social voices that are both synchronic and diachronic. Learners reconfigure social voices not only to make the meaning from learning activities, but also to present self and others in the social interactions in which learning occurs (Bakhtin, 1981).

In sum, when language learning is viewed as situated social practices that entail the use of sociocultural semiotic resources in context-dependent ways (Bakhtin, 1981; Lantolf, 2000; Leont'ev, 1981; Lier, 2000, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), it is acknowledged that learners have “social agency” in those practices. It becomes critical to examine the goals and roles that learners have in computer-mediated language practice as much as computer technologies, pedagogical purposes, and contexts to understand dynamics of computer-mediated language and literacy education. This approach enables one to see how learners are engaged in language and literacy practices involving

meaning-making practices through the new modalities afforded by computer technologies (Kress, 2005; Lemke, 1998; New London Group, 1996). Furthermore, such an examination focusing on learners' semiotic experiences shows the social, cultural, and historical complexities of computer-mediated language and literacy development, avoiding a reductive view at computer-mediated language and literacy education as a matter of skills.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

To provide a comprehensive picture of English language learners' (ELLs) uses of computer-mediated language learning for academic and social goals, this chapter discusses the nature of their learning, drawing on the notion of "learning as appropriation" for goal achievement. First, I introduce the concept of appropriation grounded in sociocultural theories of learning, and explicate studies and issues related to appropriation from a sociocultural view of second language learning and literacy development. Then, based on the concept of learning language through language use (Halliday, 1985), I discuss language and literacy development as social processes in which linguistic choices are made in response to audiences and goals, consequently shaping construction of one's social and textual identities. This review sets up the conceptual framework of my investigation of ELLs' academic language learning and literacy development through mediation of computer technologies, and provides a foundation for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data.

#### **3.2 Learning as Appropriating Processes**

The theoretical frameworks I use to answer the questions are based on sociocultural perspectives of language learning and literacy development (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Christie & Martin, 2007; Gebhard, 1999, 2004; Gee, 1996, 2004; Halliday, 1985; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Willett, 1995). From this perspective, language and literacy are social and

cultural properties realized through use of language in social relationships, rather than the mental attributes of individuals. Developing literacies occurs through social practices in which one learns certain ways of producing, using, interpreting, and valuing a written text for activities of specific literacy events as a social group member—e.g., as students in a school, workers in an office, or members of a church. Teaching literacy becomes an act of equipping members of a social group with cultural ways of reading and writing that are used with other members of that group. Having the ability to read and write is counted as developing a situated literacy within specific social practices, rather than viewing literacy as a decontextualized, autonomous ability to read and write.

In situated practices of literacy development, learners are socialized into multiple activities of learning “complex role relationships, general cognitive techniques, ways of approaching problems, different genres of talk and interaction, and an intricate set of values connected with communication, interaction, and society as a whole” (Gee, 1996, p. 56). The processes of learning new cognitive, social, and cultural attributes, in Vygotsky’s words (1978), involve transforming an *interpersonal* process into an *intrapersonal* one (pp. 56-57). In addition, the internalization process of learning occurs through mediation of the cultural tools and signs that learners use to make meaning from new activities. These mediated activities construct externally- and internally-oriented changes. In these activities, the tools function as “the conductor of human influence on the object of activity,” whereas the signs serve as “a means of internal activity aimed at mastering oneself” (p. 55).

Developing higher mental functions through mediated activities involves dynamically engaging with a variety of norms in using different semiotic resources (e.g.,

letters, graphics, colors, words, computers, languages, genres) to achieve goals of social interactions. That is, while participating in the socialization practice of culturally and socially grounded forms of behavior and mental functions, learners explicitly and implicitly learn uses of cultural artifacts that are aligned with the norms, values, beliefs, and hierarchies of a social group through interactions with people who have expertise in certain discourses. Within socialization processes of adopting, adapting, or resisting discourse norms, learners develop complex webs of learning goals on both social and individual planes that trigger transformations of the semiotic resources and cultural practices that are being used. About this aspect of learning, Polman (2006) states that “learning involves more than ‘mastery’ of cognitive skills and problem solving because it always takes place in sociocultural environments charged with values and identity” (p. 222). As such, learning entails a changing sense of self and social position (Beach, 1999).

Researchers explicate this process of learning by drawing on the metaphor of “appropriation” (Cole, 1996; Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; Rogoff, 1995; Wertsch, 1998). This notion highlights learning as tool-mediated transformation and emphasizes ownership of a cultural tool-mediated activity. Ownership of a cultural activity means that learners transform interpretations of and roles for the activity to accomplish their own individual purposes. The fundamental concept of appropriation is that in social practices of learning, active learners not only prepare themselves for changes in subsequent similar activities, but also subscribe different interpretative meanings to social activities. In a similar vein, “any event in the present is an extension of previous events and is directed toward goals and have not yet been accomplished”

(Rogoff, 1995, p. 155). In addition, internal and external boundaries are considered problematic in that a learner participating in an activity is a part of that activity.

As such, the tenet of appropriation captures the transformative nature of learning, in contrast to the concept of internalization that external pieces of knowledge are imported for static and bounded internal construction. According to Rogoff (1995), “appropriation is a process of transformation, not a precondition of transformation” (p. 152) in which learners are engaged in dynamic and mutual development processes of social knowledge. In this process, learners become active agents who transform social activities for their own goals. Even with an emphasis on learners’ active agency in any stage of higher mental function development, researchers use the term *appropriation* for instances of learning without making a clear differentiation between mastery and appropriation (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 1995).

In response to this lack of clear differentiation, Wertsch (1998) highlights the transformative nature of appropriation by discussing differences between the “mastery” and “appropriation” of a cultural tool. In his view, “mastery” means knowing how to use a cultural tool, whereas “appropriation” refers to making a cultural tool one’s own by transforming preexisting ways of using the cultural tool. Wertsch provides an example that supports his distinction between mastery and appropriation, by drawing on the history of Estonia. During the Soviet era, learners in Estonia mastered the official history of how Estonia became a part of the Soviet Union. Official history described the nation’s change into a Soviet republic as a result of and a desire for the commitment of Estonians to mass proletarian action. Many Estonians had mastered recitation of Estonian proletariat-based history in school and workplace settings. However, they did not recite

the official history outside the official institutions that demanded compliance. In their private lives, they reinterpreted the official history of Soviet statehood and appropriated the history to represent identities through different tactics and strategies. As such, appropriation became not a stance of resistance but a transformation for learners' own interests and goals.

This example shows that learners engage with both mastery and appropriation in learning a social activity, and that their appropriation processes are closely intertwined with who they are and what they want to achieve in participating in learning activities. Regarding the relationship between mastery and appropriation, researchers have identified appropriation as a steering force for learner's achievement of mastery (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999). As Cazden (1981) puts it, learners' appropriation processes allow them to practice "performance before competence"<sup>1</sup> (p. 5), which allows them to prepare for future learning or for further mastery. But it also needs to be noted that learners may not always engage with both mastery and appropriation in learning a social activity, and they often obtain either mastery without appropriation or appropriation without mastery.

Over the course of appropriation, learners who are engaged in activities of using cultural tools purposely are "agents [that] seldom have only one goal for an action but rather many explicit and implicit goals simultaneously" (Polman, 2006, p. 223). Multiple goals reflect varying interpretations of the tools that are not unitary but socioculturally situated with "irreducible tensions" between the cultural tool and learners (Wertsch &

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<sup>1</sup> Terms such as "competence" and "performance" are used in psycholinguistics, but these terms are drawn on here to explain the concept of "appropriation" from a sociocultural view of language and literacy development.

Polman, 2001). These individual interpretations and goals are not static but, over time, unfold dynamically, changing in relation to contextual elements. On this point, Polman (2006, p. 223) notes:

An agent has a particular one-time agenda for an understanding of a tool's use in a particular action, yet the tool affords certain sorts of action and has a history of meanings and uses. Neither the agent's one-time purposes nor the tool's "received" cultural meanings alone determine the meaning of action. In addition, certain scenes are associated with certain goals, tools, and actions and unwelcoming to others, whereas certain social categories of agents "belong" or do not in a scene.

Indeed, one's patterns of participating in learning practice are complex phenomena that need to be explained at multiple levels involving the individuals, collectives of individuals, and communities of a social group within sociocultural contexts. It is because learners bring academic and social goals from their own life trajectories into contextually situated practices of learning. While learning the cultural ways of semiotic resources, they are engaged in appropriation processes of reconstructing and transforming the knowledge for goal achievement that occur through dynamic interplay of cultural, environmental, historical, perceptual, and social dimensions. Engaged with dynamic processes of appropriation, one develops a "persistent engagement" pattern (Azevedo, 2006) in the practice of learning uses of a cultural tool in dialogical relationship with their interests, perspectives, and roles regarding learning activities.

In line with this, Polman (2006) investigated the relationship between historical thinking development and identity trajectories of a fourth grade student and an eighth grade student participating in after-school history Web clubs. The students used technology to make a "multimedia online history museum exhibit" (p. 226) about abolitionism, specifically focusing on historical struggles for freedom. These youths'

historical thinking development was investigated in connection with their identities. The interest of the fourth-grade boy in computer gaming helped him to have successful experiences building expertise in historical knowledge through historical simulation games (e.g., the Oregon Trail). The eighth-grader was interested in a hip-hop rapper, Tupac Shakur, which shaped an interest in learning that was in conflict with school norms. These two youths' personal interests inspired them to appropriate history web pages for different purposes, which led to different learning experiences. A note to consider is that learners' appropriations of a cultural tool are appraised by the norms of the cultural practice in which they learn uses of the tool, which often leads to formation of new social positions and identities in specific situating social, cultural, and historical contexts.

As such, learning how to use a cultural tool involves engaging dialogically and strategically with the norms and beliefs attached to the tool and its practice for their own interests. The lines of practice that learners develop index how they consummate and appropriate tool-mediated activities of learning to achieve goals emerging from their life trajectories. The appropriation of cultural tool-mediated practices occur in dialogic relationships between the history of cultural-historical mediation and the emergence of the current practices regarding participating individuals, institutions, artifacts, and discourses (Thorne, 2005).

These concepts related to appropriation are also identified in language learning and literacy development. Research has explicated learning new languages and development of literacy in relation to multiple voices, modes, and discourses/ideologies in language use and text design. In the next section, I present social, linguistic, and

semiotic perspectives that have addressed the transformative nature of language learning through language use (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Halliday, 1985; Holquist, 2002; Kress, 1999, 1998; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1995).

### **3.3 Appropriation in Language Use**

This sociocultural approach to defining learning as a social practice that entails borrowing, using, and transformation is resonant with Bakhtin's perspective of language and its use, and Kress' concept of writing. Bakhtinian theory focuses on explication of language in use or utterance, through key concepts such as *heteroglossia*, *dialogism*, and *addressivity* (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Holquist, 2002). From his sociohistorical view, language is fluid and transformative as a feature of "the living utterance" existing between interlocutors (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 67-73). The utterance is fraught with "dialogic overtones" such as intonational qualities in speech that allow a speaker to enact different "voices" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92). The diverse voices or "heteroglossia" residing in language social interactions represent diverse "social speech types" that embody discourses representing different ideologies and beliefs in the social world (1981, p. 263). In his view, even primary speech genres that are simple and basic forms of communication such as greetings and party invitations are extremely heterogeneous in nature, due to their strong dependence upon speech context. In this sense, the utterance at a given time and place is an instance of entangled interests, goals, values, and power relations of diverse social groups that speakers have and appropriate for their social interactions of commutations, rather than just a single linguistic unit.

Speakers' heteroglossic appropriation processes are grounded in the concept of *dialogism*, a term that is coined by Bakhtin's successors (Holquist, 2002, p. 15). Dialogue

is not a matter of a single guiding will or mind or voice, but the coming together of multiple minds. Speakers involved in a dialogue will incorporate elements of the interlocutor's previous utterances into their own. The dialogue itself is not considered the sum of two voices, but is the "in between" substance which is an amalgamation of multiple strands that occupy the same space at the same time. The mind and speech of a speaker regenerate something of what had emerged from the mind and speech of prior interlocutors (pp. 40-44).

The dialogic processes that intermingle and integrate heteroglossic ingredients into the so-called "in between" substance generate more than the simple co-existence of different linguistic components. Heteroglossia is the result of a convergence of numerous contextual influences at a single point in time, chosen from potential influences and resulting in a linguistic act. In dialogic processes, a speaker takes into account seemingly minor traits and peripheral influences, since even those apparently inconsequential features may play an ongoing role over time. That is, even minor traits could be realized in texts and lead to unique expressions that are differentiated from all previous utterances in a genre (Holquist, 2002, pp. 69-70).

The dialogic nature of language is both centrifugal and centripetal<sup>2</sup>. Centrifugal discourses bring into contact different languages that realize text types, beliefs, values, and ideologies associated with social groups from its own and other alien contexts, and lead them to become a "hybrid construction" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 304). In contrast, "centripetal forces" make language a stable, univocal, and determinant monologue. Centripetal forces work to eliminate differences in languages, pushing it toward a

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<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin presents "novelistic language" as centrifugal language and "poetic language" as centripetal language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 361).

centralized, standard monologic language. Through the dialogic processes of heteroglossia, even the most controlled and ritualized performances that represent centripetal forces involve centrifugal elements of the unique performer and of other elements at any given time. As such, the repetitiveness that is necessary to any genre remains, but the concept of stable genres is contested, especially over longer stretches of time.

This dialogic nature of utterances comes from the diversity of circumstances in which heteroglossia arises, and from their need to address the particulars of a given situation through appropriate choices of thematic content, style, and structure. In other words, a person learning to communicate in a certain context learns the nature of language as “being directed to someone, its *addressivity*” (Bahktin, 1986, p. 95). As Volosinov puts it, use of language is “a two-sided act” determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant “the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee” (Volosinov, 1973, p. 86). Thus, utterance is relational, signifying the speaker’s positioning in relation to others in the social world. In this process, a speaker/writer using a language does not copy the words and thoughts that s/he has come into contact with others, but rather casts the others’ voices “in a refracted way” to express her/his illocutionary/authorial intentions (Bahktin, 1981, p. 324). Namely, in a communication event, the meaning of a word in an utterance is construed from previous meanings of that word in other utterances as well as from other words in that utterance, and at the same time contributes to its possible meanings of words for future use. The appropriation process takes an integrated view of time that bridges past, present, and future into the moment of an act.

The ways in which speakers/writers appropriate other words for their intentions are shaped by the social position that they occupy in a certain utterance in response to other prior utterances that are related to their own. Thus, addressivity in utterance creates dialogism and heteroglossia in speech genres, as Holquist puts it (2002, p. 60):

[A]n utterance is never in itself originary: an utterance is always an answer. It is always an answer to another utterance that precedes it, and is therefore always conditioned by, and in turn qualifies, the prior utterance to a greater or lesser degree.

Collectively, these concepts mean that the speaker constructs the utterance while directing her utterance to someone in consideration of the anticipated reactions to the utterance from the person. In short, past and future utterances will be incorporated into the uniqueness of textual and *non-textual* or verbal and ideological circumstances of the context of the present utterance, which become the foundations of dialogism and heteroglossia in speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 60-100). This is through the addressivity of utterances or “double-voiced discourse,” in which speakers/writers intermingle and transform various beliefs, ideologies, interests, norms, and values of different social groups into hybrid forms (p. 324). Double voicing of speakers with different social interests in an utterance creates dialogic tensions among the speakers who are serving their interlocutor’s interest, while simultaneously carrying out their own goal. In this dialogical process, that norms and values that interlocutors bring into the utterance are subject to critique and transformation, and it occurs in what Bakhtin calls a carnival style, drawing on such forms as mimicry, irony, and parody.

Another aspect of constructive social semiotics emphasizing transformation in text production is echoed in Kress’ concept of writing as *design*, which draws on multimodal approaches to communication (Kress, 1998; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006;

New London Group, 1996). Within the notion of writing as designing semiotic modes, writers engage in meaning making processes that entail cultural ways of using representational modes available in a given instance of communication (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). From this perspective, writing is no longer “monomodal” and becomes multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2005). In particular, the multimodal approach to writing has become more significant with the transfer of writing from paper-based books to computer screens, in that writers have more choices for making and representing meanings (Jewitt, 2006). These modes of representation range from written text to imagery, sounds, hyperlinks, and videos. With increased semiotic resources, writing has become a matter of composing available semiotic resources through design and redesign of all modes of representation to communicate their intended meanings (Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1995).

Writers synthesize different modes of meaning, and intermingled modes of representation mutually sustain one another and generate new meanings (Jewitt, 2006). The concept of synthesis avoids mixing modes of representation as externally fixed semiotic systems, and stresses dialogic relationships among different modes of representation. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), “the different modes of representation are not held discretely, separately, as strongly bounded autonomous domains in the brain, or as autonomous communicational resources in culture, nor are they deployed discretely, either in representation or in communication” (p. 41); rather, they continually interact with one another. This kind of approach to designing multimodal texts is grounded in the framework of *synaesthetic semiosis* (Kress, 1998), within which writers understand not only the role of mode of representation as a design

element, but also the effects of both the absence and the existence of design elements in readers' response to the multimodal text. Such an understanding allows one to know what is required in creating and responding to a multimodal text. Synthesis of different representational modes involves not only arranging existing representational resources according to conventions, but also dynamically deploying representational resources in different ways to create new social and cultural meanings of reality. It becomes a transformative and creative process in which a writer's agentic voice is expressed.

One thing to be noted regarding author's agency is that the process of designing available modes of representation is not only a matter of individual choice, but is also a representation of cultural, social, and discursive values and norms. Taking this position, Kress (2005) argues that modes of representation and representational changes have social and cultural implications:

This is so because on the one hand representation is used as a metaphor for social, cultural, and ethical issues, and because on the other hand representational changes do not happen in isolation (p. 6).

Available modes as design elements allow writers to create a variety of meaning making forms in relation to the cultural and individual identities to which these forms are affiliated. In doing so, a writer as a designer "both appropriates available designs and recreates in the designing, thus producing new meaning as the redesigned" (New London Group, 1996, p. 88). Multimodal texts, therefore, convey human agency and cultural dynamism in the process of meaning making. One's authorship is based on configured affordances and discourses regarding modes, media, audience, and genres in expressing cultural, social, and political subjectivities in every act of meaning making. The configuration in a specific context of text production may generate a new and

transformed arrangement of discourses that has effects on the reality that they represent.

Such theories of language-based transformative semiotic practices in which processes of appropriation and goal achievement engender changes in individuals, use of semiotic tools, and social and cultural practices have close connections with studying writing genres. In particular, within studies of writing genres, the notion of transformative semiotic practice based on dialogism and heteroglossia reinforces the inherent impossibility of reproduction of genres as a vehicle for problematizing monolithic and static view of genres (Christie & Martin, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Dyson, 1993; Kamberelis, 1998; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Kress, 1999; Martin, 1992, 1993; Schleppegrell, 2004). The concepts “dialogic” and “heteroglossia” have been utilized in explaining linguistic phenomena of text production beyond linguistic concerns. Such a non-linguistic basis mirrors the expansion of the focus of research and theory beyond texts into contexts, to the actors, activities, and customs informing and informed by genres, which intensifies the critical role of contexts in understanding why and how language functions in certain ways. This functional perspective of social linguistics illuminates the intricate relationship between text and context in a way that shows how contextual heterogeneity directly informs the creation of particular language acts and the genres to which they are expected to conform.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theorists rooted in Malinowski’s cultural anthropology (Malinowski, 1994) and Hallidayian sociolinguistics (Halliday, 1978) explain that variations of language use and its genres are realizations of contexts of culture and situation. These contexts are realized into a system of linguistic options that are chosen to communicate meanings. The context of culture is associated with

ideologies, value systems, belief systems, knowledge systems, and identities as a general abstract concept, whereas the context of situation gives purpose and meaning to the fact that a text construes semiotic resources including linguistic and ethnographic resources (Christie, 2002; Eggins, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). Genres are culturally evolved ways of achieving goals that involve language as staged, goal-oriented, social processes, and ideologies that are realized and stabilized in the context of culture explain differences among genres in society (Martin & Rothery, 1986). In this approach to studying how language is structured for use, text is embedded these contexts, and language/text and context have interdependent relationships as seen in Figure 3.1 below, adapted from Eggins (1994, p. 75).

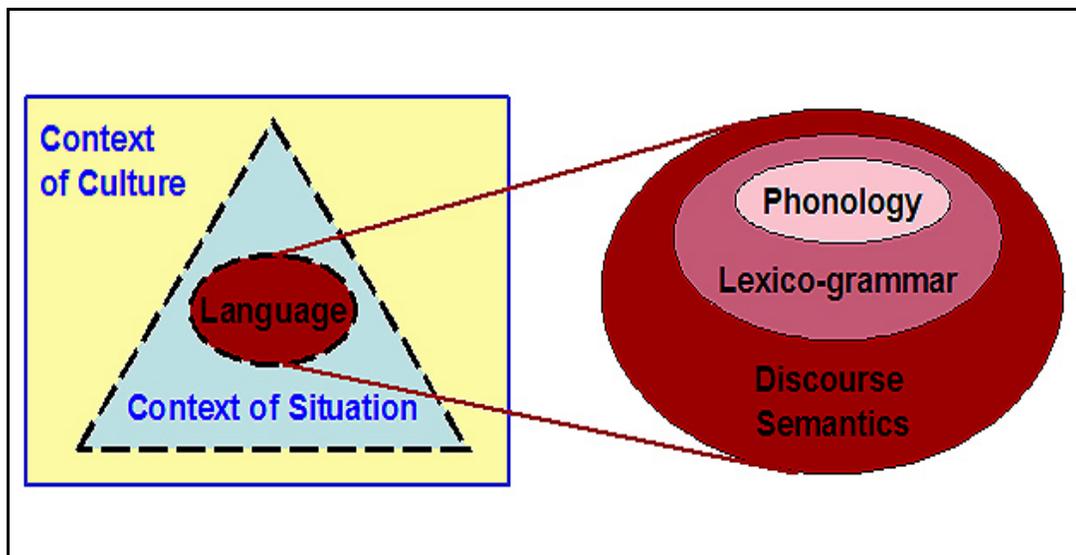


Figure 3.1: Language Embedded in Contexts

The cultural context shapes language use through genres, and three strata of language—discourse-semantics, lexico-grammar, and phonology—are realized in cultural and situational contexts. The immediate situational context has three variables including field, tenor, and mode that have predictable and systematic relationship with lexico-

grammatical patterns. These three variables are associated with the three types of meanings—experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings that “we want and need to make in interacting with each other in the world (Eggins, 1994, p. 81).” Hence, SFL scholars focus on these three variables as key aspects of the situational context, in studying how the semiotic system of language is structured to make meanings and purposes (Eggins, 1994, p. 76). Configuration of meanings associated with configuration of field, tenor, and mode in the immediate situational context explains the register of a text. Namely, register describes the situational context in which a text is produced (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

Register variables are realized as lexico-grammatical patterns at the clause level of a text and expressed as three types of meanings at the text level. Analysis of meanings that a text construes entails looking at the lexico-grammatical patterns of the clauses of the text. The field is realized through parts of the grammatical system, including patterns of process (e.g., material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational, and existential types respectively representing doing, conscious action, thinking, saying, describing, and being verbs ), participants (nouns), and circumstances (e.g., prepositional phrases and adverbs of time, manner, location, and reason). These types of grammatical patterns are called transitivity patterns that realize experiential meanings that express “who does what to whom when where why and how” (Eggins, p. 77). Tenor is expressed through patterns of mood and modality, and appraisals (adjectives and adverbs expressing attitude, evaluation, and intensification) that are associated with interpersonal meanings. Mode is realized through theme patterns, cohesion patterns, clause combining patterns, and references that express textual meanings (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004). It

has been reported that these three meanings that language constructs are associated with the three main functions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions—of all language uses. These functions work respectively for “relating experience,” “creating interpersonal relationships,” and “organizing information” (Eggsins, 1994, p. 78).

As such, the relationship between language use (its genres) and context is formed at both semantic and lexico-grammatical levels, as seen in Table 3.1, adapted from Eggsins (1994) and Schleppegrell (2004).

Table 3.1: Lexico-grammar, Discourse-semantics, and Context

		Genre			Context of culture
Register		Field	Tenor	Mode	Context of situation
Unit of analysis: Text	Discourse-semantics	Lexical relations	Conversational structure	Reference & conjunction	Language
		Experiential meaning	Interpersonal meaning	Textual meaning	
Unit of analysis: Clause	Lexico-grammar	Transitivity: -Participants (nouns) -Process (verbs) -Circumstances/ adverbs (prepositional phase of time, location, manner, reason, etc)	Mood (declarative, interrogative, or imperative clause) Modality (modal verbs/adjuncts expressing obligation or probability) Appraisal (expressions of evaluation, attitude, & intensification)	Theme (point of departure) Cohesive devices (reference, ellipsis, repetition) Clause combining (hypotaxis, parataxis, or embedded clause)	

SFL scholars have shown that varied linguistic choices are available for speakers/writers to realize unique situations of the context in which they produce an individual text. The selected choices reflect the goals, interests, positions, and audiences of authors in producing the text. Their perceptions of cultural and situational variations are expressed through the choices of lexico-grammar that speakers/writers make while making constructing meaning in a text. Their linguistic choices engender social and material consequences to speakers/writers according to the degree that the text is perceived to adhere to a discourse community's norms and generic expectations for a general language system (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The consequences have an impact on speaker's/writer's identity formation in discourse communities, which puts a positive or negative impact on students' academic and social trajectories as widely documented in L2 educational settings (Harklau, 1994; Olsen, 1997).

### **3.4 Appropriation in Second Language and Literacy Development**

The aforementioned sociocultural theories of learning and social semiotics emphasize borrowing, using, and transforming semiotic resources as choices for goal achievement. Their core perspective on meaning-making acts is that learners build experiences of new knowledge and identities while adopting, resisting, crossing, and adapting existing discourse patterns of semiotic practices. In studies of L2, this perspective on language learning and use has been discussed in terms of how English language learners resist and transform discursive language practices. Researchers explain how learners' backgrounds, including social roles, ethnic culture, race, and gender, lead them to have different subject positions in L2 use and to consequentially construct different L2 learning experiences (Daryle, 2004; Hruska, 2004; Gebhard, et al., 2007;

Ibrahim, 1999; Motha, 2006; Peirce, 1995; Rampton, 1995; Siegal, 1996; Stroud & Wee, 2007; Taylor, 2006; Tusi, 2007; Willett, 1995).

Research studies of ELLs' language learning and use show how learners' roles relating to family and school life led them to express their voices and to make different linguistic and discursive choices in L2 use for their social goal achievement (Gebhard, et al., 2007; Peirce, 1995; Tusi, 2007). In this line of research, Peirce (1995) investigated adult ESL students' experiences of using English in Canada through examination of diaries they wrote in an ESL course, along with interview data and questionnaires. In the course, the students were socialized to see their multiple social identities as members of a diverse society, beyond the identity of "non-native speaker." In her study, Pierce demonstrated a range of occasions in which two adult immigrant ESL students faced speaking English. Specifically, Pierce described these women as marginalized and silenced "non-native speaker" kitchen workers in fast food restaurants, who felt like "some broom" in the kitchen corner of their work place. They, however, were able to carry out different performances in English with their "native speaker" landlord and co-workers, while presenting themselves as assertive English speakers proclaiming their rights and protecting their families. Peirce explained that these women took social roles different from silenced "non-native" speakers and that they could defend their rights as workers, and protect their families as primary care givers. These two women had adopted different social roles and identities in their L2 interactions. The social roles that Martinez and Eva took led them to appropriate discourses of a strong parent and a member of a multicultural society. From the study, Peirce develops the concept of *investment*, which is closely associated with the social goals that a learner brings into L2 language learning

contexts, as a way of showing that the investment values learners configure in relation to goals for their life shape successes and failures in the development of their L2 abilities.

Similarly, in a recent article on children's L2 academic writing development, Gebhard and her colleagues (2007) corroborate the importance of acknowledging students' social and political goals in L2 academic literacy development. They introduce a classroom-based study in which English language learners were engaged in writing persuasive essays to reclaim their recess time, which had been taken away from them to make more time for test preparation. For their writing, the classroom teacher provided the students with explicit instruction on genre and register features of persuasive writing as a scaffold for the writing, drawing on systemic functional linguistics. In their persuasive essay project, the students took the roles of not only learners, but also of activists for changing their school schedule and policy regarding recess. Their persuasive essays enabled the school to have recess again, even though it was temporary; in their persuasive essays, they presented themselves as social agents drawing on the discourse of confident citizens who could solve problems for themselves.

Other studies (Rampton, 1995; Stroud & Wee, 2007) show how English language learners use their own interests in realigning their linguistic and cultural affiliations by borrowing and crossing languages, in learning the norms of mainstream English. For example, Rampton (1995) explores language use among youths of Indian, Pakistani, Caribbean, and Anglo backgrounds in urban multilingual neighborhoods in England who created their own multiethnic vernacular codes, crossing languages that include non-ethnically related languages. The adolescents intended to present themselves as members of a pan-ethnic community in which they adopted discourses of antiracism and

multilingualism to mock and destabilize power relations and social structures that constrained them into marginalized second language groups. In this study, Rampton conceptualizes the students' "language crossing" as an act of ethnic realignment, through which English language learners resist social hierarchies and transgress social linguistic and cultural boundaries to present themselves as members of a multiethnic group.

In a similar vein, Scollon and his colleagues (Scollon, Tsang, Li, Yung, & Jones 1998; Scollon, Bhatia, Li, & Yung, 1999) show a range of discursive roles that English language learners take on in appropriating other texts in producing texts. They examine sixty Hong Kong Chinese ESL students' written utterances relating to the transition of sovereignty from the British to Chinese government. Their examination demonstrates that the students' appropriation of multiple voices and lexis from various discourse communities and languages represents linguistic and cultural identities in the act of constructing their own discourses. In making lexical choices for their discursive articulations, learners take on such roles as principal, animator, and author to create their own voices in a specific second language context. The employed discursive choices maintain, transform, or create social and institutional roles or normative discourse practices. Further studying students' appropriation of other texts in relation to students' awareness of situational contexts, Scollon et al. (1999) examine informal texts of Hong Kong undergraduates in comparison to their formal texts, to investigate linguistic and cultural voices that students draw on in their textual production. Their findings show that the students hybridized Mandarin, Cantonese, and English into informal, casual texts such as comic strips and "infotainment" stories appropriating discourses of multilingualism. On the other hand, in the case of more formal texts such as news reports,

they utilized discourse norms aligned with academic writing and standard written Chinese grounded exclusively in Mandarin. The students drew on multiple texts such as advertisements, music and videos, reading materials, and conversations, and orchestrated various discourses within their texts.

In regard to race and ELLs' learning, it is reported that language learners' appropriation of discourse norms is an act of representing their racial identities (Ibrahim, 1999; Motha, 2006; Taylor, 2006). For example, Ibrahim (1999) has studied a group of continental African ESL students who were attending an urban high school in Ontario, Canada. As French-speaking immigrants or refugees in a Francophone area, the students spoke Black stylized English, appropriating lyrics and lexical styles of hip-hop and rap that they accessed through the media. Ibrahim maintains that the students' adoption of the marginalized discourse norms of Black stylized English was an act of resistance against standardized English and the racial discourses of society.

Pertaining to gender, researchers (Daryle, 2004; Hruska, 2004; Siegal, 1996; Willett, 1995) demonstrate that learners' adoption of gender norms constitute differing positions and discursive experiences in the social practices of language learning. Willett's (1995) ethnographic study offers a useful example of this point. She explores the language socialization processes of four ESL students, three girls and one boy who were socialized into the behavioral norms of the social and academic worlds of their first-grade classroom. Their class language and literacy block included a great deal of phonics and seatwork, and the students were expected to "do their own work" quietly. The three girls—Nahla, Yael, and Etham—transformed the class' behavioral norms in a way that met the girls' interests, while conforming to the class behavioral norms. They turned their

assigned individual work into quiet collaborative group work, which allowed the three of them to form bonds with one another. On the other hand, the boy student, Xavier, adopted behavioral norms from the boys' social world, and replaced the quiet individual work that is valued in the class academic world with individual but verbally confrontational behavior with other classmates, behavior that is appropriate in a male peer group that values competition. Along with his working-class minority background, Xavier's adoption of boys' behavioral norms over the class appropriate norm positioned him as a problematic student, contrary to the girls' positively established student status. Willett's study demonstrates that social practices of language development are laden with various discourses, and that learners adopt, appropriate, transform, or resist the discourses in relation to gender.

As these studies demonstrate, learners have active roles in learning a language and developing literacy, adapting and transforming discursive norms of social practices of learning to pursue personal academic and social interests and goals that exist beyond as well as within the school. Transformative language learning and use entail the personal reformulation of understanding of self and others in language-mediated interpersonal activities. Constructed personal reformulation in L2 learning provides learners with a range of discursive experiences, which may exert a positive or negative influence on their L2 language and literacy development.

### **3.5 Literacy, Discourse, and Identity**

From the perspective that the aforementioned studies maintain, in the development of L2 language and literacy, learners engage with ways of using, interpreting, and valuing spoken and written languages, while forming a range of

relationships with discourse patterns of a social group in the social practices of various life domains—e.g., home, peer, and school. Engaged in a range of discourse patterns, one learns the endorsed cultural and social norms of using texts in language/literacy events. The adopted discourse norms influence or mediate one's perceptual and conceptual boundaries, interests, worldviews, and patterns of thought. In this process, language learners come to reflect multiple norms that inform their social relationships and experiences.

In this vein, language and literacy practices become “identity construction practices” in which the perspectives of self and other are exchanged in the roles that learners take on as private, public, and social selves. While learning how to perform as members of a social group and simultaneously as individuals, language learners experience processes of questioning, constraining, acknowledging, or changing self against specific normative practices and other conflicting discourses shaping social life. Learner's discursive experiences shape their perspectives of the world through certain sets of discourses on and constructions of reality. Indeed, changing one's discourse pattern in learning a new form of language/literacy involves developing one's new identities. A particular worldview adopted by the culture of a social group is projected into expressions of one's personal and cultural identities (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 1996; Scollon & Scollon, 1981).

As such, developing a new form of literacy takes on discursive practices that support and structure one certain subject positions and experiences in particular domains of life through diverse social institutions that represent the interests of different discourse communities. The notion of second language and literacy practice is a conceptualization

of the relations between textual activity and social structure. Thus, concepts, conventions, and practices for language and literacy are ideological and political technologies that normalize a prevailing social formation (Gee, 1996, 2004; Street, 1984).

It is important to note that, from sociopolitical perspectives of literacy and identity development, discourses are not fixed. Similarly, the resistance, appropriation, or transformation that learners make to existing normative practices as social agents brings change to “normal” behaviors, beliefs, thoughts, interactions, and social relations in locally situated settings. A dialogic centrifugal force leads an alternative view of normalizing standard discourse to language use. To this end, critical discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2004; Luke, 1999) contend that discourses constructed in language practices are specific to a historical period and are subject to unavoidable resistance and change; this resistance and change is based on dialogic and dynamic competing discourses. This view is rooted in the social process of engaging with genres, from perspectives that are open to possibilities for change based on context. Specifically, it is noted that discursive changes occur when language production and interpretation takes “forms of transgression, crossing boundaries” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 96). However, as Foucault warns (McHoul & Grace, 1993), discourse change is not necessarily a positive or democratic social force, considering the ingrained political nature of humans.

From this perspective on the relationship between language and social structure, language and literacy are sites of struggle for different discourse communities that seek to establish their ways of speaking, reading, writing, thinking, interpreting, and valuing language as dominant norms. Developing the ability to use linguistic resources in standard ways approved by a social institution leads one to make sense of the world and

of human experiences in ways that the dominant group of the institution endorses and envisions. Namely, school-based reading and writing is one type of literacy among many others, which confirms the values and objectives of the dominant group of a society, and maintains their status quo. Supporting this point, it has been widely reported that students from non-dominant groups tend to fall short of mastery in school-based academic literacy that supports the dominant group's ideologies, or gain just enough mastery to continually position themselves as outsiders in using them (Gee, 1996, 2004; Gutiérrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995; Luke, 2003; Rogers, 2003; Street, 1984, 1995). Indeed, from this critical perspective, teaching academic genres is a political act. Syntactic and pragmatic modes of academic genres are considered political means for controlling and constraining social structures, more than semiotic resources for achieving communicative goals in social interactions.

### **3.6 Summary**

In conclusion, I propose that learning academic genres is a discursive practice in which learners engage with multiple discourses about acceptable thoughts, expressions, behaviors, and relationships that are congruent with the norms of a particular group. Learners reproduce, appropriate, or contest for their own interests and goals those discourses that are dialogic and potentially transformative. This language socialization as discursive practice has a range of impacts on their textual and social identities. Given that learning English as a second language is a matter of knowing a set of discourse practices, teaching ELLs a school-based literacy needs to be based on critical awareness of social and political issues of a standardized literacy. That is, teaching academic genres practice as a normative literacy could privilege a dominant group's ideologies. In the next chapter,

I will first portray a research site by discussing the contexts, participants, and methodology that set the foundation for this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

#### 4.1 Research Design

The purpose of this dissertation study is to examine how a group of ELL students in an urban school appropriated blog-mediated writing in learning academic genres for their academic and social goals. It draws on a research approach that explores the participants' activities and experiences in the contexts of both the class weblog and the language arts writing lessons, and interconnections between activities in these contexts. This methodological approach is derived from the theoretical framework employed by the study; that is, it focuses on transformative uses of blogging as a social and cultural practice in developing academic literacy for participants' various goals from their school, home, and peer worlds. Thus, although my main questions involve the participants' literacy practices on the weblog, I seek to place activities on the class weblog within the experiences of learning and using English in language arts writing classes.

In investigating how writing activities on a class weblog shaped or were shaped by the contexts, goals, and practices of L2 academic literacy, I use ethnography and systemic functional linguistics. This combination of ethnography and systemic functional linguistics examines meanings and linguistic features of blogging. Specifically, ethnography is used to look at the contexts, activities, experiences, and meanings grounded in ELLs' blog-mediated learning, and SFL is used to analyze linguistic features of blogging and changes in the participants' academic literacy development.

### **4.1.1 Ethnography**

I conducted an ethnographic study at the classroom site, especially in the section of the classroom designated as the language arts writing center. Ethnographic studies aim to understand a particular group's everyday social activities in specific contexts, and the meanings that people ascribe to the experience of those activities (Carbaugh, 2005; Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992; Carbaugh, Gibson, & Milburn, 1997; Egan-Robertson & Willett, 1998; Erickson, 1986; Hymes, 1972; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Egan-Robertson & Willett (1998) describe the theoretical underpinnings of the ethnographic tradition with the following key characteristics: "holistic contexts," the "recursive and cyclic process of research," and "group member perspectives" (pp. 5-7). Thus, in the present study, the social activities of pedagogical practices need to be understood within the classroom contexts in which they occurred and with respect to the teacher and students who experienced the activities and ascribed meanings to them. It is noteworthy that studying ELLs' emerging literacy practices on a weblog necessitated an application that diverges somewhat from more common ethnographic approaches, in that learning and using English in online environments generates additional contexts (e.g., Leander, 2003).

For a concrete understanding of contextualized cultural practices, Carbaugh et al. (1997) mention having both "a turtle's eye view" for the actual, concrete details of social activity, and "a bird's eye view" for scanning discursive terrains toward communicative scenes in cultural practices (p. 6). Reflecting both points of view, I participated in teaching the students how to use computers and the class weblog while facilitating their writing according to the guidelines the teacher provided, as well as managing the class

blog. My active participant's role allowed me to make a more thorough examination of interconnectedness among the activities and experiences that the participants had on the blog and in classroom interactions. I examine writing processes, communicative interactions, social relationships, and focal students' feedback exchanges with their audiences on the class blog, and seek to understand the students' electronic literacy practices within the contexts of their academic literacy development in language arts classes. I also conducted ongoing interviews with the students, to understand their beliefs, attitudes, and interpretations of the blogging activities toward learning academic genres.

Adoption of an ethnographic approach for examining actual activities, events, and uses of literacy can lead to "thick descriptions," rich and detailed descriptions that may eventually lead to valuable insights into cultural patterns (Geertz, 1973). In this regard, this approach enabled me to more thoroughly portray ELL students' literacy activities. I employed various ethnographic tools and techniques for collecting and interpreting data and for producing thickly recorded data (Davis, 1995). Also, I used triangulation across domains (e.g., videotaped class interactions, students' texts, comments on the blog, interviews, and fieldnotes) to add "rigor, breadth, and depth" to my investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 20003, p. 188).

In sum, I perceived ELLs' blog-mediated writing practice as sociocultural practice, and made thick descriptions by engaging with the participants on a daily basis over the course of a school year. This approach is meant to lead to an understanding of textual practice in the contexts "where it is lived, and according to the forms, styles, premises, and rules that are locally active, there" (Carbaugh et al., 1997, p. 3). Following the principles of Hymesian ethnography of communication (1972), in understanding

ELLs' blog-mediated communicative activities, I describe situated patterns of contextualized practice from the viewpoint of the students who experienced and ascribed meanings to the activities. Also, I strived to adhere to rigorous application of research methods, following "prescribed procedures for systematic data collection, analysis informed by all of the data, member and informant checks, and an openness to emerging theories and interpretations never before considered" (Purcell-Gates & Waterman 2000, p. 214). As such, the processes through which I theorize ELLs' blog-mediated writing as sociocultural practice are based on "cyclical movements between general sensitive cultural particulars" (Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992, p. 163) that capture Hymes' concept of "the ectic-1, emic, and etic-2 movements" approach to theorizing in ethnography<sup>1</sup> (Hymes, 1990, p. 412).

#### **4.1.2 Discourse Analysis**

I use discourse analysis to study how the focal students' appropriations of blog-mediated writing are related to the construction of social relationship with the audiences. I then investigate how the constructed relationships shaped the students' identities/selves within both the official and unofficial worlds of their social lives. Specifically, I draw on the methodological roots of interactional sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis (Bloome, Carter, Christian, & Otto, 2005; Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Gebhard, 2004, 2005; Goffman, 1959; Gumperz, 1982; Luke, 1995; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Willett, 1995).

I use interactional sociolinguistics to do a microanalysis of the focal students' interactions in the classroom and the class weblog, and to reveal the cultural assumptions and social orientations that they produced in their interactions. Through critical discourse

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed explanation is on the page 98 of this chapter.

analysis, I examine dynamic relationships between text and context and integrative processes of their social interactions for a range of academic and social goal achievements. Drawing on these frameworks, I analyze the linguistic, semiotic, and discursive features of texts through ethnographic inquiry based on participant observation of their writing processes and blogging on the Internet, and on interviews with the focal students.

In studying social interactions in the blog-mediated literacy practice, I critically examine the social beliefs and relationships that texts indexed and constructed. This examination shows contextualized viewpoints and values that the participants constructed from their social interactions and learning activities through blogging (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Gebhard, 2004, 2005; Luke, 1995). By taking this approach, I assume that contexts include the focal participants' learning situations and interpretations of their involvement with the activities. Contexts are rooted in relationships between a focal event and the field of action within which that event is embedded (Rex, Green, Dixon, & the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1998).

#### **4.1.3 Register Analysis of Texts**

As part of an examination of discourses in texts reflective of their contexts, I also conduct a register analysis, drawing on systemic functional linguistics (Christie, 2002; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Halliday, 1985; Martin & Rothery, 1986; Schleppegrell, 2004). I investigate how the focal students' blog-mediated textual practice was connected to the development of academic genre knowledge. Specifically, I look into how the linguistic choices that the students made in appropriating blogging for their goals supported them in developing knowledge

of academic genres and literacies. For genre analysis, I draw on an approach that looks at academic genres as social practices, rather than as static and normalizing textual forms and structures constraining individuals' communicative events. I consider learning of genres as learning dynamic text-forming processes, which entails knowledge of how "textual patterning and social patterning meet as genre" (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 7). In this view, genre includes both particular texts and practices, and its textual practice is conceptualized as a social, cultural, and historical phenomenon open to change and transformation contingent upon social purposes and functions of texts (Christie, 2002; Kamberelis, 1998; Martin, 1993).

From this perspective, I aim to analyze the focal participants' textual practices as a realization of collective efforts to write that the contexts of their text production afforded. To this end, I investigate the focal students' texts and exchanged feedback on the texts from the perspective of genre dynamism. I also examine how social interactions with different trajectories of engagement and interpretations of "good" writing would lead the participants to see that the linguistic and structural features of genres have different meanings and functions, contingent upon textual purposes and audiences.

I employ systemic functional linguistics to capture changes across the texts that the participants produce through the mediation of blogging, and to investigate their developing knowledge of academic genres. Specifically, I analyze registers (e.g., field, tenor, and mode) across drafts of the focal participants' texts, which illustrates how goal-based interactions in blog-mediated writing for academic literacy development were realized in their produced texts. Through the analysis of field, I demonstrate the student writers' ideational choices and the kinds of roles and positions they took, to explain the

ideas in their texts. For example, writers presented ideas as “actor, behavior, carrier, existent, sayers, or sensor” by way of certain processes, providing a specifically marked or unmarked circumstance (Schleppegrell, 2004, pp. 53-54; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007, p. 533). These analyses illustrate the transitivity of a text by showing experiential metafunctions, which could be expressed as “Who is doing what to whom, when, where, why, and how?” I explicate the students’ writer stance toward readers and the ideas they presented by examining the tenor of their texts, interpersonal metafunctions, which could be stated as “What kind of relationship does a writer have with her readers?” Specifically, I illustrate a range of dimensions of power, contact, and affective involvement that student writers had with their readers through an examination of mood, modality and appraisals of the students’ texts. Lastly, I analyze the mode of students’ texts, textual metafunctions, which could be described as “How does a writer structure her text for use?” Textual meaning is achieved through cohesive device choices, nominalization, and thematic organization. This mode analysis will show the grammatical metaphor (e.g., synoptic and incongruent linguistic choices), grammatical intricacy (e.g., numbers of clauses), and grammatical parallelism (e.g., repeated use of same grammatical structure) of texts in relation to discourses of written text (Eggins, 1993, pp. 76-80).

## **4.2 Context**

### **4.2.1 Researcher’s Roles**

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the current dissertation study was conducted in the second grade classroom of a teacher who was studying for her master’s degree and was enrolled in a teacher education program, the ACCELA Alliance (Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition). I participated in ACCELA as a doctoral

student project fellow while helping in-service student teachers to form questions, and to collect and analyze data for their inquiry-based research projects in ACCELA graduate courses and their own classrooms. Before my collaboration with Wanda, I had worked with teachers, helping them to conduct multimedia-based case studies in ACCELA courses as a technology assistant for three years. During the last year of her master's work, I worked with Wanda as her project assistant while helping her incorporate computer technologies into English language arts instruction.

While helping Wanda design a technology-incorporated curriculum for the next school year in summer 2005, I reviewed instructional technologies and curriculum frameworks for English language arts instruction with Wanda. While setting up her teaching website for students and their parents, we searched for a tool that would allow parents to not only read their children's writing but also to give feedback on the writing. I introduced a blog service to Wanda, set up her class blog, and helped her to design blog-mediated writing curricular units in compliance with the guidelines of her school district for using instructional technologies.

When the school year began in the fall of 2005, I helped Wanda to introduce her blog-mediated writing curriculum to her new students and their parents at a school open house event in her second grade classroom. During the event, Wanda showed the class the blog through laptops and an in-focus project that the ACCELA Alliance had loaned to her class. This event allowed me to naturally become a class member and to work with Wanda as a teaching partner for her language arts instruction on a daily basis throughout the school year. As such, in addition to being a researcher, I came to have several other roles including teaching partner for language arts writing instruction, technology

consultant for communicating with district personnel to meet district technology guidelines, computer teacher for her students, and Wanda's project assistant for her inquiry project. In the following section, I introduce in detail the ACCELA Alliance, the Fuentes Elementary School, Wanda's second grade class, and her language arts component.

#### **4.2.2 The ACCELA Alliance**

The ACCELA Alliance is a federally funded professional development partnership between the University of Massachusetts Amherst and two local urban school districts. ACCELA was developed to support ELLs' academic literacy development, and to provide professional development for mainstream teachers. It also promotes collaboration among teachers, administrators, and teacher educators in critically understanding and responding to the combined influences of No Child Left Behind legislation, statewide curriculum frameworks, state exams, and the passage of an English-only referendum. It seeks to provide equitable teaching and learning for ELLs in mainstream classes, and to increase academic achievement in low performing schools through a collaborative partnership among schools, homes, and communities.

ACCELA was funded through several federal and state grant programs, including a Title VII Department of Education Career Ladder Grant, a Title III Department of Education National Professional Development Grant, and a Title II Massachusetts Teacher Quality Grant. Faculty members of the Language, Literacy, and Culture (LLC) program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst direct an inquiry-based bachelor's and master's programs. To date, ACCELA has funded approximately 65 teachers in working toward master's degrees in education and earning state licenses in reading and in

teaching ELLs (see ACCELA Website; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Willett & Rosenberger, 2005).

The conceptual framework that ACCELA takes is that language is “a dynamic system of choices” drawing on systemic and functional perspectives of language learning and teaching. It emphasizes that teachers need to teach characteristics that are different from everyday language, from the perspective that developing academic language means more than acquiring vocabulary. Another important theoretical foundation for ACCELA is supporting students’ “home and peer ways of using language” in developing school-valued ways of using language. It “seek[s] out and value[s] the contributions made by the communities and families of the ELLs to the schools and communities of Western Massachusetts” (ACCELA Website). In particular, it aims to better support ELLs in acquiring academic language and content by engaging in “collaborative and systematic inquiry with teachers,” and drawing on “the knowledge, skills, and expertise of all stakeholders” (Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Gebhard, Willett, Jimenez, & Piedra, in press; Willett, 2005; Willett, Harman, Hogan, Lozano, & Rubeck, 2007).

The teachers who were enrolled in the ACCELA programs started their master’s study with an inquiry into their teaching practices and their English as a Second Language state licensure. They took ACCELA on-site master’s courses that were designed around state and national standards for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, as well as local issues. Throughout their master’s courses, the teachers designed curricular units to support ELLs’ language development and academic achievement, and implemented them in their teaching practices with support from ACCELA faculty members and doctoral project assistants. In addition, they proceeded to

research those practices, teamed with a doctoral researcher who helped them to collect and analyze data from their teaching sites. To make curricula engaging and culturally responsive, they employed various new approaches to their teaching practices—e.g., incorporation of Puerto Rican children’s literature, hip hop, and computer technologies. ACCELA teachers shared the knowledge, expertise, and skills they had developed through their research work in national conferences and in regular ACCELA dialogues in which they could reflect on “implications of their work for teaching and learning across institutional contexts” with district administrators and other teachers.

Wanda Simpson, whose curriculum innovations through computer technologies were a basis for the current dissertation, was an ACCELA in-service student teacher. During the 2005-2006 school year, she taught both mainstream and ELL students in an second grade inclusion class which incorporated a blog and other computer technologies in teaching school-mandated writing genres. She taught in an urban elementary school, Fuentes Elementary School located in one of the ACCELA partnership school districts, and several of her colleagues in the school were enrolled in the ACCELA graduate program.

#### **4.2.3 Fuentes Elementary School**

The Fuentes Community School is located just off a major interstate highway connecting Vermont and Connecticut that passes through Greenville, Massachusetts. Greenville is a mid-size city with a linguistically and culturally diverse population. For example, according to US Census reports for 2006, 32.4% of the population was Latino and 20.9 % African American. 28.5% of the population spoke languages other than

English<sup>2</sup>. A majority of its population was economically challenged in comparison with the national average<sup>3</sup>. In 2006, its median household annual income was \$31,046, and its median house value was \$150,100. About 24.8% of the families were below the poverty level.

The public schools of Greenville educate a linguistically and culturally diverse population from low-income families. According to data from the school district website, Greenville had approximately 26,000 students enrolled in 47 schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Demographically, 50.8% of its public school students were identified as Latino, 25.4% as African-American, 17.6% as White, and the remainder as Other. More than 75% of all public school students live in households at or below the federal poverty line.

Placed in a working-class section of Greenville, Fuentes is a big urban elementary school. During the 2005-2006 school year, it served 698 students from grades PK-5 with 63 teaching staff members, including teachers from outside “core academic areas.” The long, pale yellow two-story concrete building is surrounded by red-brick factory buildings and rusted railroads covered in bushes. A small sand circle with slides and seesaws in the middle of the school parking lot tells one that this concrete building might be a school. Its old name, “Fuentes Magnet School,” is written on one side of the building facing a major highway, showing the shifting educational movements the school has endured<sup>4</sup>. On the other side of the highway accessible through underpasses, small ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> In 2006, 14.8% of the US population was Latino, and 12.4% African American. 19.7% of the population spoke languages other than English.

<sup>3</sup>In 2006, the U.S. median household annual income was \$48,451, and the median house value was \$185,200. About 9.8% of the U.S. families were below poverty level.

<sup>4</sup> In the fall of 2006, the school became a Montessori school.

Latino stores are clustered with three- or four-story apartment buildings in which many of the Fuentes School students live.

There are some differences between the racial and socioeconomic profiles of Fuentes School and that of the city school district. Fuentes serves a predominantly Latino population in a low-income urban area. According to school demographic data for 2005-2006, 75.5% of the school population is Latino, and 90.3% of the students received free or reduced price lunches. Students who speak English as a second language made up 34.5% of the school population, and 26.1% of the students were categorized as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The school is designated “under-performing” by MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) scores and by the No Child Left Behind guidelines. It did not achieve yearly annual progress objectives due to attendance issues.

In regard to computer technology, at that time this study conducted, the school did not have a computer lab and the students did not have computer classes. After this year-long study, however, I learned from Wanda that the school already had two carts of 16 laptops through its participation in the Reading First program, and that the principal allowed the teachers to use the laptops only for grading. She commented that teachers never thought of using the laptops in their instruction. The classrooms had two Apple G3 computers without Internet connections even though the school had access to Internet service. The computers were quite outdated, with keyboards that did not fit with current models because the key configuration of that model was different from that of the current G4 Mac computers. The school website, however, reported that the ratio of computer access was 10 students per modern computer. This information was different from a

report of the district-wide computer ratio, which was 4.3 students per modern computer and 82 percent classroom Internet access.

#### **4.2.4 The Second Grade Classroom and Learning Centers**

Fuentes School classrooms shared a large open “pod<sup>5</sup>” in four groups divided by partitions, which caused all the classes of any pod to be constantly exposed to the talking, laughing, singing, and assorted noises of all the other classes in the pod. The second grade class in which I conducted this study shared a pod with two third grade classes. The other left quarter of the pod was often used as a meeting room that had a table and three chairs, and wheelchairs for disabled children studying in a class across the hallway. The second grade classroom was located at the end of the second floor hallway, and organized based on five different learning areas—well suited for the class morning circle time of language arts lessons.

As a first whole class activity for the day, the teacher, Wanda Simpson, started the morning routine—e.g., greeting, telling the date, learning phonics or vocabulary, and singing class songs Wanda had composed for each month of the calendar. During the morning routine, the students called “Simpson Kids” sat on a gray rug patterned with black triangle and rectangular shapes in a corner of the classroom, which was surrounded by partition boards decorated with a calendar, basal book authors, student writings, and a small whiteboard. After singing their monthly song, they left the rug area toward the center areas. In groups of four or five, they dispersed into the learning centers, taking up sections or corners of the classroom; each corner and wall of the classroom was filled

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<sup>5</sup> The physical structure of classrooms in Fuentes Elementary School shows the shifting educational movements the school has gone through since the 1990s. This trend in classroom structure was designed to provide teachers with team-teaching opportunities and more control in their curricular decisions.

with pieces of Wanda’s craftsmanship reminiscent of home decorations—e.g., hand-made curtains, bag covers for each student chair, pillows, knitted sofa blanket, area rugs, attractively displayed students’ drawings and pictures, nicely decorated learning resources for all the content areas, and antique-style lamps.

During morning circle time, the students were engaged in daily editing, independent reading, guided reading, and writing on the computers in rotation. Some first started to read self-selected books while seated in comfortably stuffed “authors’ chairs,” or while leaning against big throw pillows in the class library, surrounded by four big book cases filled with assorted books according to genre, and a glass panel facing the highway exit. Others started with daily work at their desk or typing their writing on computers at the writing center desks, referring to the writing organizers posted on the wall. When the students spoke too loudly or made noises that might interrupt the other classes of the pod, Wanda stopped her guided reading lesson with a group of students sitting on stools around a long table, and started to walk to other centers to lower the volume.

#### **4.2.5 Participants**

##### **4.2.5.1 The Second Grade Students and Focal Students**

The class was intended for students with the highest first grade academic scores. The school principal applied the tracking system for the second and third grader students, believing that teaching to academic proficiency levels would lead to increases in school achievement levels on the state-mandated MCAS standardized tests the students would take when they reached the fourth grade. Most of the students used English as a primary language only in school, since the majority of the students’ parents spoke English as a

second language with limited proficiency. Three of the students were ESL students and four of them were repeating the second grade. All of them had no or limited experience with computers and Internet-related activities.

In the class, twelve of the students—a clear majority—were Latino, three were African Americans, one was White, and one was Asian American. The number of students fluctuated; the class started with seventeen students at the beginning of the school year, two arrived in the middle of the year, and four moved to other schools by the end of the year. All of them received free lunches, and 30 percent of them had computers outside school, according to the survey Wanda conducted at the beginning of the school year.

Although I worked with all the students in the class, because of the scope of the dissertation study, I selected three students, one boy and two girls—Jose, Diany, and Maria—who were ELLs with different English proficiencies. They did not have computer experience prior to this project, which enabled me to study how learning experiences with computer technologies could shape or be shaped by developing and using academic literacies. All the students belonged to the same group for Language Arts center activities. Their group was a low level group for ESL students and academically challenged limited English proficiency (LEP) students.

***Diany:***

Diany was a seven year-old girl when she participated in this study. She spoke English and Spanish, and Spanish was her home language but her command of English was stronger. Her mother had little English proficiency, and was able to speak only isolated words. She was very social and liked to talk and hang around with her friends. Her writing often included friendship-related topics, and in her

writing she often expressed her apologies, sympathy, or support for her friends. For example, in the letter writing activity the class did at the start of second grade, Diany wrote Maria an apology for not lending Maria her red shirt. Her reading and writing proficiencies were below average. At the beginning of the semester, her score on a standardized reading test for the school district, DIBELS<sup>6</sup>, was 47 out of 100, which led Wanda to be curious about how Diany had been assigned to her class for advanced students at the beginning of the school year. In terms of experiences with computers, she did not have any computer experience before this project and did not have a computer at home.

***Jose:***

At the time of this study, Jose was a seven-year-old Puerto Rican boy and the youngest among the six children in his family. He spoke Spanish at home and started to learn English as a second language from kindergarten. He was the smallest boy in the class and had good relationships with his classmates in the class, working and playing with many different boys and girls in official and unofficial class activities without any difficulties finding partners or troubles in collaboration. In addition, he was diligent about schoolwork and well mannered with his teachers and other classmates, which led Wanda and other teachers to compliment his behavior. For example, a third-grade teacher who shared the Pod with Wanda and also worked for Master degree with ACCELA praised Jose's

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<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s-80s, Deno and colleagues through the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota developed DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) based on measurement procedures for Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM). DIBELS measures phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency with connected text, vocabulary, and comprehension of early literacy skills.

exemplary engagement in schoolwork to me, and commented on his active participations in class activities and well-done homework.

His English language proficiency was low compared with other classmates, and he belonged to a low level group for reading and writing of the class. His score on the standardized reading test for the school district, DIBELS, was 35. In terms of computer expertise, he had had little experience with computers, even though his family had a computer at home. His parents had limited expertise in using computers and Internet resources and did not support Jose' blog-mediated writing as much as they did with other schoolwork and class events such as open-house meeting, publication party, and Thanksgiving lunch. His mother has been working as a volunteer at Fuentes for years.

***Maria:***

Maria turned into nine-years old while I was conducting this study. She was the eldest among three girls, and her family lived next to her grandparents' house and had close relationships with her cousins. She was a caring sister to her younger sisters, and an appreciative daughter who described herself as a "lucky and spoiled" child that had her family's good care and generosity. She spoke Spanish as home language, but she had a better command of English. She did not have any direct computer experiences before the project and had no computer at home even though she said that she had observed her aunt and grandmother who worked at a local school using computers. Her family, however, did not have a computer and her mother had access to computers and the Internet at her temporary work place, a local bank.

In school, Maria was two-years older than her classmates—turning nine in the middle of this study— and the tallest and biggest among the girl students. She was repeating the second grade due to her low reading and writing test scores. For example, she gained 56 out of 100 on DIBELS test, a standardized reading test for the school district. She was placed into a low literacy proficiency group among her classmates with Diany and Jose.

Relevant background information of the students is provided below along with Table 4.1 that summarizes the presented information.

Table 4.1: Relevant Background Information on Focal Students

	Age	English proficiency (in the class reading/writing group)	Home language	Length of stay in the U.S. at the beginning of the study	Computer at home/ computer experiences at the beginning of the study
Diany	7	Low level	Spanish	U. S. born Transient between Puerto Rico & U. S. in early years of life U. S. K-1 schooling	No/None
Jose	7	Low level /ESL Student	Spanish	US born Transient between Puerto Rico & U. S. in early years of life U. S. K-1 schooling	Yes/limited
Maria	9	Low level/ repeating 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Spanish	U. S. born Puerto Rican U. S. K-1 schooling	No/None

#### 4.2.5.2 The Teacher: Wanda Simpson

Wanda Simpson is a White teacher with approximately twenty years of teaching experience. Before Fuentes Elementary School, she taught in a wealthy suburban school

district in a Midwestern state. After moving to the Greenville school district, a striking difference she found between the current urban school context and her former suburban school was limited access to material resources and lack of support for academic achievement. For example, the Fuentes School did not have a computer lab or computer classes for the students, and opportunities to use Internet resources for their learning and to develop computer literacy for their future education and careers were non-existent. Also, current educational policies to achieve school reform through standardized high-stakes tests rendered her linguistically and culturally diverse students few opportunities to use their backgrounds in schoolwork. In response, she strove to make her curriculum relevant and responsive to the home language practices in which they were engaged.

In teaching academic genres, Wanda provided the students with new learning experiences and led to increased engagement on the part of students in school-based writing. As a veteran teacher, she had a firmly developed belief that students need to master school-mandated genres for their academic success as a prerequisite for having a chance to “play with the language” for their own personal interests and goals. Following this belief, she designed her curriculum in a way that unpacked the demands of academic language for linguistically and culturally diverse students, and provided them with access to the “language of power” that is valued in school. Her instruction aimed to support development of knowledge and skills critical to academic literacy through connections between students’ interests and home experiences and schoolwork. She was committed to incorporating her students’ interests and goals into teaching what second graders are typically asked to read and write, as specified in state curriculum frameworks, and as assessed by high-stakes exams (e.g., Gebhard, Habana Hafner, & Wright, 2004; Gebhard,

Harman, & Seger, 2007; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007). In particular, she wanted to teach ELLs to read and write grade-level texts by providing them with opportunities to communicate about topics they cared about and to write for audiences that mattered to them.

Regarding computer literacy, because of her belief that having expertise in computer technology was critical for success in future education and careers, Wanda had already been providing opportunities for her students to use computer technology. For example, prior to the current blog project, she applied computer technologies in her writing instruction and created a class magazine, *Bart*, made up of students' typed essays, illustrations, and photos. Once in a while, she and her students searched online for pictures, words, and people to help their understanding of new words and to gather information for guided reading. She also allowed them to study by themselves with self-study programs on their textbook website. Wanda extended computer use beyond academics, and taught the students how to use Internet resources for their everyday lives. For example, the students rotated responsibilities for getting daily local weather information online for the class and wrote forecasts on the board. Through a greater use of computer technologies in her classroom, she aimed to support students' academic literacy development as well as everyday life.

#### **4.2.5.3 The Project Assistant: “Ms. Dong-shin”**

At the time that I conducted this study, I was a doctoral student in the LLC program who had been working as an ACCELA project assistant for three years prior to working with Wanda for this blog project. My research focused on using computer technologies in language and literacy education. Before starting my graduate studies in

the United States, I taught English as a foreign language in secondary schools in South Korea for about six years. Wanda addressed me by my first name while we were working together in her classroom; the students started to call me “Ms. Dong-shin.”

Collaborating With Wanda, I critically analyzed state and district curricular frameworks, and designed blog-mediated curricular units that aligned with mandated frameworks. At the same time, I also helped Wanda to form research questions regarding curricular interventions involving blog-mediated writing, collecting data, and analyzing changes in student work over the course of school year. During the school year, I presented our collaborative work in local and national conferences.

#### **4.2.6 Wanda’s Blog-Mediated Writing Curriculum**

##### **4.2.6.1 Writing Genres: Recounts and Persuasive Essay**

The writing genres mandated by the state and district curriculum standards for Wanda’s second graders to learn included letter writing, recounts, expository writing, reports, and persuasive essays. Recounts and persuasive essay were the main components that I will explore in this dissertation study, to capture changes in students’ academic literacy development over time. Recount writing was a starting point for students to share life stories, and the persuasive essay was a culmination of an activity intended to bring computers to their school. Also, recounts and persuasive essays were curricular units in which students wrote about stories or issues that mattered in their lives. I will, however, draw on relevant data for my analysis from curricular units for the other genres to obtain grounded data.

The genre of recounts is a high frequency genre, as it is an entry point genre for school-based writing. When the genre was introduced to the students, they were invited

to write about “unforgettable stories” from their lives. Given the degree to which second graders, including ELLs, are routinely asked to produce these kinds of narratives, both orally and in writing, Wanda made this genre the centerpiece of their work. A recount is simply a narrative retelling of a sequence of events in chronological order (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2006; Derewianka, 2000; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004). The difference between narratives and recounts is that there is no complicating action and resolutions of problems at the end of recounts. The students were invited to write their life stories by drawing on an organizational structure that included an orientation (e.g., introduction of participants, time, and place), a series of events, and personal comments. In terms of register features, there is an emphasis on action verbs and on following the order in which the events unfolded.

Persuasive writing is an advanced form of writing genre that students are often asked to write when they reach higher grades. Wanda planned writing of persuasive essays as the last writing curricular unit at the end of school year, after all the other writing genres in the curriculum had been taught. The previous writing units that the students had learned were introduced earlier to be scaffolds for persuasive writing. For the persuasive essay, the students wrote grant letters to computer companies, in order to bring computers into their school and address a lack of resources. Wanda explicitly taught organizational structure, drawing on a textual orientation of thesis statement, argument, and restatement of position. Its register features are based on use of action verbs and logical sequences. Register features of recounts and persuasive essays are summarized in Table 4.2 below, adapted from Schleppegrell’s description of “genres of school” (2004, p. 85).

Table 4.2: Register Features of Recounts and Persuasive Essay

Genre	Purpose	Register Features
Recounts	Retelling a sequence of events about personal experience	Material & behavioral verbs Personal pronouns and typically one actor Additive & temporal conjunctions Past tense
Persuasive Essay	Argue why one's position has been proposed from more than one arguments presented for the judgment	Nominal Expression Modality to present claim as possibilities Reasoning verbs Conjunctions for logical sequence

#### 4.2.6.2 Incorporation of a Blog

To incorporate computer technologies into her instruction, Wanda first needed to provide Wanda's students and their families with access to computer technologies. Like many urban schools serving poor communities, Wanda worked in a building with a limited number of computers, and much of what was available was outdated or in need of repair. Moreover, only thirty percent of the students in the class reported having regular access to a computer in their homes. Tackling the issue of limited resources, Wanda made an effort to secure access to computers for her students in and out of schools. For example, she borrowed eight laptops from ACCELA for the academic year, and also contacted a local library within walking distance of the school, to see if the students and their families could use these more updated facilities. The class went to the local public library on Friday mornings and conducted language arts class there throughout the school

year, along with instruction on using computers. Students and their families had access to computers outside school for the duration of the school year. Wanda and I also continuously worked with the school principal and the district technology coordinator to ensure that classroom practices complied with district policies, and were responsive to administrative concerns (e.g., issues surrounding appropriate content and confidentiality).

In regard to creating a class blog, the class used a web browser-based blog provided for free commercially, with easy-to-use templates and design choices. The class blog site added a password protection function to its login condition to prevent any possible issues related to identity theft. Using these readily available resources, Wanda created a class blog for her second graders called “Simpson Kids,” as seen in see Figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1: Class Weblog

Wanda incorporated blogging into her language arts lesson through a writer’s workshop approach to guiding students in the recursive process of generating ideas, receiving explicit instruction, drafting, receiving feedback, and revising. This approach

was an extension of a genre approach to teaching school-based writing, and reflected what Wanda had learned in ACCELA graduate courses about supporting ELLs' academic language and literacy development by drawing on systemic functional linguistics. It was also connected to her belief in the need to explicitly teach genre features to her ELL students who did not have school-valued literacy experiences. Blogging was a part of the students' everyday regular writing routine rather than an add-on in learning academic genres. The students followed the step-by-step writing process illustrated in Figure 4.2, with explanations below:

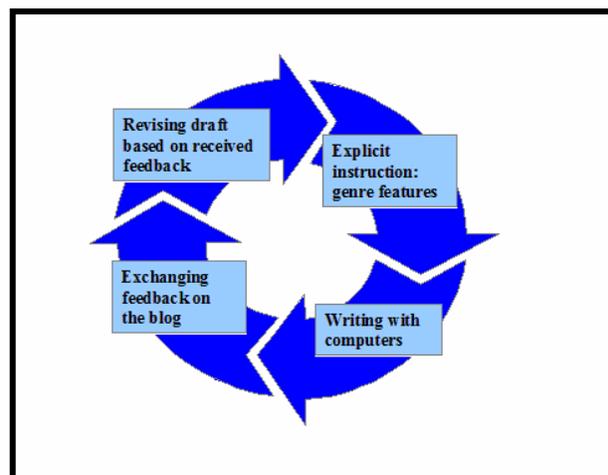


Figure 4.2: Blog-Mediated Writing Procedures

***Explicit instruction:***

Wanda explicitly taught the students how to brainstorm ideas and to move their thoughts and ideas into written texts through the use of six traits<sup>7</sup> of writing that had been used to teach writing before her study with ACCELA. This six-trait approach is conceptually different from what she had learned in ACCELA

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<sup>7</sup> Spandel and Stiggins in 1990 at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed this method outlining how teachers could teach students “specific criteria and for writing” and “perceptions of their writing skills”. The six traits include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

courses, in that it judges the quality of texts based on prescribed autonomous criteria without considering contexts. In scaffolding register features of recounts and persuasive essays, she modified the six traits approach in a way that shows how writers' lexico-grammatical choices could be varied according to the purposes and audiences of texts. She also scaffolded the writing genres with her own writing sample, a joint writing with the whole class, and several completed stories from her previous class.

***Composing with computers:***

The students drafted their stories directly on the laptop computers or on paper, depending on their preferences. While they were composing their texts, Wanda offered mini-lessons regarding the differences between oral and written language (e.g., using periods as opposed to chained sentences with the word *and*), expanding the kinds of word choices students made and attending to writing conventions that support readers in making sense of their postings (e.g., spelling).

***Exchanging feedback on the blog:***

When students were finished with their first drafts, their recounts were posted on the blog for feedback. At this stage, Wanda provided students with instruction on how to provide feedback to their peers online, by attending to both the contents and the linguistic features of their classmates' texts. She encouraged the students to provide feedback on contents first and then linguistic features.

***Revising Drafts Based on Received Feedback:***

The students revised their first drafts by drawing on the feedback comments they received from the audiences: their peers, teachers, family members, and librarians.

Students' subsequent drafts were then posted to the class blog for additional cycles of feedback and publication.

Engaging with this process of writing, the students produced their texts by using linguistic choices appropriate to their purpose and audience that were recommended by readers of the class blog.

### **4.3 Gathering Data**

The data I collected for this study include Wanda's preparation for her language arts curriculum, delivery of the curriculum, and review of the delivered curriculum. My data collection occurred throughout the school year and can be divided into three stages. These stages explain the cyclical processes that I draw on to theorize the focal students' blog-mediated writing processes. The theorizing processes that I use are based on the four cyclic phases proposed by Carbaugh and Hastings (1992, p. 163):

“Phase 1. Basic orientation: assumptions, vocabulary, and subsequent character of communication.

Phase 2. Activity theory: general theory of a specific communication activity, practice or dimension of practice.

Phase 3. Situated theory: theory of a socioculturally situated communication practice.

Phase 4. Evaluation and /or Evolution of theory: Evaluating the relationship between the situated theory and the basic orientation/ activity theory, and modifying the theory when necessary.”

As Carbaugh and Hastings explain, these cyclic processes could be described in relation to the fieldwork of an ethnographic study. Formulated prior to fieldwork, phases 1 and 2

explain general orientation and theories of a specific communication activity. Formulated during or after some fieldwork, phases 3 and 4 include studying and evaluating a socioculturally situated communication practice. The theorizing processes that I used for this study are explained in relation to my fieldwork, as seen below.

#### **4.3.1 Phases 1 and 2: Orientation and Studying General Theories before Entering the Field (May-August 2005)**

Before entering the field, I prepared for my fieldwork drawing on what current studies have found regarding computer-mediated language and literacy development. To brainstorm ways to incorporate computer technologies in language arts instruction, Wanda and I had a first meeting in late May 2005. The meeting focused on how to incorporate instructional technologies into her writing instruction by using the laptop computers that would be available during the next school year. She brought to the meeting a class “magazine,” *Bart*, that she produced as a language arts writing project with her students as a sample of her computer technology use for teaching. She also expressed a wish to share her students’ work—e.g., writings, drawings, and class songs—with their parents. In the first meeting, I suggested developing a class home page on which she could post her students’ writings and drawings in the format of a class webzine. Following the first meeting, I met Wanda several times in July 2005 to create a web page that contained samples of all second grade writing genres. Our wish to exchange ideas for posted student texts led us to seek out an instructional tool for communication such as a weblog or a web course tool. In August, I looked for a weblog suited to the project, and Wanda continued to finish her web page.

During this time, the data I collected were closely related to her webpage development. They included previous students’ writing samples and illustrations for the

texts, her own writing samples, illustrations for accompanied texts, and the writing organizers she developed for various academic genres. I also saved e-mail exchanges between Wanda and myself, to organize meetings and notes from the meetings.

#### **4.3.2 Phase 3: Studying a Socioculturally Situated Practice in the Field (September 2005-June 2006)**

When the new school year started, I started my fieldwork in Wanda's school site, and visited her class on a daily basis. I observed their "morning circle time" and the period for language arts that lasted from around 9:30 to 11:30, just before lunch, and often stayed until math and science periods after lunch that ended at 3:00. In the afternoon, when the students studied math and science with Wanda, I worked on managing the class blog while watching the students studying math and science. My daily observations in the field varied from day to day, but lasted 3 to 4 hours on average. This daily work allowed me to collect grounded data about the students' blog-mediated writing practice and to theorize their practice.

For my data collection, before bringing laptops to the classroom and videotaping their class activities, I observed their learning in four different centers of language arts classes to establish my presence among the students. At the end of September, I started to videotape the students reading books with Wanda in the guided reading center. During this time, I tested a class weblog and helped Wanda in preparing to introduce the class web page and the class weblog to the students' parents. I met the parents at an open house, introduced the plan to use laptops and a weblog, and asked for their permission to conduct the study. After the open house meeting, I started to work with the students, teaching them how to use the laptops and Microsoft Word, and then how to use the blog as a way of giving feedback on each other's writing. I was in charge of running the

writing center in the classroom and at the library as well as managing the class blog, while Wanda ran the guided reading center. In doing so, I followed the guidelines that Wanda provided to the students. Also, I had regular meetings with Wanda during lunch breaks and often on weekends to discuss students' writing processes and possible issues that might arise. After working with the class for six months as an active participant, I gained trust to the extent that Wanda called and asked me to take care of the class when she was sick, and the students wanted me to teach them the rest of the day, when I left the class after their language arts block, instead of their substitute teacher.

Throughout the year, I worked with all the students at the writing center as a "computer writing teacher" and as a researcher, while collaborating with the teacher as a "teaching partner." In January, I observed and participated in writing on the class weblog. While becoming a member of the class and gaining trust from the students and the teacher, I identified potential focal participants for the study. The participants that I selected were identified as ELLs who were academically challenged because of their limited academic literacy. Despite focusing on only these three students, I received permission for the study from all the other students' parents as well, in that the focal students' interactions in class and on the weblog often involved the other students. I did not inform those three students separately of my research interest, to decrease possible disturbances of their learning and to create greater accessibility to their interactions with other students. Every student in the class thought that I was researching their writing and learning activities with computer technology, and I managed a formal or informal interview session with all the students based on the same research questions, asking about their learning experiences.

During this period, my data collection was closely related to the curriculum units for writing that were delivered to the students during that school year. The data set (see Table 4.3) is organized based on the texts that the students produced for each genre. I documented their writing practices from production to dissemination on the class blog. The collected data for each curriculum unit include the focal students' texts, exchanged feedback from the class blog, organizers, videotaped classroom interactions around text production practices, teaching materials, and school documents. I made field notes and voice recordings about observed elements that needed to be documented beyond the videotaped class interactions. In addition to the interviews with the students, I conducted an interview with the teacher about her teaching experiences. The interview with the teacher was done after the school year at her home. All the interviews with the students were conducted in English at school after lunch and were recorded. I also collected images of the classroom, the students' test scores, and other relevant background information such as family, home language, and computer experiences.

#### **4.3.3 Phase 4: Evaluating the Socioculturally Situated Practice during and after Fieldwork (September 2005-December 2006)**

After the school year ended, I continued to analyze the collected data and to theorize the students' blog-mediated practice in learning academic genres. Also, meeting with Wanda occasionally after the school year was over, I discussed conference presentations that we planned to deliver together. I shared my interpretations of the data analysis with her, to elicit her opinions. In our meetings, we also discussed her current use of the weblog, uses of the school laptops, and the students' writing. In the fall of 2006, Wanda became the reading specialist for the entire school, and did not have her own class. However, she continued to keep her own classroom and to blog with her

former students in different third grade classes for about thirty minutes before their morning work started. Her use of the weblog was redesigned around reading response activities in which she posted questions for the students about the books they read. During this time, the students used two laptops, one of which they had won from their grant writing class project. Wanda reported to me that the students developed expertise in using computers and blogging to the extent that they did not need adult help. After the principal of Fuentes Elementary School moved to another school, the teachers were given access to the school's laptops, as well. I also participated in blogging by answering questions and exchanging comments with the students.

During this period, in addition to evaluating blog-mediated literacy development to theorize their practices, I was able to collect data related to our conference presentations and Wanda's literature response activities on the class weblog. The collected data include presentation slides and handouts, my notes of our discussions, e-mail exchanges to organize meetings, and the comments posted on the class weblog.

#### **4.4 Analytical Frameworks**

The methods of analysis that I use to understand the relation between the focal students' appropriations of writing conventional genres on a blog and development of their academic literacies are discourse analysis, and register analysis based on systemic functional linguistics (for children's appropriation of conventional writing genres, see Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). The unit of analysis that I draw on in this study is blog-mediated writing texts bounded by contexts of each curricular unit of recounts and persuasive essay. In this study, "text" includes writings produced by students in each

genre that were posted in the class blog, as well as comments on the writing exchanged by the students in the class blog.

Drawing on interactional sociolinguistics from critical perspectives (Bloome, Carter, Christian, & Otto, 2005; Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Gebhard, 2004, 2005; Goffman, 1959; Gumperz, 1982; Luke, 1995; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Willett, 1995), I examine students' roles in production formats and authors' stances towards constructing genre knowledge, to understand the students' constructed textual identities in this learning activity. In looking at interactional discourses on the class blog, I analyze interactions between students and their audiences to understand the kinds of social relations they built. I then analyze how the constructed social relations produced, maintained, or transformed the focal students' social relations and identities within their community of writing practice. I inductively identified codes such as *pursued goals in academic genre writing, social networks, interactions between writer and reader, and mediation of blogging* through a triangulation of the focal students' texts, exchanged feedback comments, videotaped lessons, interview files, and field notes. After coding emergent themes in the data, I developed analytical sub-codes for answering the research questions—*appropriated feedback comments, author's and reader's roles, awareness of audience, and constructed social relationships*.

Through systemic functional linguistics, I examine how the focal students' goals, awareness of audience, and uses of computer technologies were realized in their text production. Specifically, focusing on lexico-grammatical choices that the students made, I analyze the register features of the genre texts (Christie, 2002; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Eggins, 1994; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Halliday, 1985; Martin & Rothery,

1986; Schleppegrell, 2004). For this register analysis, I examine the field, tenor, and mode of students' texts that were realized into *participants, process types, circumstances, mood types, modal verbs, appraisal adverbs, cohesive devices, nominalization, and thematic organization*. For text organization, I look at structural features such as orientation, characteristic events, and sequence of the events for recounts, and position statement, arguments, and restatement of position for persuasive essays.

#### **4.5 Summary**

In sum, the data sources for this study consist of a number of different types, as seen in Table 4.3 below—e.g., student texts posted on the class weblog, videotaped class interactions of language writing activities, field notes on the observed focal students' learning experiences, formal and informal interviews with students and teacher, discussions with parents and administrators, e-mail exchanges with the teacher and administrators, and relevant documents such as student work, scores, curricular materials, and school reports posted on its website. As discussed above, I collected these data in different phases of the study. In Phase 1 and 2, I prepared for the fieldwork while looking for ways of using technologies in language arts writing lessons. The analysis involves reviewing the district-mandated writing genres of the language arts curriculum, student sample writings, and notes on the meetings. Phase 3 involves major data collection for this study with the core data collection that I mentioned above. My work during this period was based on “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of the field. The data analysis focuses on actual learning activities and meanings ascribed by the participants to the blog-mediated writing. Phase 4 continues examining the meanings of the participants' experiences with their blog-mediated writing activities. The analysis is aimed at

incorporating the teacher's interpretations of the focal students' learning, and at increasing the validity of the analysis. Table 4.3 summarizes the data sources and analytical methods that I draw on in this study.

Table 4.3: Data Sources and Analyses

Phase	Unit of analysis	Observation	Collected Data	Method of Analysis
1 & 2	Planned curricular unit for writing genres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming meetings</li> <li>• Webpage development meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing samples (teacher's/former students')</li> <li>• Teacher's webpage</li> <li>• Illustrations</li> <li>• Genre organizer</li> <li>• E-mail exchanges (with the teacher)</li> <li>• Notes from meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse Analysis across domains</li> </ul>
3	Curricular unit for writing genres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning routines</li> <li>• Languages arts centers</li> <li>• Library visits</li> <li>• Meetings with the teacher</li> <li>• Special events (e.g., open house, publishing party)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student writing samples on the blog</li> <li>• Exchanged feedback on the blog</li> <li>• Videotaped class interactions</li> <li>• Audio recorded interview with the students/the teacher</li> <li>• Illustrations/images</li> <li>• Genre organizers/teaching materials</li> <li>• E-mail exchanges (with the district administrators/ the teacher)</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• Students' test scores</li> <li>• State/district/school reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse analysis across domains</li> <li>• Register analysis drawing on systemic functional linguistics</li> </ul>
4	Curricular unit for writing genres & reading response activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings for data analysis</li> <li>• Reading response activities on the blog</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation materials</li> <li>• Reading response comments on the blog</li> <li>• E-mail exchanges</li> <li>• Notes from meetings with the teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse analysis across domains</li> <li>• Register analysis drawing on systemic functional linguistics</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOUNTS WRITING

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the three focal students' experiences with writing recounts in a blog-mediated environment. In writing about their memorable life stories, Wanda and her students appropriated expanded audiences through blogging, to expand the experiential and interpersonal meanings of school-based writing. Lines of blogging in which they were engaged show their processes of achieving various academic and social goals through these expanded audiences. Blogging became a venue for the focal students to increase their symbolic capital among friends, teachers, and family members in learning academic genres (Bourdieu, 1991; Kramsch, 2007; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008). My exploration of the participants' interpretations and appropriations of blog-mediated writing will highlight the interests and concerns that the participants had in blog-mediated writing, their semiotic repertoires, and the roles that they played in their social interactions.

In the first section of the chapter, I portray the contexts of situation which are realized in the participants' texts, by describing scaffolding activities engaged in by the students during Wanda's recounts curriculum. This description also illustrates Wanda's efforts to support the ELL students in reading and writing at grade level through meaningful learning activities. In the next section, I introduce the focal students' textual practices of appropriating blog-mediated writing for their various goals, through an analysis of composed texts, exchanged blog comments, and classroom interactions.

Lastly, I explore changes in the students' use of academic language in their textual practice over time, through a register analysis across drafts of their recounts.

## **5.2 Context of Situation for Recounts Writing**

The context of situation in which the participants wrote recounts is captured in Wanda's efforts to support students in reading and writing across the curriculum, by valuing the multiple social and linguistic worlds to which students already belong. In support of that goal, Wanda's appropriation of the blog as a tool to expand the audience brought more semiotic repertoires and dynamic roles into the participants' text production. That is, through use of blogging, she intended to open up a curricular space in which multiple stakeholders from school, peers, families, and communities could co-create practices and meanings related to the students' learning of academic genres (see Willett & Rosenberger, 2005 for transformative practices based on inclusive and critical dialogues among stakeholders). These pedagogical goals highlight core contexts and discourses shaping Wanda's curriculum design and the register variables of the participants' recounts.

### **5.2.1 Field: Expanding Audiences, Roles and Semiotic Repertoires**

Wanda drew on the expanded audiences of blog-mediated recount writing to increase the ideational functions of students' writing practices. That is, her students had opportunities to produce recounts for various functions related to their expanded audiences, and to engage with expanded experiential meanings. To this end, the class blog became a social space for all the stakeholders to "talk to each other" about personal experiences and ways of writing recounts. Specifically, parents actively participated in their children's recount writing, from topic selection to revising and publishing. The

parents took teacher's roles and showed their children how to write recounts by helping to brainstorm ideas and to share their own stories. Parents' scaffolding started in class events such as family visits to the class and a publishing party arranged at a different stage of writing, and then moved onto the class blog for further discussion.

For example, Maria's mother and younger sister visited the class and made a presentation with Maria about her first birthday party (November 4, 2005). She brought a first birthday photo album that was trimmed with white lace and pink and sky-blue dots and filled with pictures from the party. With this photo album, Maria and her mother also voluntarily prepared written stories (Figure 5.1) about her birthday that were hand-written on pink paper with decorations around the edges for their presentation. Before Maria and her mother started their presentation, Wanda briefly reviewed what the students had been learning about the genre of recounts by reviewing the definition of "recounts" with the students, and showing features of the genre written on flip chart sheets. Her mother first read her own story about Maria's birthday to the class while Maria held her younger sister on her lap. Following her mother, Maria read the story that the two of them had written together at home.

After reading the stories, Maria and her mother showed pictures from the birthday party to the students, and described the different events and activities of the party. Her mother's scaffolding enabled Maria to write a recount about her birthday by drawing on material processes in the semiotic role of "actor" (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007). Both stories had the same story-telling orientation, including introductions of self and topic of the story, details of the birthday party (e.g., where it was held, who attended, what they

ate and did), and ending (e.g., evaluative statement for conclusion or a summary) as seen below.

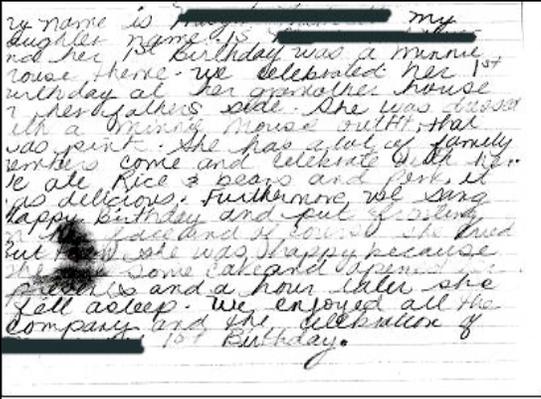
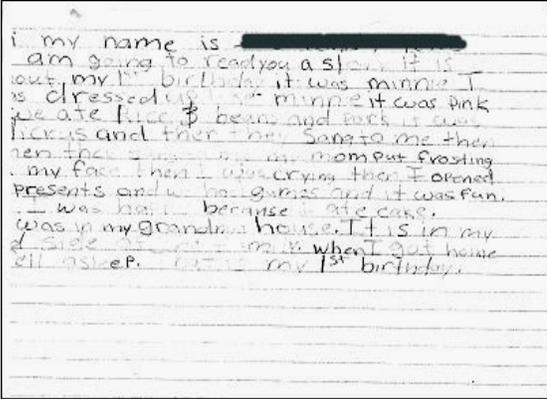
Mother's Birthday Story	Maria's Birthday Story
 <p>My name is [redacted] my daughter name is [redacted] and her 1st birthday was a Minnie Mouse theme. We celebrated her 1st birthday at her grandmother's house on her father's side. She was dressed with a Minnie Mouse outfit, that was pink. She has a lot of family members come and celebrate with her. We ate Rice &amp; beans and pork. It was delicious. Furthermore, we sang Happy Birthday and put frosting on her face and of course she cried. But then she was happy because she ate some cake and opened her presents and a hour later she fell asleep. We enjoyed all the company and the celebration of [redacted] 1st Birthday.</p>	 <p>I, my name is [redacted] I am going to read you a story. It is about my 1st birthday. It was Minnie. I was dressed up like Minnie. It was pink we ate Rice &amp; beans and pork. It was delicious and then they sang to me then they sang to me my mom put frosting on my face then I was crying. Then I opened presents and had games and it was fun. I was happy because I ate cake. It was in my grandma's house. It is in my dad side of my family. When I got home I fell asleep. That is my 1st birthday.</p>
<p>My name is [redacted]. My daughter name is [Maria] and her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday was a Minnie Mouse theme. We celebrated her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday at her grandmother's house of her father side. She was dressed with a Minnie Mouse outfit, that was pink. She has a lot of family members come and celebrate with her. We ate Rice &amp; beans, and pork. It was delicious. And then they sang to me then they sang to me my mom put frosting on my face and of course she cried. But then she was happy because she ate some cake and opened her presents and a hour later she fell asleep. We enjoyed all the company and the celebration of [redacted] 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday.</p>	<p>My name is [redacted]. I am going to read you a story. It is about my 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. It was Minnie. I was dressed up Minnie. It was pink we ate rice and bean, and pork. It was delicious. And then they sang to me then they sang to me my mom put frosting on my face then I was crying. Then I opened presents and had games. And it was fun. I was happy because I ate cake. It was in my grandma's house. It is in my dad side of my family. When I got home I fell asleep. That is my 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.</p>

Figure 5.1: Recounts: Maria and Maria's Mother

The blog afforded the student writers bigger audiences that included parents, family members, teachers, students, librarians, and school and district administrators. Parents' participation in blog-mediated writing provided the students with more opportunities to use their funds of knowledge in learning academic writing (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Moll et al., 1992; Nieto, 2003). For example, Diany's mother visited the

class and spoke in Spanish about their family trip to Puerto Rico. A friend who accompanied her translated the mother's Spanish into English, due to her mother limited English proficiency. To facilitate further discussions about Puerto Rico with expanded audiences on the class blog, Wanda read with the students fiction, folktales, and non-fiction relating to Puerto Rican culture (e.g., *Juan Bobo Goes to Work*, *The Song of El Coqui*, *Mama Provi and the Pot of Rice*). The students wrote their recounts and blogging comments, making intertextual links to what they had read (Pappas & Varelas, 2003).

The students learned the writing of recounts by engaging in scaffolding activities that afforded expanded semiotic resources and experiential meanings for writing recounts. To support diverse social work in blogging, Wanda explained to the students how to write diversified feedback comments according to what they wanted to talk about. The feedback Wanda introduced to the students included complimenting, sharing similar experiences, questioning and expressing opinions about stories, and examining register features and conventions. When the student wrote feedback on each other's texts, they learned to pay attention to content first and conventions later (October 28, 2005). In this way, students learned various approaches to writing and reading their stories.

### **5.2.2 Tenor: Writing to Build Social Relationships**

The tenor of writing recounts is featured in ways in which the students perceived the expanded audiences of their blog-mediated writing. They learned that a new tool, blogging, allowed them to write recounts involving other people such as classmates, parents, family members, teachers, and friends, as seen in the Figure 5.2. The students learned that blogging was a form of public writing in which they would talk about their life stories with others. To help the students understand interpersonal relationships with

audiences on the class blog, Wanda developed rules for blogging with the students, as seen in Figure 5.2.

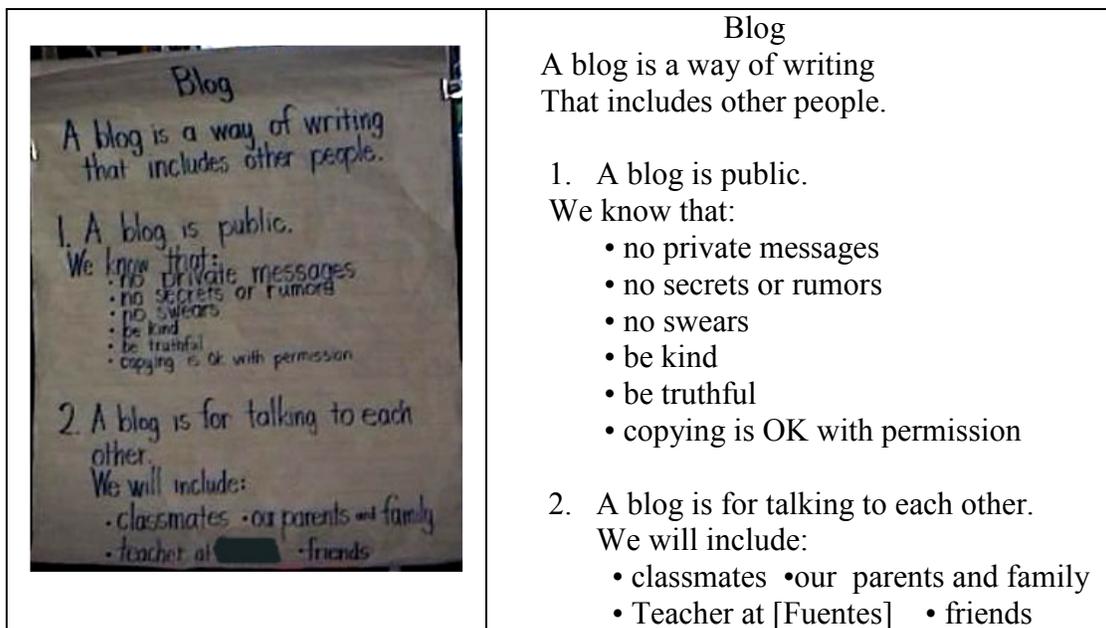


Figure 5.2: Introduction of Blog

Through this kind of discussion on blog and blog-mediated writing, the students came to know that the relationships that they had with audiences were similar to those that they had in their face-to-face classroom interactions. That is, their interactional relationships were related to those of everyday casual communications along the continuums of power, contact, and affective involvement. What the student writers perceived of the tenor of their writing was based on “equal power, frequent contact, and high affective involvement” rather than “hierarchical power, infrequent contact, and low affective involvement” (Egins, 1994, pp. 64-65).

Expanded audiences intensified the social functions that the students were able to achieve through their writing. For example, after presenting their home-written recounts to the class, parents continuously participated in their children’s writing of recounts on

the blog, and wanted to know how the class presentations supported their children's social life with their peers. To this end, Maria's mother actively supported Maria's social relationship building, as seen in the following excerpt:

Hi! Maria is mom again. I was expecting your response, I was happy when I saw it and read it. ... How did the other kids like your 1st birthday story? I hope that they enjoyed it because I did.

Posted by: Mom | November 08, 2005 at 12:26 PM

This kind of blog-mediated comment led Maria and other students not only to pay attention to their audiences' response to their texts, but also to become aware of the symbolic functions that the texts had in social relationships among their peers in official and unofficial worlds.

Additionally, Maria's mom extended her scaffolding of the tenor of a text to social relationship building with teachers. To demonstrate to Maria how to express stances toward readers, she wrote blog comments complimenting Wanda's class management, such as, "I like how organize Ms. Simpson is with her students." She also posted comments that every teacher in Fuentes School should be like Wanda and that Maria was receiving a good education. Maria's mother expressed her deep trust in Maria's academic progress under Wanda's guidance. Maria's parents clearly stated their gratitude that their daughter was able to study with Wanda. Following her parents, Maria wrote Wanda a letter in which she said that "you are the best" to express her appreciation for the teacher; Wanda glued the letter inside the door of her coat closet.

### **5.2.3 Mode: Co-constructing Genre Features in Focus of Meaning**

One of Wanda's curricular goals was to make sure that her students were able to understand the genre and lexico-grammatical features of conventional recounts in writing

about their rich and diverse life experiences. Moving toward this goal, Wanda made efforts to help her students learn ways of constructing their stories by focusing on textual meanings, not by focusing on structure or grammar. The students were engaged in meaning-focused text production, by proceeding through a process of brainstorming ideas, writing recounts, and identifying the organization of composed recounts.

When the students started to write their own recounts after selecting topics and ideas, Wanda wrote a class recount with the students about her own “unforgettable memory” of almost losing her own daughter in New York City. After finishing the recounts, the students reviewed the orientations of the recounts, analyzing the flow of the story. They identified three stages of genre moves, as seen in Figure 5.3.

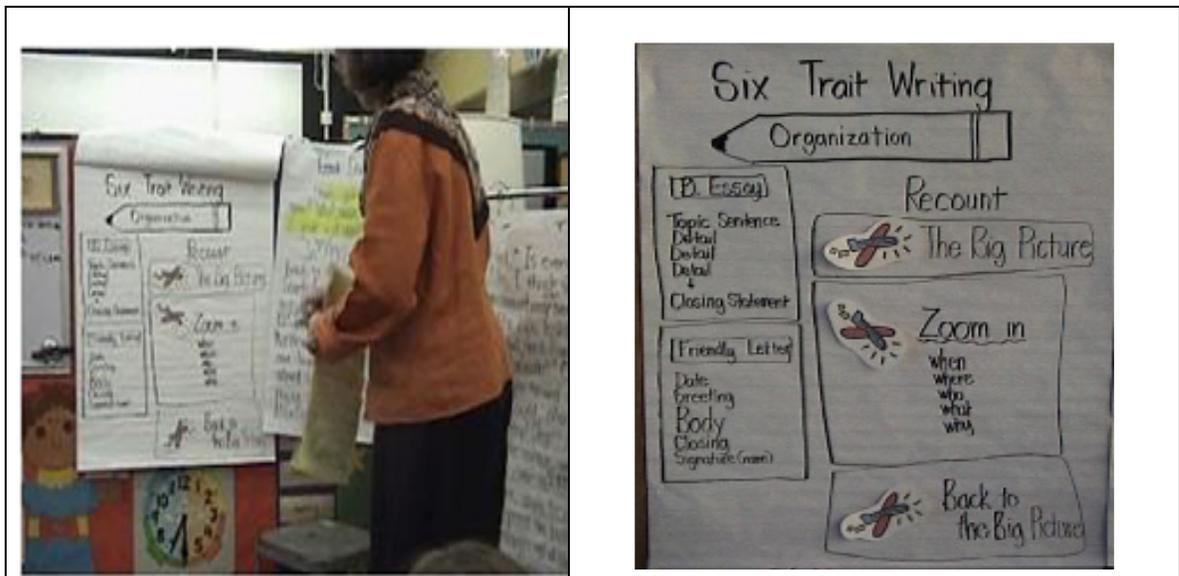


Figure 5.3: Structural Organization of Recounts

The class called the three stages of genre moves “big picture,” “zoom in,” and “back to the big picture,” as seen above. Wanda explained this structural organization of recounts by drawing on the metaphor of an airplane flight. In doing so, she intended to make the abstract academic genre more accessible to the second grade students by

drawing on their age-relevant frames of references. Her multimodal scaffolding of the story organization with pictures of an airplane allowed the students to learn genre features of recounts without losing their engagement. The following transcript demonstrates how Wanda scaffolded the genre recounts through explicit instruction on genre structure, by drawing on modeling, metaphors, and images/charts:

1. Mrs. Simpson: Let me show you with an airplane. Do you see? The picture of my story is right there. Sorry. Airplane did zooming along looking over everything. Have you ever lost something? Whom I talking to?
2. Students: //XXX//
3. Mrs. Simpson: Everybody.
4. Diany: //Everybody. //
5. Mrs. Simpson: Then, I zoom in. I told you all the details of what happened the time I left her at the back of that van.
6. Dan: //Then you go. //
7. Mrs. Simpson: When it's over, I'm not going to have a crash. I don't want to crash by just continuing telling you all the details. What if I stop my story right there?
8. Students: You're going to go all the way.
9. Mrs. Simpson: //Oh. // We were relieved. The end.
10. Students: No. You have to go.
11. Mrs. Simpson: //Crash. //
12. Students: //You have to go. //

13. Mrs. Simpson: I've got to back up, don't I?
14. Maria: //You have to go to big picture. //
15. Mrs. Simpson: I've got to kind of finish it. Sort of put the ending in. I'm going to take my little airplane. I'm going to go back up.

In the above transcript, Wanda explained the structural features related to text organization of her recounts. Metaphorical expressions such as “big picture” (Turns 1 & 14), “zoom in” (Turn 5), and “back to the big picture” (Turns 13-15) correspond to typical structural moves of recounts—initiation, main body, and finale (Christie, 2002; Derewianka, 2000; Kamberelis, 1998; Kamberelis & Scott, 1992; Pappas, 1991; Schleppegrell, 2004). Specifically, the “big picture” sets up an introduction that situates a story. Next, the “zoom in” section relates the details of when, who, where, what, and why of the writer’s experience. “Back to the big picture” introduces the writer’s feeling about those experiences to conclude a story. Wanda and the students analyzed her recount, marking each stage of text organization with the metaphors. When the students exchanged comments on each other’s recounts on the class blog, these metaphors became semiotic resources for the student’s blog interactions.

As such, the class constructed their own meanings for the genre structures of recounts. Wanda guided the students to form a working genre that addressed both school-valued conventional genre norms and register features relating to the situation of writing “unforgettable memories” from their life experiences. In this, she encouraged the students to maintain this textual organization in their recounts for themselves by drawing on expanded audiences in their blog-mediated writing. For example, in a class discussion,

the students talked about how writing on a blog was different from writing in their notebooks or in journal entries, in that “everybody” would read their writings. They learned to be careful about selecting content and words for their writing. When the students wrote comments on each other’s writing as readers, they were also encouraged to read their comments one more time before posting them since, once again, “everybody” would read them (October 28, 2005). Along with scaffolding genre and register features related to the mode of recounts, Wanda provided mini-lessons covering sentence fluency (e.g., how to use connectors), voices (e.g., use of quotation marks for incorporating other’s words) and conventions (e.g., spelling and periods).

### **5.3 Focal Students’ Blog-Mediated Recount Writing Practices**

In this section, I explicate how the register variables of blog-mediated writing shaped the three participants’ experiences of learning recounts. By examining their texts and the interactional processes of blogging, I investigated how they appropriated writing life stories to expanded audiences in a public space for their academic and social goals. In particular, I examine the goals and roles that the students had in those appropriation processes, and the linguistic repertoire that they adopted to achieve their academic and social goals. In addition, I explore the social and cultural relationships and identifications with people and materials that the students reflected or newly constructed in their blog-mediated writing practices. In conclusion, to examine how these textual experiences supported their academic literacy development, I show through a SFL analysis (e.g., transitivity, mood, and theme) changes in the students’ use of academic language that blogging for academic and social goals generated across drafts of their recounts. Below, I

will portray the experiences of the focal participants Diany, Jose, and Maria by examining their recounts and interactions on the blog.

### **5.3.1 Diany’s Blog-Mediated Recount Writing**

#### **5.3.1.1 Diany’s Recount and Goals**

Diany wrote about her family trip to Puerto Rico for her recount. Before she started to write her story, Diany’s mother visited the class as the first family guest, to talk about their family trip to Puerto Rico with a friend. Diany’s mother had limited English proficiency, and a family friend translated her mother’s Spanish into English. For their presentation, Wanda reviewed the definition and genre structures of recounts with the class before Diany and her mother started the talk. They shared details of the trip—flying above the clouds, swimming in a lake, and a flight attendant allowing Diany to speak over the intercom during one of the flights. Diany’s talk focused on her excitement over swimming in a lake. When she was supposed to interpret her mother’s Spanish explanation about flying over the clouds into English, she said, “My mom says,” but then talked about her own experience of swimming in a lake and how scared she was swimming in the deep end of the lake. In other words, Diany used interpreting for her mother into a chance to talk about her own swimming experience. Their talk was lively, with a lot of excitement and descriptive details, which led them to get attention and questions from Diany’s classmates.

After talking about the family trip to the class and learning the genre features of recounts through Wanda’s explicit instruction, she changed the medium of text production and composed her recount on computers, intending to talk about swimming in a lake. Table 5.1 shows the first draft of Diany’s recount.

Table 5.1: Diany’s Recount

Diany’s Recount <sup>1</sup>	Text Organization
<p>November 22, 2005</p> <p>WHEN I WAS IN Puerto Rico I love to go to the lake.</p> <p>I did not know Spanish in Puerto Rico that much. In the day time I wish I could go to the candy store because my moms dad works at the candy store I bye candy. In the lake I was so so happy. In Peurto Rico it was hot and raining a lot. In the lake my mom was scared because I wen’t to the big side. Now I can swim good. In night the frogs say coocee at Puerto Rico. In the Mall me and my mom were so happy because the Mall here is wake [fake]. They were so happy when we came from here. It is to hot there.</p> <p>THE END</p>	<p>Initiating Event (“Big Picture”): love to go to a lake in Puerto Rico</p> <p>Main Event (“Zoom in”): Details of what she did in Puerto Rico</p> <p>Finale (“Back to big picture”)</p>

While moving her spoken story into a school-based written text, Diany rearranged experiential components of her story, by using the genre orientation and structural organization of recounts that the class constructed. In the initiating event section, Diany wrote, “WHEN I WAS IN Puerto Rico I love to go to the lake.” Her goal for composing a recount on the blog was to get attention from her friends with the excitement and fun that she had swimming in a lake. In the main event section, however, she commented on other exciting things she had done in Puerto Rico in addition to swimming. For example, she wrote about a *couqi*<sup>2</sup> making intertextual links to a book the class had read, *The Song of El Coqui*, to boast about having heard the real sound of a *couqi* to her classmates. She mentioned additional fun activities such as buying candies in her grandfather’s store and

<sup>1</sup> The text is a direct copy of Diany’s recount posted on the blog.

<sup>2</sup> *Couqui* is a collective name for several species of small frogs in Puerto Rico.

going to a mall, the latter being so impressive that she later called a mall in Greenville “fake” by comparison.

Diany’s interest in becoming popular among her friends led her to list all the exciting experiences she had instead of chronologically describing unfolding events related to the main event of swimming in the lake. In addition, it was not easy for Diany as a beginning writer to consistently stick with one main topic such as swimming in the lake, considering the tendency for emergent writers to often mix topics, events, modes, and times in their writing (Dyson, 1993, 2003). For a finale, she wrote “THE END” rather than writing a closing statement to conclude her story. The way Diany organized her experiences she had in Puerto Rico was to appropriate the organizational structures that the class had defined; however, she did not own the genre knowledge fully. Diany was authoring the excitement she had in Puerto Rico while ventriloquating the rules of school ways of telling a story (Bakhtin, 1981).

The register of her written recount is similar to speaking in terms of patterns of using process types, appraisals, and thematization. The field was construed into multiple experiential meanings that realized Diany’s activities and experiences in Puerto Rico through various process types, including mental, relational, and material processes. Mostly, she took the semiotic role of “feeler” rather than of “actor,” which is a register feature of school-based recounts, as explained in chapter 4 (Schleppegrell, 2004; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Thompson, 1996). The tenor was realized by the interpersonal relationships that Diany wanted to construct with her classmates. Namely, Diany wanted to obtain social recognition as a popular student whose story was read by many members of the expanded audience. For that goal, she expressed the excitement and fun related to

Puerto Rico that would get her friends' attention. In doing so, she frequently used appraisal words. The mode of the written recount was based on reiterating deictic pronouns as themes without theme planning (e.g., Eggins, 1994; Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2006). Diany did not differentiate the mode differences between writing a recount and telling a story.

### **5.3.1.2 Diany's Appropriation of Blogging**

When the first draft of her recount was posted on the class blog, her classmates wrote feedback comments on her text to help her revise it. The comments that Diany received between the first and final drafts of her recount included a range of feedback such as checking organizational structures, suggesting more ideas, and asking about feelings. In blogging comments, I identified two main interactional processes, doing schooling and maintaining friendship. The former is an assessment of each other's texts, and the latter is an exchange of wishes and concerns made out of friendship.

One of the interactional lines, doing schooling, was a feature of assessing genre structures and lexico-grammatical choices. In this line of interaction, the students borrowed words that Wanda used to teach the genre, and responded to Diany's writing by appropriating the teacher's voice, as seen in the following comments<sup>3</sup>:

1. Dear Diany,  
You need more details and you need back to the big picture.  
Your friend Lianne  
Posted by: Lianne | November 23, 2005 at 09:49 AM

2. Dear Lianne ,  
I will show some more stuff.  
From Diany  
Posted by: Diany | November 29, 2005 at 11:00 AM

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<sup>3</sup> All the comments in this chapter are direct copies of comments posted on the blog.

3. DEAR DIANY

YOU NEED TO SAY MOM AND I.

Posted by: Kate | December 06, 2005 at 11:22 AM

4. Dear Diany ,

Do you know spanish now? When did you go to Puerto Rico? What people did you meet in Puerto Rico? Was it fun in Puerto Rico?

Your Friend ,

Yolri

Posted by: yolri | December 19, 2005 at 12:51 PM

In Comment 1, Lianne examined the organizational structure of Diany's recount, and by appropriating the teacher's voice, commented on the necessity of adding a missing organizational structure and more ideational elements. Responding to Lianne's direct suggestion, in Comment 2, Diany appropriated the teachers' words and stated that she would add more details in her recount by saying "I will show some more stuff." In Comment 3, Kate corrected Diany's use of "me and my mom" by saying "YOU NEED TO SAY MOM AND I." Kate suggested this expression by making an intertextual link to a class discussion about word choices that Wanda had had with the students (Pappas & Varelas, 2003). In the discussion, the students commented that they needed to use "my friend and I" as a subject instead of "me and my friend" in school, calling this kind of lexico-grammatical expression "school talk." Like other students, in Comment 4, Yolri asked about details of Diany's story, drawing on organizational features of recounts that Wanda taught to the class.

As such, the students examined each other's writing and made them use the organizational structure and register features of recounts that Wanda had taught them in their writing. In pursuing this academic goal, they took the role of "language detective" (Monahan, 2003), to remind Diany of the necessity of looking out for language variations according to contexts. Taking on the role of language detective, they employed an

authoritative voice with the expression “you need,” and appropriated their teacher’s words in their interactions. These feedback comments mostly concerned the field and mode of her recount, suggesting more ideas, different lexico-grammatical choices, and organizational structure.

The other interactional line that Diany was engaged in with peer audiences was checking feelings, sharing similar experience, and exchanging wishes and concerns out of friendship. In doing so, they utilized blogging as a tool for socializing with friends, as seen in the following excerpt of received comments:

1. Dear Diany,  
So you were scar of the water.  
From Steven,  
Posted by: Steven | November 30, 2005 at 12:32 PM

2. Dear Diany  
My gradndma and aunt went to Purto Rico. I want to go to Puerto Rico and swim in the lake with you.  
Posted by: Anngie | December 14, 2005 at 12:22 PM

3. Dear Diany,  
you know if you eat alot of candy you get cavitys.  
Your friend,  
Lianne and Nalie  
Posted by: Nalie Lianne | December 21, 2005 at 01:18 PM

4. Dear Diany,  
My family is planning to go to Puerto Rico  
your friend,  
zory  
Posted by: Zory | January 09, 2006 at 10:33 AM

5. dear diany,  
I WENT LAST YEAR IT WAS FUN AND I SAW MY FAMILY.  
LOVE  
MARIA  
Posted by: maria | January 09, 2006 at 11:12 AM

6. Dear Diany,

It is really hot in Puerto Rico. Did you get to go in the candy store. I did not no there was a candy store in Puerto Rico. Did you go to the beach it is fun in the beach. I never went to the lake in Puerto Rico but I did go to Puerto Rico.

Your friend Alicia

Posted by: Alicia | February 10, 2006 at 10:54 AM

Steven asked in Comment 1 if Diany was scared of the water. He had been working hard to build strength for school activities in public settings, even though he was too nervous to read his recount to the large audience in a class publishing party<sup>4</sup> at the end of the school year. While socializing with peers, he often asked about other classmates' feelings. Diany's statement that her mother was scared that she went to the deep side of the lake motivated him to be curious about her feelings at the moment.

Similarly, her classmates expressed their experiences and feelings related to Puerto Rico, which were mostly phatic responses (Malinowski, 1994; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). Those responses functioned to mark their friendship to Diany or their Puerto Rican identity in this social arena, without conveying any other information. For example, Anngie expressed her wish to visit Puerto Rico and swim in the lake with Diany, in addition to letting Diany know about her grandmother's and aunt's visits there, in Comment 2. By expressing her wish, Anngie presented herself as a Puerto Rican rather than as a peer expert who would have given feedback on the genre features and content of her writing. In the same vein, Zory announced her family plan to visit Puerto Rico in Comment 4, and Maria also shared her visit to Puerto Rico and seeing her family in the previous year in Comment 5. Alicia also commented on the hot weather and visits to the

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<sup>4</sup> At the party, the students read the recounts that they had written with family members through blogging. All the students' parents and family members attended the class event, in addition to Fuentes teachers, administrators, and school district administrators who visited the school for a meeting with the principal that day.

beach when she had visited Puerto Rico, in Comment 6. As such, her classmates presented themselves as friends who shared their experiences about Puerto Rico, rather than giving feedback on the structural or lexico-grammatical features of Diany's recount.

This kind of friendship-oriented phatic communication, related to ideational components of the story other than Puerto Rico, continuously occurred as shown in Lianne and Nalie's response in Comment 3. They commented that eating many candies causes cavities, which reminded Diany of her recent visit to a dentist. To Diany, who was a social goal-oriented blogger seeking attention and social recognition among her peers, the comments received from her classmates led her to gain self-confidence in building friendships. In my interview, she commented that when she received many comments from her peers, she felt like a star, like "J-Lo" in her words (April 13, 2006).

As an avid blogger who frequently wrote comments to her peers in and out of school, Diany also appropriated blogging as a tool for socializing with her friends by providing support for classmates who wrote about difficult life experiences, endorsing behaviors on the part of her friends, or complimenting friends' recounts. Indeed, she appropriated blogging for her social goals, as identified in an excerpt from Diany's comments to Dan—"I feel bad that some people write you"<sup>5</sup> (January 30, 2006). In other words, she appropriated writing for the blog as an opportunity not only for developing academic literacies, but also for maintaining friendships and gaining social recognition. The interviews in which I asked how stories were selected for first reading and commenting support this point. Not only Diany but also many of her peers said that they

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<sup>5</sup> Diany meant to say, "I feel bad that few people wrote to you." This sentence represents her developing English literacy in that she was learning when to use "some" or "few" in addition to using "write."

chose their best friend's recounts, and then those of students who had not received comments. This kind of social goal-oriented feedback exchange on the class blog allowed learning school-mandated genres to become more meaningful to Diany and her classmates.

Building social relationships through blogging was expanded into non-friendship building realms. Diany drew on writing for the class blog as an opportunity to negotiate and perform multiple textual identities (Kramersch, Nessir, & Lam, 2000; Lam, 2000; Nelson, 2006) such as a capable other to peers, confident student to the teacher, and proud daughter to her mother. With regards to her role of a capable student, for example, she posted her completed work for the next day's reading response assignment from home the previous night after receiving a computer as a Christmas gift from her mother. In addition, she also helped her mother to read recounts posted on the class blog and to write comments for her mother<sup>6</sup>, and to use the Internet for obtaining information for a family trip.

Diany was one of the students who enthusiastically developed expertise in computer technologies such as a word processing program, a web browser, and a weblog. She frequently expressed her wish to type fast like her teachers, and commented that typing fast made her feel like a grown-up. Her interests gradually moved to other functions such as spell checking, font or screen size, and text arrangement that mostly make her texts longer. She proudly shared what she had discovered about computers with her friends and teachers. While sharing her knowledge about computer technologies and blogging with her friends, she learned about an educational site (e.g., Funbrain) from a

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<sup>6</sup> When she wrote a comment for her mother, she stated, "This is for my mom."

former classmate in her neighborhood, and a cartoon site from a TV advertisement (e.g., Disney)<sup>7</sup>. Her mother said that Diany's favorite site was Funbrain, and she studied information about the human body through this site at home. In these social relationships, she was practicing how to become an academically capable other for her classmates, while constructing a confident and capable identity to her classmates, teachers, and family members, which became a regular routine of her school writing.

As such, the class blog was an academic and social space for Diany to learn about academic writing through an expanded audience and to maintain close friendships. Having different positions, such as being a popular student and a computer expert, became sources of Diany's confidence and investment in school learning. Indeed, in blog-mediated writing practices, Diany constructed new academic identities as a successful student, instead of a struggling one. In the next section, I show how these lines of interactions are interrelated to developing knowledge of academic genres.

### **5.3.1.3 Register Changes across Drafts of Diany's Recount**

The interactions that Diany had with her peers on the blog for academic and social goals led her to expand her semiotic repertoire, realizing register variables of the situational context of writing a recount about a trip to Puerto Rico in the class blog. Table 5.2 demonstrates changes in register features across the first and final drafts of Diany's recount at the clause level that is "the pivotal unit of grammatical meaning" (Eggins, 1994, p. 139). Through blogging-mediated interactions, Diany made changes in the lexico-grammatical features, including organizational structure, appraisal lexis, cohesion,

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<sup>7</sup> Wanda and I did not introduce any website other than the class blog, to prevent the students from navigating to non-educational sites. We informed Diany's mother of possible harmful sites and of the necessity for parental guidance and control of children's use of the Internet at home.

and addition of more ideas, as seen in boldface text<sup>8</sup> in the final draft. I explain these register variables relating to what I explained as the field, tenor, and mode of recounts in Chapter 4.

Table 5.2: Changes across Diany’s Recount Drafts

First Draft	Final Draft
1. WHEN I WAS IN Puerto Rico	<b>1. When I was in Puerto Rico</b>
2. I love to go to the lake.	2. When I was Puerto Rico
3. I did not know Spanish in Puerto Rico that much.	3. I love to go to the lake.
4. In the day time I wish	4. I did not know Spanish in Puerto Rico that much.
5. I could go to the candy store	5. In the daytime I wish
6. because my moms dad works at the candy store	6. I could go to the candy store
7. I bye candy.	7. because <b>my grandpa</b> works at the candy store.
8. In the lake I was so so happy.	8. <b>I buy</b> candy.
9. In Peurto Rico it was hot and raining a lot.	9. In the lake I was so happy.
10. In the lake my mom was scared	10. In Puerto Rico it was hot and raining a lot.
11. because I wen’t to the big side.	11. <b>When it is raining,</b>
12. Now I can swim good.	12. <b>the sun comes out too.</b>
13. In night the frogs say coocee at Puerto Rico.	13. In the lake my mom was scared
14. In the Mall me and my mom were so happy	14. because I <b>went</b> to the big side of the lake.
15. because the mall here is wake.	15. Now I can swim <b>well.</b>
16. They were so happy	16. At night the frogs say <b>coqui</b> at Puerto Rico.
17. when we came from here.	17. In the mall my <b>mom and I</b> were so happy
18. It is to hot there.	18. <b>because the mall has nice stuff.</b>
19. THE END	19. <b>We</b> were so happy
	20. <b>that</b> it was so hot <b>in winter</b> there.
	21. <b>We came from Springfield, Massachusetts.</b>
	22. <b>Here winter is so cold.</b>
	23. <b>I love Puerto Rico.</b>

In Diany’s recount, as seen above, the salient feature of the field is feeling-

<sup>8</sup> The boldface has been added for emphasis. The students did not use any boldface letters in their texts.

oriented. In describing the experiences that she had in Puerto Rico, Diany more frequently took semantic roles as a “feeler” who was excited by interesting activities or different natural phenomena rather than an “actor” engaged in a range of exciting actions (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007). In doing so, she employed more relational process with appraisal lexis (e.g., “was so happy” “was hot,” and “was scared” in Clauses 1, 8-10, 14-16, 18) than material processes (e.g., “work,” “swim,” “go,” “buy” in Clauses 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 17). Her overuse of relational process made her recount less congruent with standard recounts, considering that in terms of the register of school-valued recounts, participants construe experiential meanings through material process as actors (see chapter 4).

The tenor of Diany’s recount is featured in the frequent use of appraisal lexis. Her use of appraisal is varied, including amplification of feelings (e.g., “so so happy,” “so happy,” “a lot,” “too hot” in Clauses 8, 9, 14, 16, 18), judgments (e.g., “fake” in Clause 9), and expressions of affection (e.g., “love” in Clause 2). Her lexical choices highlight the excitement and happiness of her trip to Puerto Rico. It is worth noting that to provide reasons for excited feelings, Diany employed logical clauses using hypotactic cohesive devices such as “because” more than temporal cohesive devices, which made her recount less aligned with school-valued recounts. Namely, standard recounts describe unfolding events in chronological order through use of temporal and additive cohesive devices (Schleppegrell, 2004). In addition to rarely modalized clauses, all the clauses were formed in the declarative mood except for Clause 5 (e.g., “could go”), suggesting that Diany constructed equal and informal relationships with her audiences (Eggs, 1994).

With regard to the mode, Diany wrote her recount by drawing on theme choices

of spoken language. She used the same thematic patterns repeatedly with circumstances and participants (e.g., “In the lake I...”) to offer concrete examples of the exciting activities in which she had engaged in Puerto Rico. In other words, Diany did not deploy the strategy of a “zig-zag pattern” between theme and rheme to increase cohesion in written texts (Eggins, 1994; Eggins & Slade, 2004). The conversational themes with reiterating deictic pronouns led to the absence of theme planning in her text, and made the events less sequentially connected to one other as a list of separate activities. Themes, however, are marked with prepositional phrases describing time and place, which increased lexical density of her text.

Audiences on the class blog suggested that she add more details and check her lexico-grammatical choices. Diany made changes in the first draft of her recount by using the received feedback and a spell checker. In terms of field, Diany included weather differences using relational process (e.g., “is”) and nominal participants (e.g., “the sun” in Clause 12, and “winter” in Clause 22), which added theme variations other than reiteration of deictic pronouns. The dominant pattern of transitivity, however, is the structure of circumstances for location or time and deictic pronoun. This repetition of the same grammatical structure rendered grammatical parallelism in her recount, a sign of a beginning emergent writer (Eggins, 1994, p. 86). Numerous comments about Puerto Rico that Diany received from her peers intensified her goal of promoting her social status among friends. For this goal, she added more dramatic ideational elements about Puerto Rico that would help her to get attention from her peers in the final draft (e.g., Clauses 11 and 12).

In relation to tenor, she used more appraisal words to express her excitement and

loving feelings (e.g., “nice stuff,” “so cold,” “love” in Clauses 18, 22, 23), and juxtaposed contrastive appraisal words such as “so hot” vs. “so cold” in Clauses 20 and 22. She summarized her exciting experiences with feeling statements such as “I love Puerto Rico” in Clause 23. The added evaluative statement at the end aligned her recount more closely with genre features that Wanda had explicitly taught to the class. The frequent use of appraisal lexis made her recount more feeling-oriented. In addition, overuse of appraisal is less congruent to the discourse of academic text, since registers of school-based texts value demonstration of overall stance and judgment with concrete examples, not directly relating attitudinal stances (see Martin, 2000; Schleppegrell, 2004; White, 2003).

The mode of Diany’s recount shows substantial changes across drafts. She used more adverbial clauses employing subordinating cohesive devices to provide reasons for her excitement, which echoed Wanda’s scaffolding of how to express feelings or complements with concrete reasons by using the conjunction “because.” This use of the logical conjunction “because” increased the lexical density of her recount, which is characteristic of academic written discourse. On the other hand, her use of the logical conjunction “because” increased grammatical intricacy in her text, associated with the discourse of spoken text. Also, academic texts deploy nominalizations of logical clauses along with material processes (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2004), as seen in Diany’s declaration that “Nice stuff in the mall made my mom and me happy.” In her final draft, she heightened textual cohesion by using more periods and proper exophoric references (e.g., “we” for “my mom and I” in Clauses 19, 21). She did not make any chained sentence with the connector *and*, which is a common feature among emergent writers (Gebhard et al., 2007).

In her revision, Diany continuously presented her main semiotic role as a feeler instead of an actor by using few transitive material and behavioral processes. Increased use of judgmental and attitudinal words rendered Diany’s recount to be more feeling-oriented. In proving reasons for her feelings, Diany drew on more logical cohesive devices (e.g., because) than temporal or additive ones (e.g., when, or, and). One thing to note is that there is an absence of changes in the patterns of field and tenor between the first and last drafts, in contrast to the changes in the mode of her recount. Table 5.3 summarizes lexico-grammatical patterns across the drafts of Diany’s recount.

Table 5.3: Register Changes across Diany’s Recount Drafts

Register system	First Draft	Final Draft
Transitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relational</li> <li>○ Material</li> <li>○ Time</li> <li>○ Place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relational</li> <li>○ Material</li> <li>○ Mental</li> <li>○ Time</li> <li>○ Place</li> </ul>
Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Declarative</li> <li>○ Example of other mood clause (e.g., “I wish I could . . .”)</li> <li>○ Frequent use of attitudinal and judgmental appraisal words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Declarative</li> <li>○ Example of other mood clause (e.g., “I wish I could . . .”)</li> <li>○ More frequent use of attitudinal and judgmental appraisal words</li> </ul>
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reiteration of deictic pronouns</li> <li>○ Textual themes starting with “because”</li> <li>○ Marked themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reiteration of deictic pronouns</li> <li>○ More nominal group themes</li> <li>○ Textual themes starting with “because”</li> <li>○ Marked themes</li> </ul>

## **5.3.2 Jose's Blog-Mediated Recount Writing**

### **5.3.2.1 Jose's Recount and Goals**

Jose is the youngest among six children in his family, and his elder siblings attended the Fuentes School at the time that I conducted this study. His mother actively participated in her children's schooling, and offered administrative assistance at Fuentes as a volunteer for years. She was knowledgeable about a range of school activities based on her experiences with Jose's elder siblings' schoolwork and her volunteer work. For instance, when Wanda invited parents to school to share stories about their children, Jose mother's brought her own and Jose's written stories about his baby nicknames (see Figure 5.4) with pictures from Jose's infancy to the class, even though she was not asked to prepare these kinds of presentation materials. Her presentation set a precedent for all other parent presentations after hers to bring written stories and pictures for their own presentations. When I asked in an informal interview what had led her to prepare written stories and pictures, she answered that that was her understanding of what parents were supposed to do. That is, as far as she knew, this was the genre that parents should follow in their school presentations.

Initially, Jose wanted to write about his memorable experiences such as being lost, possessing 72 dollars, or having a flu shot when he had brainstormed topics for his recount in school. Like his classmates, he wanted to write about something that he could use to increase his social status among his classmates—especially his competing male friends. But his mother, who was not aware of his interests, had a different idea about selecting topics for the presentation, and rejected all of his brainstormed topics. She selected a topic for his recount and prepared for their class presentation, making him

write a story about his siblings and about his “baby life” that introduced nicknames from his infancy. Figure 5.4 illustrates what Jose and his mother wrote for their presentation.

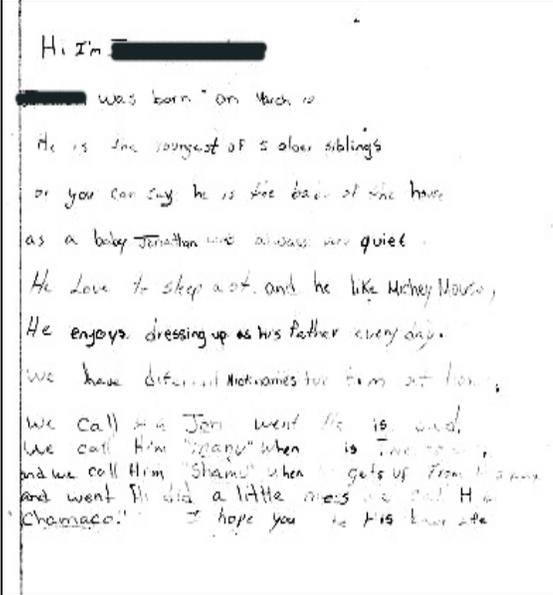
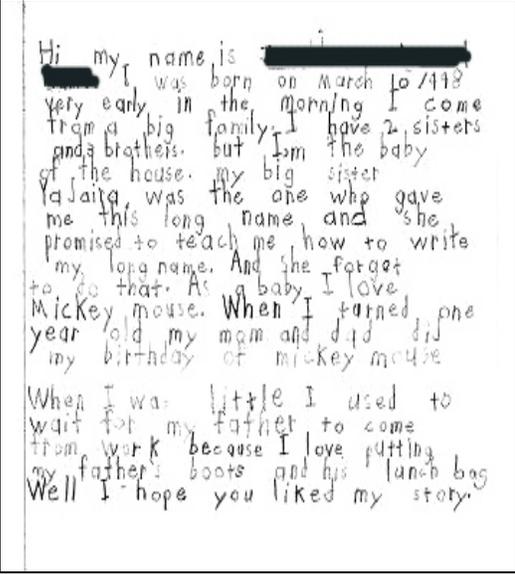
Mother’s Recount	Jose’s Recount
 <p>Hi I'm [redacted] [redacted] was born on March 10 He is the youngest of 5 older siblings or you can say he is the baby of the house as a baby Jonathan was always very quiet He love to sleep a lot and he like Mickey Mouse, He enjoys dressing up as his father every day. We have different nicknames for him at home, We call him Jon when he is say, and we call him "manu" when is time to eat, and we call him "Shamu" when he gets up from his way and went to did a little mess we call him "Chamaco." I hope you like his baby life.</p>	 <p>Hi my name is [redacted] [redacted] I was born on March 10/1998 very early in the morning I come from a big family I have 2 sisters and 3 brothers but I'm the baby of the house. my big sister Yajaira was the one who gave me this long name and she promised to teach me how to write my long name. And she forget to do that. As a baby I love Mickey mouse. When I turned one year old my mom and dad did my birthday of Mickey mouse When I was little I used to wait for my father to come from work because I love putting my father's boots and his lunch bag Well I hope you liked my story.</p>
<p>Hi I'm [Jose's] mom. Jose was born on March 10. he is the youngest of 5 older siblings or you can say he is the baby of the house as a baby Jonathan was always very quiet. He love to sleep a lot and he like Mickey Mouse, He enjoys dressing up as his father every day. We have different Nicknames for him at Home. We call him Jon when he is say. We call him “manu” when is time to eat, and we call him “shamu” when he gets up from his way and when he did a little mess we call him “chamaco.” I hope you like his baby life.</p>	<p>Hi my name is [Jose] I was born on Mach 10 1998 very early in the morning I come from a big family. I have 2 sisters and 3 brothers. But I’m the baby of the house. My big sister Yajaira was the one who gave me this long name and she promised to teach me how to write my long name. And she forget to do that. As a baby I love Mickey mouse. When I turned one year old my mom and dad did my birthday of mickey mouse. When I was little I used to wait for my father to come from work because I love putting my father’s boots and his lunch bag Well I hope you liked my story.</p>

Figure 5.4: Recounts: Jose and Jose’s Mother

Jose’s story was similar to what his mother wrote about him. Both of the stories have the same orientation, including the initiating event in which the writers introduced themselves, the main event in which they wrote about family members and gave detailed

information about Jose, and the finale in which they expressed their wish for audiences to like their stories. His mother's recount was centered on Jose's adorable baby figures as the youngest out of the six children in the family. To this end, she introduced the nicknames that the family members used with him and the behaviors in which he used to engage. In contrast, Jose did not mention any nicknames from his infancy. He focused on what he liked such as putting on his father's boots and carrying his father's lunch box that show his wish to present himself a grown man like his father.

Jose and his mother read the stories in their class presentation, and showed the pictures of baby Jose as supplements to their stories. When his mother read her story, Jose's classmates had laughed loudly at Jose's nicknames and a picture of Jose wearing his father's boots. After the presentation, Jose said to his mother, "Embarrassing," for revealing to his classmates nicknames used only among his family members and for showing his baby pictures. His mother strongly disagreed, telling him not to be embarrassed about showing who he was to others.

Because of his mother's insistence, Jose was forced to stick with the topic and to type the story about his infancy for the next class activity, posting the recount on the class blog for feedback. While typing the story, he often expressed his embarrassed feelings. Right before posting his typed story on the class blog, Jose told the teachers that he did not want to post it because his classmates would continue to make fun of his nicknames. He wanted to write a new story, changing the topic of his recount. In particular, he wanted to write about visiting an amusement park, Six Flags<sup>9</sup>. While other classmates were receiving blog comments on their posted stories from their expanded audience, Jose

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<sup>9</sup> At that time, he and his classmates talked about their visits to Six Flags, competing for the status of most frequent visitor to the park.

started to compose an entirely new story. While completing his new recount, he also wrote comments on the first drafts of his classmates’ recounts that were posted on the class blog. His new story was posted on the blog when other students were finishing their revisions. As such, his textual production schedule and cycle were different from other students, in that he wrote a draft of his story without having enough time to revise his first draft. Table 5.4 presents Jose’s new recount about his visits to Six Flags.

Table 5.4: Jose’s Newly Composed Recount

Jose’s Recount	Text Organization
<p>Last summer I went to six flags and I went to the waves. I wanted to go there every day. But when the days past I went to a new ride. It was called Mr. Six Pandemonium. My whole family was with me on six Flags in New England. Later I hated to go there every time we went to six flags</p> <p>I went to the water park 20 times and I got used to. I was well. If you don’t jump it, you will get pushed by the waves.</p> <p>They pushed me and my brother laid down. We got pushed very hard. We both tried the opposite way and we got out of the water.</p> <p>I went to six flags because when I went the first time I wanted to go every day. So we went once. That’s how we and I got used to it.</p>	<p>Initiating Event (“Big Picture”): to go to Six Flags and to ride waves</p> <p>Main Event (“Zoom in”): Details of ride a new wave “Mr. Six Pandemonium”</p> <p>Finale (“Back to big picture”): Get used to going to Six Flags</p>

Jose’s story was focused on describing his numerous visits to Six Flags and a new wave pool to boast his family’s visits to the class. The organizational structure of his recount had an initiating event, a main event, and a finale, exactly the way Wanda had scaffolded the organization of recounts. In the initiating event, he stated his visit to Six Flags and the wave pool, followed by a main event with detailed descriptions of his activities in the park. Specifically, he said that he went to the park twenty times and lost

his excitement or interest in going to the park. He continued to express his enthusiastic feelings toward the park while simultaneously contradicting himself by saying, “I hated to go there.” His actual intention in writing this way was to boast that he visited the park enough times to feel bored about going to the park, considering that the boys in the class often boasted about their visits or their plans to visit to each other in the unofficial classroom talks that I observed. To compete with other boys, Jose described the fun that he had with a new wave pool, Mr. Six Pandemonium, which he used with his brother. He described the waves as being so strong that both he and his brother were pushed out of the water. In the finale section, he finished his recount describing his feelings about visiting the amusement park twenty times by saying, “I got used to it.”

The salient register features of his recount were excessive use of a material process, *go*, to express the number of numerous visits to the amusement park (e.g., “go” and “went” 11 times out of 24 clauses). This repeated use of a grammatical structure such as the process type “went” with the deictic pronoun “I” provided heightened grammatical parallelism in his text, which is considered an inappropriate pattern in academic writing (Eggins, 1994). Another transitivity pattern is that his feeling changes related to visiting the park were expressed through mental processes such as “wanted,” “hated,” and “used to it.” He wrote his story in the declarative mood, drawing deictic pronouns as themes without having planned themes.

### **5.3.2.2 Jose’s Appropriation of Blogging**

When Jose’s recount was posted, his story triggered different reactions from his classmates, even though he received few comments because of his late posting. The following excerpts show the comments that Jose received from his classmates:

1. Dear Jose  
I think its great!  
Posted by: Anngie | December 15, 2005 at 01:25 PM

2. Dear jose,  
I really really like your story it re minds me of when i went to six flags  
new england.  
your friend, JAMSE  
Posted by: jame\$ | December 21, 2005 at 01:06 PM

3. dear Jose,  
That was a graet story. I went to six flags 20 times. It's not fun any more.  
Your friend,  
Ray  
Posted by: Ray | December 21, 2005 at 01:27 PM

In Comment 1, Anngie wrote complimentary statements about his writing without providing specific reasons, which continued to be one of the common ways of writing comments on each other's texts among the students. Regarding this kind of phatic feedback, Wanda often told the students to provide a specific reason for their compliments on others' texts. Some of the students started to provide reasons when they said they liked someone else's text, as seen in Comment 2. James stated that he "really really" liked Jose's story because his story reminded him of his own fun visit to Six Flags. In Comment 3, Ray also mentioned that he visited Six Flags twenty times, too, and added that Six Flags was "not fun any more" to him. As members of the same reading and writing group, Ray and Jose often competed with each other not only in schoolwork but also non-school activities. For example, in recounts writing, Ray wrote a story about receiving twenty dollars from the Tooth Fairy with the statement, "My best friend Jose got only 1 dollar." Responding to him, Jose wrote a comment that his father said that the Tooth Fairy does not exist. Similarly, when Dan wrote a story about visiting forty-three

houses for trick-or-treat on Halloween, Jose wrote a comment to him that he received one hundred candies. As seen in interactions, Jose, Ray, and Dan, who were close or best friends to each other, tended to compete for higher positions in various matters of interest. Jose wanted to write a story for the class blog that would lead to increased symbolic capital among his classmates (Bourdieu, 1991; Kramsch, 2007).

However, Jose's textual goal, to increase his symbolic capital by writing about impressive memories, was not achieved due to his mother's interference. Her insistence on writing a cute and funny story that included baby nicknames demonstrates differences between what Jose and his mother thought of writing a story for an expanded audience within the medium of a blog. To his mother, audiences were friends who had "personal" relationships and could have fun by talking about life stories. On the contrary, Jose perceived audiences as "public" others, with which he had competing relationships. He did not want the expanded audiences in the blog to continuously laugh at him about his nicknames. He planned to appropriate expanded audiences of blogging as an opportunity for him to construct a new self-image as a confident and dominant friend, not as the smallest "baby" boy. He rejected his mother's suggestion since writing about nicknames for baby Jose would not help him to achieve his goal, and tried to re-scribe this different identity in the class by writing new recount.

On another note, face was an important factor to Jose in exchanging feedback with others on the class blog. Regarding good or bad feedback, he stated (interview on May 11, 2006) that among the feedback he received, he liked complimentary comments or comments that gave specific points that need to be corrected, because those comments were not embarrassing. He mentioned that comments such as "You[r] story doesn't make

sense” were not good comments because they were not specific and were embarrassing to him. He was sensitive about saving not only his own face but also that of his peers. Indeed, when he wrote feedback on others’ texts, he wrote more specific comments for his peers in a way that connected his feedback comments to concrete examples (e.g., “your sentens needed to fix the last word like this too,” “your storey dosent make sens because you didnt do more detels.”). As such, Jose’s attention to the interpersonal function of blogging also extended to giving feedback on his peers’ stories in a way that saved other’s face as part of maintaining friendships.

Jose wrote multiple feedback comments on his peers’ stories, addressing a range of genre and register features of their texts such as organizational structure, lexico-grammatical features, and sharing similar experiences. However, due to his change of topic, Jose received less feedback than he had given and that other classmates had received. In addition, Jose did not blog at home, even though his family had a computer. His mother came to the class to learn how to use the class blog to help her family to write comments on Jose’s story. His family members, however, did not participate in blogging for Jose because they did not have expertise in using the Internet. According to Jose and his mother, the setting of his family computer did not show the full features of the webpage interface; they could read posted comments, but could not use the blog’s comment function. His family tried to support Joe’s blogging but could not support him actively the way that Maria’s mother did, due to a lack of cultural capital related to computer literacy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For those students who did not have a computer or an Internet connection, Wanda made class books that included the students’ recounts and comment sections. The students could sign up for the books to continuously share stories with their family members.

Jose's mother showed a gradual understanding of Jose's interest in and view of blog-mediated writing. After writing recounts, his mother more actively supported Jose's academic and social goal achievement on the class blog. When she came to the school for her volunteer work, she visited Jose's classroom once in a while throughout the school year and wrote comments on Jose's posted texts. For example, when the class learned about writing a report about animals, his mother wrote comments on Jose's text such as "I LOVE THE STORY YOU SHOW US AT HOME...KEEP THE GOOD WORK LOVE MOM" (April 12, 2006). She also wrote comments on Jose's writing on behalf of his sister and brother, such as "Keep the good work" and "I like your story very much." In my interview with him (May 11, 2006), Jose commented that what he liked about blogging was receiving comments on his story from friends and family members. In short, blogging was an avenue for Jose to develop academic literacies, to gradually increase his social status among members of his class, and to gain recognition from his family. I will explain how this kind of writing practice shaped Jose's developing knowledge of academic writing through an analysis of register variables in his recount.

### **5.3.2.3 Register Changes across Drafts of Jose's Recount**

As I explained, changes to Jose's story kept him from revising his first recount draft by drawing on feedback from the expanded audience. My analysis of his growing knowledge of the genre and register of recounts is based on his first draft of the story. Table 5.5 presents register features of Jose's recount at the clause level.

Table 5.5: Jose’s Recount

Jose’s Recount
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Last summer I went to six flags</li> <li>2. and I went to the waves.</li> <li>3. I wanted to go there every day.</li> <li>4. But when the days past</li> <li>5. I went to a new ride.</li> <li>6. It was called Mr. Six Pandemonium.</li> <li>7. My whole family was with me on six Flags in New England.</li> <li>8. Later I hated to go there</li> <li>9. every time we went to six flags</li> <li>10. I went to the water park 20 times</li> <li>11. and I got used to.</li> <li>12. I was well.</li> <li>13. If you don’t jump it,</li> <li>14. you will get pushed by the waves.</li> <li>15. They pushed me</li> <li>16. and my brother laid down.</li> <li>17. We got pushed very hard.</li> <li>18. We both tried the opposite way</li> <li>19. and we got out of the water.</li> <li>20. I went to six flags</li> <li>21. because when I went the first time</li> <li>22. I wanted to go every day.</li> <li>23. So we went once.</li> <li>24. That’s how we and I got used to it</li> </ol>

The transitivity of Jose’s recount shows that he performed the semiotic role of an “actor” who went to the Six Flags and engaged in all the activities in the park. The experiential meanings of the story were construed through the main participants (e.g., he and his brother) and action-oriented verbs such as material (e.g., “went,” “past,” “laid,” “tired” in Clauses, 1, 2, 4, 9, 16, 18, 21) and behavioral (e.g., “jump,” “push” in Clauses 13, 15) processes. This action-oriented story telling is congruent with the register of school-based recounts, but the chronological unfolding of events was not deployed in his recount, as seen in the multiple events and activities that were described separately. In

addition, the same grammatical structure of deictic pronouns and a material process such as “I went” or “We went” were frequently used, showing high grammatical parallelism (Eggins, 1994).

Jose expressed his changing attitudes toward Six Flags using mental processes (e.g., “wanted,” “hate” in Clauses 3, 8, 22) in an opposing way. He explained activities in the declarative mood, except for the subjunctive mood in Clauses 13 and 14, in which he explained the increased strength of waves in the pool. He used a limited number of evaluative words (e.g., “hate” in Clause 8), and represented his feelings in the opposite way. Instead of expressing a loving stance toward going to Six Flags with appraisal words that directly showed vivid affection, he relayed multiple visits to the park with a concrete number of visits, twenty times. In the same vein, he described the strength of the waves he and his brother had encountered by deploying the intensifying appraisal lexis “very hard” along with a passive construction, “got pushed.” The way in which Jose showed his excitement in a controlled way with concrete examples was an appropriate choice for the discourse of school-based recounts (Schleppegrell, 2004).

For the theme of his recount, Jose used deictic pronouns (e.g., *I, it, they, we, and that*) that were the participants for the actions of his story. Mostly, he did not provide specific circumstances for the participants’ actions by using unmarked themes, which lowered lexical density along with few uses of nominal groups as theme (Gebhard et al., 2007; Fang et al., 2006). He often employed textual themes rather than topical themes in connecting clauses, by using subordinating cohesive devices (e.g., “when,” “every time,” “if,” “because” in Clauses 4, 9, 13, 21), which increased the grammatical intricacy of his text, a feature of spoken discourse (Eggins, 1994). He employed no theme planning

between preceding rhemes and subsequent themes. The planned theme-and-rheme network is a key source of grammatical metaphors that constitute the synoptic discourse of academic texts. Table 5.6 summarizes the register features of Jose’s recount.

Table 5.6: Register Features of Jose’s Recount

Register system	First Draft
Transitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Material (“go” &amp; “went”)</li> <li>○ Behavioral</li> <li>○ Relational</li> <li>○ Few circumstances (e.g., time &amp; place)</li> </ul>
Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Declarative</li> <li>○ An example of Subjunctive</li> <li>○ Limited use of appraisal</li> </ul>
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reiteration of conversational themes (e.g., deictic pronouns )</li> <li>○ Frequent textual adjunct themes (e.g., “because,” “and” &amp; “so)</li> <li>○ Few marked themes</li> </ul>

### 5.3.3 Maria’s Blog-Mediated Recount Writing

#### 5.3.3.1 Maria’s Recount and Goals

Maria was repeating the second grade, which made her parents concerned about her academic achievement. They paid a lot of attention to her schoolwork by regularly checking her work and giving feedback on it. For example, her parents participated in their daughter’s school activities and willingly attended various class events that Wanda arranged, in addition to visiting the class blog regularly and writing feedback on her work. In supporting Maria in her academic achievement, her mother showed her how to use textual, social, and technical elements of blogging for her goal of gaining competent student status among her peers and teachers.

To scaffold Maria's recount, her mother visited school with her younger sister and made a presentation with Maria about her first birthday party to the class. Her mother also prepared hand-written stories about Maria's birthday (see Figure 5.1), which guided Maria's writing of her story. Maria composed her own story by making intertextual links to her mother's story, specifically, its contents and organizational structure (Pappas & Varelas, 2003). In their presentation, after reading their birth day stories to the class, Maria's mother showed pictures of her first birthday to the students with explanations, and talked about the details of her birthday.

After learning how to write a story in the genre of recounts through her mother's scaffolding and Wanda's explicit instruction, Maria wrote her own birthday story on paper first and then typed it on a computer for posting on the class blog. Table 5.7 shows the first draft of Maria's recount.

Table 5.7: Maria’s Recount

Maria’s First Draft	Text Organization
<p>Birthday make people happy. My family made a show of my 1st birthday .My birthday was Minnie I was Minnie I was dressed up like Minnie it was pike I had a cake that my mom did it was big, I had a birthday hat after we were playing games it was fun it was in my dad side of the family and it was in my grandma house my mom was scar because I fell and I had a big BO BOE [bruise]? And we ate a lot of stuff I opening my present I got a lot of stuff Minnie stuff I was 1st year old</p> <p>My mom was 19 and my dad was 20, we had soda and jolt and apples and we had fruits And I take picture with my family Ai was crying because my mom let me go then they I ran to my dad my mom take picker of the cake a nod then they sang to me my mom put fasting on my face I was crying and then I was happy because I aye cake when I was done my cake I was like a coined the my mom take picture then I was with my dad</p> <p>W e ail take a picture with me I was in the font first the table it was all of the e lift el kids and my mom take a picture of the cake the cake was good and we had ice cram it was cichlid and vinous It was good too and I had a lot of preens I was I a piecing everyone called me a little doll and said that I was a city and when I was sleep they will call me slopping girl so when I got home I fell asleep. The next day we ate cake because we had a little bit so we ate it when I was taking a bath my dad scorn me my mom said that when I go to school that she will buy me something I said yes and I got a Minnie toy if take.</p>	<p>Initiating Event (“Big Picture”): birthday</p> <p>Main Event (“Zoom in”): phase I birthday place, clothes, food, song, and picture</p> <p>Main Event (“Zoom in”): phase II Getting home The next day</p>

The first draft of Maria’s recount was considerably longer than the story she had written with her mother at home. After deleting the final sentence, “That is my 1<sup>st</sup> birthday,” Maria added more details such as her mother’s and father’s ages, taking pictures, eating ice cream, receiving a lot of presents, and the day after her birthday, by making intertextual links to what she had talked about to the class and the pictures that she had shown. The organizational structure of her recount was not congruent with what

Wanda had scaffolded for the students, in that it had only initiation and main events but not an ending. In initiating events for her recount, she added a “big picture”: “Birthday make people happy. My family made a show of my 1st birthday” to catch readers' attention. In the main event, Maria addressed a question asked by Wanda and other classmates, when her birthday was, a missing organizational element from her home-written story. She, however, commented on the ages of her mother and father, instead of saying the specific date and year of her birthday. Like other students, Maria also considered longer texts to have better quality and wanted to write a longer story than her peers. To meet the goal of writing a long text, she wrote about what had happened the day after her birthday.

A striking register feature of Maria's recount is grammatical intricacy, a high numbers of clauses, which is a discourse feature of spoken language (Eggins, 1994). She used no modified nominalizations with adjectives in her text, which increased the number of clauses. For example she wrote the sentences “I was dressed up like Minnie it was pike” and “we had ice cram it was cichlid and vinous” which could be combined into single sentences such as “I was dressed up like pink Minnie” and “We had chocolate and vanilla ice cream.” She used relational and material processes more frequently to note all the details, including food, presents, pictures, and so on with the main participant “I.” All the sentences were stated in the declarative mood and had no modulated or modalized sentences, which shows typical informal spoken discourse. In addition, excess use of reiterated deictic pronouns without theme planning corroborated spoken discourse features of her text.

### 5.3.3.2 Maria's Appropriation of Blogging

When her draft was posted on the class blog, she exchanged comments with her classmates and mother for academic and social goals. Their interactions in blogging included comments on text organization and conventional features, and compliments. Maria's peers mostly examined organizational features and conventions of her recount for academic purposes. Her mother utilized blogging as a tool for social purposes such as arranging Maria's birthday party, encouraging Maria's hard work, and expressing compliments on Maria's recount. I will first show the blog comments in which Maria was engaged with her classmates:

1. Dear Maria  
You have too many Periods. your friend  
Lianne  
Posted by: Lianne | December 19, 2005 at 10:48 AM
2. Dear Maria,  
That was a nice letter for your birthday  
Your Friend,  
Nalie Melendez  
Posted by: Nalie | December 19, 2005 at 10:41 AM
3. Dear Maria,  
I think it's a nice story. You have a good memory. You forgot to tell when was your birthday?  
Your friend,  
Anngie  
Posted by: Anngie | December 19, 2005 at 12:54 PM
4. Dear Maria,  
That was a nice story.Do you know that you have 6 and's  
your best friend  
Nalie melendez  
Posted by: Nalie | January 04, 2006 at 10:18 AM
5. Dear Maria,  
Were you cring.  
Your best friend Steven,  
Posted by: Steven | February 01, 2006 at 11:23 AM

Taking a teacher's role, Lianne stated in Comment 1 that Maria used too many periods by saying, "You have too many Piriodes," making intertextual links to what she had learned in Wanda's mini-lesson about "sentence fluency." One common feature among the second grade writers is that they did not use periods and produced chained sentences connected with the cohesive device *and*. Wanda addressed this issue in relation to registers of written texts, emphasizing the importance of using periods. Appropriating Wanda's scaffolding, Lianne wrote a comment on Maria's text as a confident student who understood the register features of school-based texts. Her knowledge of uses of a period, however, was in an emergent stage as seen in the comment, even though she knew that repeated use of the same lexical or conventional features decreases "sentence fluency" in writing. In Comment 4, Nalie also addressed "sentence fluency" issues by citing that her story had used the conjunction *and* six times. Both Lianne and Nalie made sure that Maria used the register features of written texts that their teacher had taught in her recount. In enacting the lexico-grammar of appropriate sentence combining for written texts, they performed themselves as experts while developing knowledge of the discourse of academic texts.

In Comment 3, Anngie commented that Maria needed to say when her birthday was by making an intertextual link to class discussions on Maria's home-written birthday story. As explained above, she chose not to state the specific date and year, even though Maria informed another student of the importance of the organizational element "when" in her story about illness, saying, "You forgot to till me when you got sick" (11/14/2005). I noticed that the students, who were repeating second grade, including Maria, were not willing to mention their age to the classmates and teachers. For example, in my

interviews, when I asked the repeating students their age, they hesitated to answer my question. Maria did not want to reveal the information to “everybody” on the class blog that she was repeating the second grade. To Maria and her classmates, the class blog was a social space for them to construct different identities as much as to develop confidence in academic matters.

Other than examining grammatical or conventional features relating to the mode of her recount, there were few feedback comments asking about the contents of the story or sharing personal experiences. Only Steven, who cried occasionally in the class, asked Maria in Comment 5 if she cried after she fell and was bruised. There were a few compliments patterned after phatic responses to maintain communications in the social space of the class blog (Malinowski, 1994; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). For instance, in Comment 2, Nalie praised Maria’s story without telling her why she thought that it was “a nice letter.” Similarly, Angie mentioned that Maria wrote a “nice story” along with a comment that she had a good memory as a reason for her compliment in Comment 3, without giving details about her text.

Another line of blogging that Maria was engaged in was with her mother. After the class presentation about Maria’s first birthday, her mother also participated in the revision processes of Maria’s recount in the class blog, and regularly provided support until completion of the recount. In doing so, her mother not only encouraged Maria’s hard work with her own and her co-workers’ compliments, but also communicated about other school-related matters. The following comments represent the interactions that Maria had with her mother after her first draft was posted on the class blog:

1. Hi Maria it is mom. ... Keep up the good work. Mommoy loves you a lot. ... I enjoyed going to your classroom and reading about your first birthday. ...Once

again I am very proud of you, keep up the good work.  
Love your mom  
Posted by: Mom | November 07, 2005 at 02:37 PM

2. Dear Mommy,  
I like your letter....You are a nice Mommy. I love you Mommy. I love your letter.  
Love,  
Maria  
Posted by: Maria | November 08, 2005 at 09:33 AM

3. Hi! Maria is mom again. I was expecting your response, I was happy when I saw it and read it. ... How did the other kids like your 1st birthday story? I hope that they enjoyed it because I did. You have a birthday coming soon, as Ms. Simpson that if on your birthday which lands on a Wednesday if I can bring you a cake so the kids can sing you Happy Birthday?  
Posted by: Mom | November 08, 2005 at 12:26 PM

4. I have been waiting for your response. I been looking everyday, but I do not see any response. Well I hope you write back to me.  
Love Mom  
Posted by: Mom | November 15, 2005 at 04:55 PM

In Comment 1, Maria's mother stated that she had enjoyed visiting the class to tell a story about Maria's birthday, along with her pride in and love for Maria. Her mother's comments focused on supporting Maria to build up confidence in academic work. Appropriating her mother's evaluative and encouraging comments, Maria wrote comments to show her appreciation and love to her mother in Comment 2. Her mother expressed her curiosity about other students' opinion about Maria's story in Comment 3, along with her wish that Maria's classmates liked her story as much as she had. As such, Maria's mother was utilizing blogging as a tool for achieving social purposes. In Comment 4, after not receiving any comment from Maria for a week, she wrote an anxious statement to elicit a response. These comment exchanges with her mother demonstrated for Maria the audiences in text production and interpersonal meanings that her recount would construe.

Maria's mother regularly wrote comments throughout the revision process, which was a great encouragement for Maria to be more engaged in school work. Specifically, her comments gave Maria confidence in her academic work by the fact that even her mother's coworkers praised her recount:

I am very proud of your work with your 1st Birthday story. I have printed it out and hung it up on the wall at work. Everybody in my job has read it and say it is very nice and interesting. I hope you keep up the good work and keep making mommy happy. I love you very much.

Talk to you soon.

Posted by: mom | December 20, 2005 at 02:42 PM

Maria's mother wrote that she was very proud of Maria, who wrote a recount good enough to make her coworkers say that it was a "very nice and interesting" story. She then added her hope that Maria would continue to do good work and to make her happy with academic success. After reading this comment, Maria showed the comments proudly to her peers and teachers to negotiate different textual and social relationships in the class through her recount. Her mother's keen use of the interpersonal function of blogging helped Maria to have a heightened awareness of expanded audiences, and inspired her to produce better texts, although her efforts were primarily motivated by a wish to increase the length of her texts.

As an active blogger, Maria's mother enjoyed opportunities to write to her daughter throughout the school year. For example, when the class wrote a report on animals, she wrote the following comments to check Maria's school work, as the following interactions show:

1. Hi, Baby

What are you doing today, You have not wrote back yet. That okay, I am just writing to see what is new for story writing. I hope you write back soon.

Love you,

Mom

Posted by: Mom | April 04, 2006 at 12:47 PM

2. DEAR MOM,  
I HAD TO WRITE TO MRS. SIMPSON ABOUT A KID THAT LIKE TO ROPE  
WITH HIS DAD AND GRANDPA.  
THIS WEEK WE AER WRITEING ABOUT SKUNKS I AM GOING TO FINISH  
IT THIS WEEK THAT YOU CAN RAED IT TO YOUR FRIENDS.  
LOVE  
MARIA

Posted by: maria | April 04, 2006 at 01:04 PM

3. dear mommy,  
Mommy i did post my letter it.... it is so fun to have a mom like you.  
love,  
Maria

Posted by: maria | April 09, 2006 at 11:35 AM

In Comment 1, Maria's mother took the teacher's role by asking what she wrote in school that day, along with a statement that she was waiting for Maria's response and a newly posted piece of writing. Replying to her mother, in Comment 2, Maria wrote that she was writing about skunks. Maria was clearly aware of the expanded audiences of her writing when she wrote, "I AM GOING TO FINISH IT THIS WEEK THAT YOU CAN RAED IT TO YOUR FRIENDS," meaning her mother's co-workers. When Maria posted her writing, she informed her mother about her new writing and expressed the pleasure of having a mother that checked and supported her school work on the class blog, in Comment 3. These blog interactions between Maria and her mother demonstrate how important it is having significant audiences when children learn academic genres.

Throughout the school year, Maria's mother participated in her textual practices by performing the teacher's role, and supported her in building up confidence in academic work. Comments showing her compliments, pride, and love for Maria were sources that enabled Maria to see herself as a capable student, and to become more

invested in school writing. For instance, in my interview with Maria (May 9, 2006), she stated that she used the spell checking function in Microsoft Word and fixed her story so that it would have no “red and green lines” and would be error-free, because her mother and her co-workers would read her texts. In addition, she used large font sizes and all capital letters to make her texts longer and different from others students’ texts. Indeed, Maria appreciated blogging with her mother as seen in her statement, “I like blogging because my mom blog me and I get to blog her back” (May 9, 2006). Her mother’s active support for increasing Maria’s textual and social status helped Maria to have a new self-image, perceiving herself as a “star,” in her words.

Maria also built new relationships with other family members using the class blog. For example, she taught her sister and cousins how to use the class blog at home when her aunt brought a laptop computer to her house. By doing so, Maria developed a different view of herself in relation to her mother, as seen in the comment, “She is lucky to have a daughter like me” (May 9, 2006). Blogging interactions allowed her to negotiate and perform different identities such as that of a confident, capable, and proud daughter and sister, not a struggling student who was repeating the second grade. Maria’s construction of different relationships through blogging led to an impact on her new self-image. In the next section, I will show how these blog-mediated interactions support her semiotic system development for writing conventional recounts.

### **5.3.3.3 Register Changes across Drafts of Maria’s Recount**

Blogging-mediated interactions led Maria to revise her story in a way that made her recounts more congruent with the register features of school-based recounts. Below, I explain the linguistic patterns of transitivity, appraisal, and textual cohesion in her

recount, in relation to her academic literacy development. In Table 5.8, boldface sections demonstrate changes across the drafts of Maria’s recount at the clause level.

Table 5.8: Changes across Maria’s Recount Drafts

First Draft	Final Draft
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Birthday make people happy.</li> <li>2. My family made a show of my 1st birthday.</li> <li>3. My birthday was Minnie</li> <li>4. I was Minnie</li> <li>5. I was dressed up like Minnie</li> <li>6. it was pike</li> <li>7. I had a cake</li> <li>8. that my mom did</li> <li>9. it was big,</li> <li>10. I had a birthday hat</li> <li>11. after we were playing games</li> <li>12. it was fun</li> <li>13. it was in my dad side of the family</li> <li>14. and it was in my grandma house</li> <li>15. my mom was scar</li> <li>16. because I fell</li> <li>17. and I had a big BO BOE?</li> <li>18. And we ate a lot of stuff</li> <li>19. I opening my present</li> <li>20. I got a lot of stuff Minnie stuff</li> <li>21. I was 1st year old</li>   <li>22. My mom was 19</li> <li>23. and my dad was 20,</li> <li>24. we had soda and jolt and apples</li> <li>25. and we had fruits</li> <li>26. And I take picture with my family</li> <li>27. Ai was crying</li> <li>28. because my mom let me go</li> <li>29. then they I ran to my dad</li> <li>30. my mom take picker of the cake</li> <li>31. a nod then they sang to me</li> <li>32. my mom put fasting on my face</li> <li>33. I was crying</li> <li>34. and then I was happy</li> <li>35. because I aye cake</li> <li>36. when I was done my cake</li> </ol>	<p>My 1st birthday</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Birthday make people happy.</li> <li>2. My family made a show of my 1st birthday.</li> <li>3. My birthday <b>dress</b> was Minnie.</li> <li>4. I was Minnie.</li> <li>5. I was dressed up like Minnie.</li> <li>6. It was <b>pink</b>.</li> <li>7. I had a cake</li> <li>8. that my mom made.</li> <li>9. It was big.</li> <li>10. I had a birthday hat</li> <li>11. after we were playing games.</li> <li>12. It was fun.</li> <li>13. It was in my dad side of the family.</li> <li>14. It was in my grandma house.</li> <li>15. My mom was <b>scared</b></li> <li>16. because I fell.</li> <li>17. I had a big <b>bruise</b>.</li> <li>18. We ate a lot of stuff.</li> <li>19. I <b>opened</b> my present.</li> <li>20. I got a lot of stuff.</li> <li>21. Minnie stuff I was 1st year old.</li>   <li>22. My mom was 19</li> <li>23. and my dad was 20.</li> <li>24. We had soda and juice, and fruits.</li> <li>25. I <b>took</b> pictures with my family.</li> <li>26. <b>My mom let me go</b></li> <li>27. <b>because I was crying</b>.</li> <li>28. I ran to my dad.</li> <li>29. My mom took pictures of the cake <b>and nod</b>.</li> <li>30. They sang to me.</li> <li>31. My mom put <b>frosting</b> on my face.</li> <li>32. I was crying</li> <li>33. and then I was happy</li> <li>34. because I <b>ate</b> cake.</li> </ol>

<p>37. I was like a coined  38. the my mom take picture  39. then I was with my dad</p> <p>40. We e ail take a picture with me  41. I was in the font first the table  42. it was all of the e lift el kids  43. and my mom take a picture of the cake  44. the cake was good  45. and we had ice cram  46. it was cichlid and vinous  47. It was good too  48. and I had a lot of preens  49. I was I a piecing  50. everyone called me a little doll  51. and said that I was a city  52. and when I was sleep  53. they will call me slopping girl  54. so when I got home  55. I fell asleep.  56. The next day we ate cake  57. because we had a little bit  58. so we ate it  59. when I was taking a bath  60. my dad scorn me  61. my mom said  62. that when I go to school  63. that she will buy me something  64. I said yes  65. and I got a Minnie toy  66. if take.</p>	<p>35. When I was done <b>with</b> my cake,  36. I was like <b>a queen</b>.  37. <b>My mom took a picture of me and my dad</b>.</p> <p>38. We <b>took</b> a picture with me.  39. I was in the font of the table.  40. <b>It was all of the kids</b>.  41. My mom took a picture of the cake.  42. The cake was good.  43. We had ice cram.  44. It was <b>chocolate and vanilla</b>.  45. It was good too.  46. I had a lot of cream.  47. I was pleased.  48. Everyone called me a little doll.  49. When I was <b>sleeping</b>  50. they called me a <b>sleeping</b> girl.  51. So when I got home  52. I fell asleep.  53. The next day we ate cake  54. because we had a little bit.  55. So we ate it.  56. When I was taking a bath  57. my dad <b>scared</b> me.  58. My mom said  59. that when I go to school  60. that she will buy me something.  61. I said “yes”  62. and I got a Minnie toy.</p>
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Maria’s recount was action-oriented, aligning with the register features of conventional recounts. Maria mentioned the events of her first birthday party in chronological order, moving from her birthday to the following day. The absence of an unfolding main event of the party, however, made her recount incongruent with the register of school-based recounts that construe experiential meanings through chronologically unfolding sequenced events to the main event. She listed activities such as eating cake, taking pictures, accidentally falling, and opening presents, by drawing on

material process (e.g., “ate,” “call,” “got,” “had,” “make,” “open,” “put,” “scare,” “take” in Clauses 2, 19, 20, 32, 35, 50, 56, 59, 60). She explained how she was dressed up and how happy she was by using relational processes (e. g., “was” in Clauses, 3-6, 21-23, 33-34, 49), often seen as less congruent with the register of conventional recounts. To make intertextual links to her mother’s and family members’ comments into the story, she also employed verbal process (e.g., “said” in Clauses 6, 51). With the exception of a few nominal subjects (e.g., “birthday and my mom”), most of the participants were introduced using deictic pronouns (e.g., “I, and it”) with unmarked themes, which made her texts less lexically dense.

Maria described the activities of participants such as family members through declarative statements, without use of modalized or modulated clauses. This mood feature suggests that the constructed interpersonal relationship between writer and reader is informal, following the discourse of spoken texts (Eggins, 1994; Schleppegrell, 2003; Thompson, 1996). Her controlled use of feelings about the birthday party (e.g., only three times did she say she was “happy” in Clauses 1 & 34, and “piecing [pleased] in Clause 49) allows readers to conclude reading the recount with the feeling that she intended for the story (Schleppegrell, 2004). To this end, she illustrated extravagant features of the party (e.g., plentiful and diverse food, a big cake, numerous guests, many presents) by using appraisal words (e.g., “big, good, fun, a lot of” in Clauses 9, 12, 18, 44).

Congruent with the register of conventional recounts, Maria used mostly past tense with the exception of occasionally mixing present tense (e. g., “take” in Clause 26) and future tense (e.g., “will call, will buy” in Clauses 53 and 63). She did not use a period between sentences, and constructed chained sentences using additive conjunctions (e.g.,

*an, then*). Like many other classmates, she used iterative themes with the same deictic pronouns without deployed theme planning that is the register feature construing coherence between sentences in academic texts. Subordination with adverbial clauses was used when she provided reasons for reactions (e.g., “because” in Clauses 16, 28, and 36) and time or sequences of activities (e.g., “after” and “when” in Clauses 11, 36, and 59). These grammatical patterns led to few modified nominalizations with adjectives in her text, and the heightened grammatical intricacy realized through an increased number of clauses made her recount less aligned with the register of academic texts.

The bold sections in her final draft are the changes that Maria made between the first and final drafts of her recount. Most of the changes were connected to the mode of the register of her text. The biggest change is that Maria did not make any chained sentences with additive conjunctions such as “*and*, and *then*,” but instead used a period between sentences. Some of them were made from audience suggestions, and others were from use of the Word spell checking function that she enjoyed using. Several of her classmates commented on this aspect of not using the same linguistic item repetitiously, something they had learned in Wanda’s instruction on sentence fluency. With regard to use of connective devices, Maria not only deleted unnecessary instances of “and” and “then,” but also tightened coherence between clauses by putting subordinate conjunctions in the correct place (e.g., changing from “Ai was crying because my mom let me go” to “My mom let me go because I was crying.”). She used past tense throughout the story, except for the use of future tense in Clause 60. Maria had a clear understanding that all the activities of her first birthday needed to be stated in the past tense. She did not add any information related to the temporal organizational element (e.g., *when*) that Wanda

and her peers asked for up to the final draft. One thing to note is that she did not make changes to her text in terms of the transitivity of field, which addresses participants' process patterns, or in terms of the tenor, which illuminates her stance toward the first birthday party or position with readers. A lack of changes in field and tenor shows that these components of writing are not easy concepts for emergent writers to capture. Table 5.9 summarized register features of Maria's recount explained above.

Table 5.9: Register Changes across Maria's Recount Drafts

Register system	First Draft	Final Draft
Transitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Material</li> <li>○ Relational</li> <li>○ Verbal</li> <li>○ Few circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Material</li> <li>○ Relational</li> <li>○ Verbal</li> <li>○ Few circumstances</li> </ul>
Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Declarative</li> <li>○ Controlled use of attitudinal and judgmental appraisal words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Declarative</li> <li>○ Controlled use of attitudinal and judgmental appraisal words</li> </ul>
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reiteration of deictic pronouns</li> <li>○ Frequent textual themes</li> <li>○ Unmarked themes</li> <li>○ Heightened grammatical intricacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reiteration of deictic pronouns</li> <li>○ Frequent textual themes</li> <li>○ Unmarked themes</li> <li>○ Heightened grammatical intricacy</li> </ul>

#### 5.4 Summary

Blog-mediated writing provided new contexts for ELLs' academic writing, including expanded audiences, semiotic repertoires, and roles. The students appropriated the expanded audiences of blog-mediated writing to achieve academic and social goals. Their social goals reflected concerns about and interest in schooling, and often became a steering force (Bakhtin, 1981) for blog interactions and academic goal achievement. Interactions with diverse audiences used cultural and linguistic resources from the

domains of school, home, and peer life, and negotiated and performed various roles beyond institutionally afforded ones.

In writing recounts through the mediation of blogging, the participants pursued different social goals for their writing. Diany appropriated blogging as an opportunity to maintain friendship and gain social recognition among friends by sharing feelings about her trip to Puerto Rico with her audiences. In a similar vein, Jose was interested in enhancing his social status among close and competing male classmates, by relating his numerous visits to and impressive experiences at Six Flags. Maria was focused on constructing new relationships with her audiences as a successful student, by sharing special activities about her first birthday party. For their goals, Diany composed a feeling-oriented story with a substantial number of appraisal words, taking the semiotic role of “feeler,” whereas Jose and Maria wrote more action-oriented recounts with material processes for their actions by taking the semiotic roles of “actors.”

In blog interactions, Diany and her peers shared similar experiences and related feelings with each other. Similarly, Maria’s blog interactions with her audiences focused on building her identity as a capable student. Specifically, her mother took a teacher’s role and actively supported Maria in achieving social goals throughout text production processes. Differently from Diany’s and Maria’s experiences, Jose could not achieve his goal of securing higher social status among his competing male friends through blogging, partly because of his mother’s different opinions about writing recounts for the blog. In these textual practices, the students often negotiated and constructed different social relationships with their family members and teachers as confident students and as proud daughters and sons.

In their social interactions on the blog, the students used conventional genre and register features as semiotic repertoires to interact with expanded audiences for their own important social purposes. Such textual practices led them not only to achieve social goals, but also to produce texts that were more congruent with school-valued recounts. These opportunities gradually led them to understand that academic genres could change based on contexts and functions, even though their understanding at the moment mainly concerned the mode of their texts. In the next chapter, I explore the experiences that the focal students had in writing persuasive letters to obtain computers for their school. Specifically, I explicate how having a designated audience with the same goal for writing shaped linguistic choices for their letters, and their understanding of other register variables beyond the mode of texts.

## CHAPTER 6

### PERSUASIVE LETTER WRITING

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a description of the three focal students' experiences writing persuasive letters in a blog-mediated environment. During this curricular unit, Wanda and her students appropriated blog-mediated learning of a persuasive written genre for the achievement of the students' common interests, similar to what occurred when blogging practices were used for collaborative social action. In this unit, the students wrote grant application letters to a local organization to obtain computers for the school by drawing on their experiences with the blog. My exploration will highlight how the participants appropriated their own experiences of blog-mediated language learning to address their concerns through collaborative social action, how the focal students' individual interests in blogging contributed to the achievement of the collective goal, and how having a designated audience and a shared goal shaped the participants' blog-mediated academic writing development.

In the first section of the chapter, I describe the situational context of the students' persuasive letter writing by detailing the scaffolding activities of Wanda's curriculum. This reflects her efforts to support the ELL students in learning the academic genre through meaningful activities that generated important outcomes in their lives. In the second section, I introduce the experiences of the focal students in writing to address problems and to make changes in their school, through an analysis of their composed letters and their language processes in exchanged comments on the blog and in offline

class interactions. Then, I explore changes and differences in the students' uses of academic language over time through a SFL analysis of drafts of their persuasive letters.

## **6.2 Context of Situation for Persuasive Letter Writing**

The objective of persuasive letter writing is to provide the students with experiences using academic literacies for meaningful purposes such as solving problems that they face in their lives. Specifically, aligned with the “pedagogy of engagement” (Pennycook, 1999, 2001), this curricular unit was designed to offer an opportunity to discuss on the blog issues they faced in school and in their communities, and to take action to solve these issues collaboratively. When the students brainstormed concerns that they had at school, they identified problems in their school such as having little toilet paper and no computer lab. They decided to tackle the lack of computers in the school, and suggested fund raising for computers or borrowing computers as possible solutions. Taking up the students' ideas, Wanda suggested the idea of writing a letter to grant agencies to get computers for the school by explaining to the students what a persuasive letter could do to solve the problem. She helped the students to see that academic writing can be an apparatus for solving problems in school, peer, and home worlds. To scaffold an expanded view of using school-based writing, she planned for the students to review blogging experiences that they had had over the course of the school year. They had opportunities to review the academic and social goals that they achieved for their learning, friendship building, and parent's participations in blog-mediated writing.

The situational context for persuasive letter writing was for the second grade students to write letters to local grant agencies to obtain computers for their school.

Wanda's instruction on the register of persuasive letters focused on explicitly teaching (1)

patterns of persuasive ideas as the field of the letter, (2) interpersonal stances between the student writers and their designated audience regarding the tenor of writing, and (3) a formal persuasive letter as the mode of their grant letter writing. The genre moves were presented in a way that emphasized how to present a thesis statement as a proposed solution for tackling a problem. In the case of letter writing, the students had already been posting blog comments as letters, and were familiar with the general structural organization of letters. In the following section, I will describe how Wanda scaffolded the register variables of their persuasive letter-writing project.

### **6.2.1 Field: Transitivity Types Appropriate for Persuasion**

To scaffold the field of persuasive letter writing, Wanda introduced a range of persuasive essays written for multiple purposes, such as convincing readers about new ideas, changing rules, and obtaining grants. Wanda, who was experienced teaching persuasive writing to ELL students (see Gebhard et al., 2007), taught appropriate linguistic patterns for each persuasive action in ways that showed interactive relationships between different contexts of situation and linguistic choices. This kind of explicit instruction highlighted functions of language for specific purposes and audiences. In this curricular unit, scaffolding activities of transitivity or process types were designed to help students understand how different ideas are construed into process type choices.

As a starting activity, the students engaged in choosing process types in persuasive writing, to convince others by respecting different opinions. The students wrote to convince others whether or not to squash a bug after reading a story book, *Hey, Little Ant*, written by Phillip and Hannah Hoose (May 22, 2006). This activity mirrored a writing arguments unit that addressed the guilt or innocence of “Ned Kelly”

(Derewianka, 2000, Chapter 7) that she had read in an ACCELA course. For this activity, Wanda and the class read the book aloud, and studied mental process types relating to taking and arguing a position with images embedded in the story, as seen in Figure 6.1, the cover of *Hey, Little Ant*. As for appropriate lexical choices to achieve this kind of rhetorical goal, Wanda taught them to use mental processes such as “I think . . . I agree that . . . [and] But I also think . . .” or “I agree with . . . and I disagree with . . .”

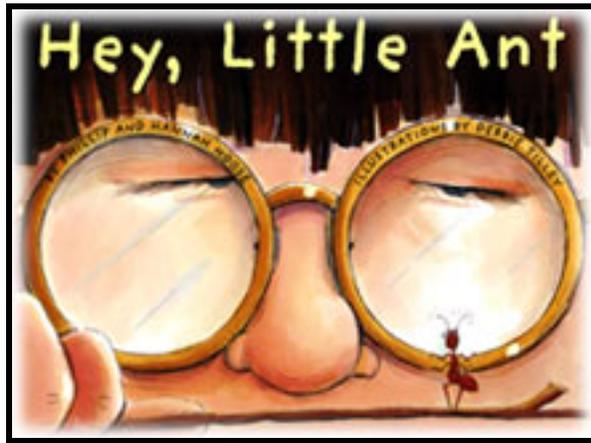


Figure 6.1: Cover of *Hey, Little Ant* (Phillip & Hannah Hoose, 1992)

After reading the book, Wanda asked students to take a side on this matter and to talk about reasons for their decision. Based on the class discussion, the students were invited to write a text to convince other people of their position. Wanda emphasized that they needed to win over different opinions through a respectful approach, since there was “no right or wrong decision.”

Another scaffolding activity that the students engaged in was to write a letter suggesting a change to others. In her scaffolding, Wanda drew on a problem that the students had encountered while using a local library. The class visited this library every Friday morning and had language arts classes there, as mentioned in Chapter 4. The students borrowed books or videos from the library to use at home throughout the school

year. Two students, Jose and Anngie, were charged overdue fines even though they had returned the borrowed books. The class discussed issues related to procedures for returning library materials to help Jose and Anngie identify what caused the problems and to suggest a possible solution. The students learned appropriate process types for suggesting that the return sign be lowered closer to eye level for children, and to put a return box outside the library. Wanda explicitly taught the students ways of suggesting a solution for the problem by drawing on mental and material process types such as “We think,” “You could provide . . .,” and “Please consider . . .” Following this whole-class discussion, the two students wrote a letter to deliver to a librarian on the following Friday when the class visited the library.

Drawing on these kinds of pre-writing activities, Wanda taught the students the field of writing a letter asking for school computer funding to grant agencies. Her scaffolding enacted a process of defining a situation type and then selecting linguistic resources for its experiential meaning. In addition, highlighting interconnected relationship between ideational and interpersonal metafunctions, she supported the students in using appraisal lexis to heighten the experiential meaning of persuasion. For example, in Table 6.1 (May 23, 2006), a class discussion focused on what counts as persuading as opposed to begging, as seen in the following excerpt of class interactions on jointly constructing an idea organizer for the class letter:

1. Mrs. Simpson: Why are you writing the letter in the first place?
2. Keisha: Cause we want to have computers.  
*// noise//*
3. Mrs. Simpson: So. We will back to that. As you can see, Mr., Mrs. um.

(Pointing to what she wrote on the paper with her hand.)

We really (Writing the word really on the paper).

Here we go. Someone say beg.

4. Keisha: No.

5. Ray: We (Jean and Lianne turned around to look at Ray)

6. Mrs. Simpson: You know there is a way to ask. Almost seems like begging. It's not. [ ]

//(Steven turned around to look at Ray.) //

Right? Isn't there a way to do that? (Receiving some debris from Joyce and throwing it into the garbage can near her chair)

7. Julia: Please, please, please.

8. Daquan: Stop begging.

9. Mrs. Simpson: =That will be begging.

10. Anngie: //Please XXX//

11. Mrs. Simpson: We can use words like we really (writing what she is saying on the paper).

12. John: How about Mrs. Simpson, How about?

13. Ray: = Oh, Mrs. Simpson. We could put we really, really, really really, really, really, and really.

14. Keisha: Okay. That inco-. (Keisha also turned around to see Richard).

15. Maria: //That's actually begging. (Looking at Ray)//
16. Mrs. Simpson: What are you guys doing here (Gesturing thinking with her hand)? We really want to continue my our what?
17. Maria: = //Yeah. We don't wanna  
really really really really  
really really (look at Ray)//
18. Anngie: Our blogging.

In Turn 1 of this transcript, Wanda emphasized the goal of writing by asking why they were writing this letter, to show the appropriate process and lexis for experiential meaning in their letter writing. The response from Keisha in Turn 2 reminded the class that they sought to obtain computers for the school. Drawing on Keisha's answer, Wanda demonstrated how to restate their goal using proper appraisal lexis such as "really" in the letter to convey desperation (in Turn 3). In regard to achieving this goal, Wanda stated, "Someone say beg," creating a forum for examining the ideational function that the students might commonly use to obtain what they wanted from others. The idea of begging was rejected as an action for the class to take when Keisha said "No" in Turn 4. Ray tried to suggest ideas but was stopped in Turn 5. Acknowledging Keisha's rejection, Wanda encouraged the students to think of a way to ask which "almost seems like begging" but "[i]t's not" in Turn 6. Responding to the verbal process "ask," Julia suggested repeating the appraisal lexis *please*—"Please, please, please" in Turn 7—as she often did when asking for something from teachers or parents. Julia's suggestion was judged inappropriate for a persuasive letter and was asked to "stop begging" by Daquan in Turn 8. Endorsing Daquan (Turn 9), Wanda suggested in Turn 11 use of an appraisal

word “really” as an alternative lexical choice that would carry less informal discourse and would be more appropriate for a formal persuasive letter. Reacting to Wanda’s suggestion, Ray proposed writing down “really” multiple times to show heightened persuasive force, in Turn 13. Ray’s repetitious use of “really” caught his classmates’ attention, leading to Maria telling him that repetitious use of “really” is “begging” rather than “asking,” in Turn 15.

As such, the students learned register variables of persuasive letter writing as an interconnected entity. That is, they learned that appraisal adjuncts such as “please” and “really” could be semiotic resources for experiential meaning that make their letter sound like persuasion, rather than begging. They developed knowledge of not only the field itself, but also its dynamic relationship with other variables such as the tenor of their grant letter, in construing experiential and interpersonal meanings with linguistic choices from the semiotic system of language.

### **6.2.2 Tenor: Formal Interpersonal Relationships**

A key feature of how the students learned the tenor of persuasive letter writing is grounded in knowing who was designated the audience for the letter and what the appropriate “vocatives” or terms of address were (Eggins, 1994; Poynton, 1984) that would suit the interpersonal relationships the students had with their audience. Writer’s interpersonal relationships are categorized into formal and informal situation types according to their correlations along the dimensions of power, frequency of contact, and affective involvement. Formal situations involve “unequal, hierarchic power, infrequent, or one-off contact, and low affective involvement,” whereas informal situation are associated with “equal power, frequent contact, and high affective involvement” (Eggins,

1994, p. 65). Choices of vocatives are construed by contextual constraints of tenor and indicate the realization of interpersonal meanings.

The audiences that the students had been writing to over the course of the school year included classmates, family members, teachers, and a librarian through activities such as friendly letter writing and blog comments. They did not have experience writing letters to someone who was unfamiliar and hierarchically unequal in a non-reciprocal way. Wanda planned to teach the students that a formal writing situation, like writing a grant application letter, is different from informal writing situations with which they were familiar, in ways that show different choices of vocatives when calling one another to get attention. For this instructional goal, she invited one of the ACCELA professors, Pam Pauline, to the class blog and provided opportunities for the students to have a discussion about their blogging activities. When the professor posted her comment on the blog, the students started to inquire who she was and how to address her in their responses to her questions. Wanda explicitly taught the students that the appropriate vocatives for the professor are ones that show their “respect” for her such as “Professor Pauline, Dr. Pauline, Professor Pam, or Dr. Pam.” Wanda posted a note with these vocatives on the wall for the students’ reference. Most of the students wrote back to the professor answering the questions she had posed. The following are excerpts from the fifteen comments exchanged between the professor and the students which illustrate the constructed interpersonal relationships among them:

1. Dear Simpson kids,  
I am very interested in your letters. I am a professor at UMASS. I know Ms. Simpson and Ms. Dong Shin. I think computers are important tools for learning to read and write. Looking at your website, I see that you have learned a lot from blogging. Will you write back and tell me more about what you've learned? ...  
Sincerely,

Pam Pauline

Posted by: Pam Pauline | May 30, 2006 at 10:55 PM

2. Dear pam Pauline

I learned how to use computer's and how to type. It was fun because my mom can write to me and other people write to me. Can you look at my storie's and write back to me?

sincerely

Anngie lopez,

Posted by: anngie | May 31, 2006 at 01:13 PM

3. dear dr. pam

i learnd that i am saposto read people storys and blog to them about what i like about there storys or reports.

sinslerly,

kate

Posted by: kate | June 01, 2006 at 10:19 AM

4. dear dr.Pauline

Befor I did't know how

to make leeters biger and now I do. please write back and I am in the same class as jocelyn.

sincerly Daquan

Posted by: Daquan salcedo | June 01, 2006 at 10:29 AM

5. Dear Dr.Pauline

I learned how to type. And we learned how to type fast its called typing program. its hard at first but when you get youst to it. It aint hard because you already got youst to it.

Sincerly,

Lianne

Posted by: Lianne | June 01, 2006 at 10:34 AM

While Professor Pauline started her letter with an explanation of who she was, she introduced herself as a “UMASS” professor in Comment 1. After expressing her thoughts about computers as a tool for leaning how to read and write, she further asked the students about what they had learned through blogging. She finished her comment letter with a formal complimentary close, “Sincerely.” After reading the professor’s questions, the students started to respond to her questions by drawing on vocatives such as “Dr.

Pauline or Professor Pauline” that they had decided in their class discussion to use to address the professor. Moreover, most of the students used “Sincerely” for their closing statement by appropriating what the professor wrote as seen in Comments 2-5 instead of “Love,” which is one of the most common complimentary closes they had been using in blog comments. It is worth noting that the students had not discussed how to close a letter or blog comment for a person who is unknown and hierarchically unequal to them. The lexical choices that the students used as vocatives for the professor illustrate that they had an understanding of the formal tenor of the situational context in which they were writing to a professor that they had not met before.

Drawing on the students’ understanding of a formal relationship, Wanda informed the students that they were going to write their letters to computer company owners such as Bill Gates. Wanda’s scaffolding allowed them to know who Bill Gates is and how he could help them to obtain computers for their school.

### **6.2.3 Mode: Formal Business Letter**

Following explicit instruction on the field and tenor of register variables in their grant letter writing, Wanda brainstormed ideas for a class letter to Bill Gates with the students. For their discussion, Wanda utilized an organizer that displayed the genre moves and organizational structures of the letters. Their discussion about possible content for relevant organizational stages led the students to an opportunity to naturally learn the mode of their letters while learning other register variables. Figure 6.1 is the organizer for a letter that Wanda wrote with her students.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Persuasive Letter (Convince)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">May 22, 2006</p> <p>Dear Mr./Ms. _____, To Whom It may Concern:</p> <p>(a) Catchy: We know that you are a busy person and that you . . .</p> <p>(b) Thesis: We need computers to blog, teach others, learned how to use them, publish, to help others at our school</p> <p>(c) Examples *We had:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·blog (web log)</li> <li>·learned to use computers</li> <li>·learned to write to others</li> <li>friendly letter, reports, recounts, family writing</li> <li>·taught other students in another classroom to use the computers on the blog</li> </ul> <p>(d) Problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·give back on June 15</li> <li>·most don't have computers in their homes</li> <li>·no computer lab at our school</li> <li>·can't pay the high cost of a computer</li> </ul> <p>(e) Solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·lower the cost for our classroom</li> <li>·please consider giving us a computer</li> </ul> <p>(f) As you can see, Mr./Ms. _____, we really want to continue the blog, our projects, our . . .</p>
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Figure 6.2: Organizer for Brainstorming Persuasive Letter

After helping the students to brainstorm ideas for the persuasive letter through their blogging experiences, Wanda encouraged them to pay attention to these organizational structures by asking about the order among these ideational components in relation to the orientation and organizational structure. That is, her instruction on the

mode of the letter focused on how to organize ideational elements according to the structural configuration of presenting a “catchy comment,” “thesis,” “example,” “problem,” “solution,” and “restatement thesis.” When the students finished drafts of their letters, Wanda asked them to check if the letters had all the organizational elements in the correct order. Presenting organizational structures in connection with the cohesion of experiential meanings provided the students with an opportunity to see how the textual meanings of persuasive letters are carried by the formal discourse of their grant letters.

### **6.3 Focal Students’ Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing Practices**

This section examines how the students’ learning of register variables of persuasive letter writing shaped their composition of blog-mediated grant letters. In particular, I will examine how having the same goal and a designated audience for persuasive letter writing was realized in the students’ experiential, interpersonal, and textual choices of their texts (see Butt et al., 2006, for the realization of same contexts of situation into texts). First, I will examine their letters by focusing on the participants’ appropriation of and reflections on their blog-mediated learning experiences for their collective goal and individual goals. Then, through SFL analysis of the students’ blog comments and letters, I will examine the kinds of linguistic choices the students made to achieve the goal of obtaining computers, and the ways this textual practice shaped their academic literacy development. Below, I will present the focal participants’ persuasive letters and interactions on the blog.

#### **6.3.1 Diany’s Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing**

##### **6.3.1.1 Diany’s Letter and Goals**

Drawing on the register variables of the persuasive letter that Wanda scaffolded,

Diany wrote her letter to Bill Gates. She composed her letter by making intertextual links to the genre orientation and register variables of the letter that had been co-constructed with Wanda. Table 6.1 presents the first draft of Diany’s letter<sup>1</sup>.

Table 6.1: First Draft of Diany’s Letter

<b>Diany’s Persuasive Letter</b>	<b>Text Organization</b>
<p><b>May 22, 2006</b></p> <p><b>Dear Mr. Gates,</b></p> <p><b>We need a computer. We need a computer to blog. May you give me one. “Please.” We all know you are a buy man. You use your computers wisely. This is really important to us. Next year people want to learn to type like this year like us.</b></p> <p><b>We don’t have that much money. It will so sad if next year there’s know computers.</b></p> <p><b>This is really important to me cause we need computers to study learn and to type so “please” give us some for next year.</b></p> <p><b>Love</b></p> <p><b>Diany M Santos</b></p> <p><b>Simpson Kids</b>  <b>Fuentes Community School</b>  <b>200 Binie Ave. Greenville MA</b></p>	<p>Thesis</p> <p>Catchy: “You us your computers wisely.”</p> <p>Problem</p> <p>Restatement of thesis</p>

Diany’s first draft demonstrates her developing understanding of register variables related to the situation of persuasive letter writing. The field of persuasive letters is realized in her linguistic choices describing actions such as “need,” “give,” “use,” and “learn.” These material processes construct the experiential meaning of the

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<sup>1</sup> The letters in this chapter are direct copies of letters posted in the class blog. Diany typed her letter in boldface.

letter in a way that Diany, as a legitimate persuader, asked Mr. Gates, who is described as someone who uses computers “wisely.” Diany borrowed this comment about Gates’ use of computers from their class discussion. Through construction of this intertextual link, she intended to imply that granting computers to her school to help students to “study, learn, and blog” the following year would be another way for him to use his computers wisely. The tenor is established in a mixed interpersonal relationship in which she showed both formal and personal relationships with the reader of her letter, the grant provider. At the beginning of the letter, she displayed a formal stance, saying, “May you give me one.” Finishing her letter, however, Diany overrode the formal relationship she had constructed with an informal one by writing “Love” to demonstrate her affable stance toward the reader. The mode of the letter was expressed through the organizational format of formal business letters, as seen in the address of the complimentary close, in addition to the genre moves of persuasive essays that Diany appropriated from the letter composed in class. Diany’s use of boldface font demonstrated her growing expertise in using computers, something that she frequently showed to the teachers and her classmates.

#### **6.3.1.2 Diany’s Appropriation of Blogging**

When her letter was posted on the class blog, her classmates wrote feedback on the letter, appropriating what they had discussed during composition of the class letter. The feedback that Diany received from her classmates predominantly pointed out her inappropriate lexical choices for the complimentary close of a persuading letter to Mr. Gates. In their feedback, her classmates reminded her to construct formal interpersonal meaning appropriate for her grant application letter, as seen in the following excerpts:

1. Dear Diany,  
I like your letter because you didn't use please too much time. You need to use sincerely instead of love.

Sincerely  
By

Jose  
Posted by: jose Ramos | May 30, 2006 at 11:08 AM

2. Dear Diany  
I like your letter. you need to use sincerely instead of love. and you put buy instead of busy.

your friend daquan  
Posted by: daquan salcedo | May 30, 2006 at 01:33 PM

In Comment 1, Jose first wrote to Diany that he liked her letter because she did not overuse “please [please],” which reflected what the class had discussed about the issue of repeated use of appraisal adjuncts to represent intensification of one’s assertions, such as “please” and “really.” Diany was also accustomed to a narrative style of spoken discourse like her classmates, and showed difficulties using abstract and synoptic elements of written discourse for her letter. In particular, she had social, informal, and dynamic relationships with readers rather than individual, formal, and distant stances. Continuing to use informal discourses of everyday language in her grant letter, she used “Love” as a complimentary close of her letter instead of “Sincerely.” This informal lexis led Jose to remind Diany of the inappropriate lexical choice that she had made.

Following Jose’s comment, most of Diany’s classmates pointed out her inappropriate tenor for a persuasive letter. In Comment 2, Daquan commented on her inaptly chosen appraisal lexis “Love,” suggesting use of “Sincerely,” which was suitable for a formal letter. The students’ feedback helped Diany to have knowledge of tenor for her grant application letter, by showing the appropriate lexis for formal complimentary

closes such as “Sincerely.” It is important to note that the students pointed out incongruent lexico-grammar in connection with register variables such as tenor first, and then pointed out mechanical conventions. This kind of comment demonstrates different approaches to understanding language and its use other than focusing on fixed structures and mechanical conventions.

Her classmates’ comments on the tenor of Diany’s letter led her to make the same suggestions for other classmates’ letters, by pointing out incongruent lexical choices for the tenor. On a similar note, she responded to Jose, who had pointed out first her improper lexical choice by commenting that she would change her complimentary close and use a “right” one, “Sincerely,” as seen in the following comment excerpt:

Dear jose  
I will do sincerly cause thats inbarisen  
to write love to mr gates that's NOT right  
  
love diany

Posted by: Diany santos | May 30, 2006 at 12:25 PM

Diany stated that it was embarrassing to say “love” for a complimentary close to Gates, and that she would write “Sincerely” instead . She added that it was “NOT right,” using capital letters to highlight the necessity for change. This statement proves her growing understanding of a range of interpersonal relationships that writers can have depending on their readers. Furthermore, it demonstrates that she was developing knowledge of how context variables are realized in text through proper lexical choices.

### **6.3.1.3 Changes across Drafts of Diany’s Persuasive Letter**

The interactions on the blog helped Diany to develop knowledge of the relationship between context and text. That is, the context of situation required her to take

a semiotic role such as legitimate persuader, and to have a formal relationship with a reader. These register variables are realized in specific lexico-grammatical choices that encode these kinds of experiential and interpersonal meanings. In Table 6.2<sup>2</sup>, I analyze these meanings by examining the patterns of transitivity, appraisal lexis, mood, and theme of her drafts at the clause level.

Table 6.2: Drafts of Diany’s Letter

First Draft	Final Draft
1. May 22, 2006	1. May 22, 2006
2. Dear Mr. Gates,	2. Dear Mr. Gates,
3. We need a computer.	3. We need a computer.
4. We need a computer to blog.	4. We need a computer to blog.
5. May you give me one.	5. May you give me one.
6. “Please.”	6. We all know
7. We all know	7. you are a buy man.
8. you are a buy man.	8. You use your computers wisely.
9. You use your computers wisely.	9. This is really important to us.
10. This is really important to us.	10. Next year people want to learn to type like this year like us.
11. Next year people want to learn to type like this year like us.	11. We don’t have that much money.
12. We don’t have that much money.	12. It will so sad
13. It will so sad	13. if next year there’s know computers.
14. if next year there’s know computers.	14. This is really important to me
15. This is really important to me	15. <b>because</b> we need computers to study learn and to type.
16. cause we need computers to study learn and to type	16. So “please” give us some for next year.
17. so “please” give us some for next year.	17. <b>Sincerely,</b>
18. Love	18. Diany M Santos
19. Diany M Santos	19. Simpson Kids
20. Simpson Kids	20. Fuentes Elementary School
21. Fuentes Elementary School	21. 200 Binie Ave.
22. 200 Binie Ave.	22. Greenville <b>MA</b>
23. Greenville Ma	

<sup>2</sup> Changes that Diany made across drafts are presented in boldface letters. The original boldface used by Diany in her letters has been removed.

As explained above, the experiential meaning of Diany's letter was constructed to achieve the goal of persuading Mr. Gates to give computers to her school. This goal was realized in the transitivity of the letter. Specifically, Diany used plural pronouns such as "we," "you," and "people" as participants of transitivity. She framed her request not as a personal interest but as a collective public good, by using generalized actors such as "we" and "people," as seen in Clauses 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 16, and 17. In doing so, she increased the importance of obtaining computers as a public matter. Diany presented "we" as legitimate petitioners and the participant "you" as a wise benefactor, drawing on material processes such as "need," "give," "have," "use," and "want." She further presented more ideational elements by drawing on other material processes, to show reasons for needing computers and the activities that she and other students would engage in with the computers. Diany stated that computers were needed for studying and learning activities that involved blogging and typing in Clauses 4 and 16. The participants' processes were mostly unmarked, except for instances of the comment "next year" as seen Clauses 11 and 14, which led to decreased lexical density.

The interpersonal meaning was constructed to enact an informal and friendly relationship, as seen in her lexical choice "Love" for a complimentary close. Diany, however, was aware that Mr. Gates is a person with resources and power who could grant computers to her school. She realized this interpersonal meaning through use of the probability modal verb "may" in Clause 5 and intensity appraisal adjuncts "please" and "really" in Clauses 6 and 15. Attitudinal lexis was employed to accentuate Mr. Gates' authority by expressing knowledge of his "wise" use of his "computers" as a common sense and general truth that the clause "We all know" in Clause 7 construes. However,

Diany's continuing tendency to use intensification appraisals frequently gives the text a less formal, more conversational tone.

The textual meaning of the letter is heavily based on the "interpersonal discourse" of spoken text. The themes of the letter iterate deictic pronouns such as "we," "you," "this," and "it" throughout the letter and therefore show less "theme planning," which is associated with characteristics of spoken language. Interpersonal and conjunctive textual themes (e.g., "May" and "so") in Clauses 5 and 17 complement an informal and interactive mood choice that is common in face-to-face spoken dialogues. All the themes are unmarked except for circumstantial details in Clauses 11 and 14 describing times when certain behaviors would occur. These themes also display decreased experiential density. This pattern makes the letter more like spoken discourse, considering that marked themes are less common in casual conversations.

The revised draft does not show much difference in lexico-grammatical choices from those of the first draft in that the transitivity and theme are based on similar linguistic patterns. The mood is reconstructed to realize a formal persuasive situation in which the relationship between Diany and Gates is based on "unequal power, infrequent contact, and low affective involvement" (Eggins, 1994, p. 65). For instance, she no longer included the attitudinal adjunct "please" to avoid a begging tone, and changed the complimentary close from "Love" to "Sincerely" in response to feedback she had received from peers. These choices indicate Diany's emerging understanding of different dimensions of "power, contact, and affective involvement" of informal and formal situations, as seen in Table 6.3, summarizing lexico-grammatical patterns across drafts of Diany's letter.

Table 6.3: Register Changes across Diany’s Letter Drafts

Register system	First Draft	Final Draft
Transitivity	Material process Mental process Relational process Time Attributive Manner	Material process Mental process Relational process Time Attributive Manner
Mood	Declarative Modalizations Mood adjunct: intensification (e. g., please, really) Reader as subject Single examples of other mood clause (e. g., will, can)	Declarative Modalizations Fewer Mood adjuncts: dropping “please” Reader as subject Single examples of other mood clause
Theme	Reiteration of depictive pronouns Unmarked	Reiteration of depictive pronouns Unmarked

### 6.3.2 Jose’s Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing

#### 6.3.2.1 Jose’s Letter and Goals

Like Diany and other students, Jose wrote a grant letter by drawing on what he had learned from Wanda’s explicit instruction on the register variables of persuasive letter. Their engagement with the same context of situation led them to produce texts that were similar to each other’s, as seen in Jose’ letter presumably addressed to Bill Gates.

Table 6.4<sup>3</sup> below presents the first draft of his letter:

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<sup>3</sup> Jose wrote his letter in boldface font.

Table 6.4: First Draft of Jose’s Letter

Jose’s Persuasive Letter	Text Organization
<p><b>May 22, 2006</b></p> <p><b>Dear Mr. /Ms. -----, To whom it may concern:</b></p> <p><b>We know that you are a busy person and that you use the computers wisely.</b></p> <p><b>We need computers to blog and to help others how use them.</b></p> <p><b>We hade a web log We learned how to use it.</b></p> <p><b>The problem is that we need to give our computer back on June 15. We don’t have a computer lab in our school.</b></p> <p><b>May you please lower the cost for Pod 10 D or can you please give us a computer.</b></p> <p><b>As you can see we really need a computer for our school.</b></p> <p><b>Sincerely,</b> <b>Jose M. Ramos</b></p>	<p>Catchy: “You us your computers wisely.”</p> <p>Thesis</p> <p>Problem</p> <p>Restatement of thesis</p>

Jose’s letter showed intertextual links with the letter that the class had composed in regard to the ways in which its register variables encoded the contextual situation of obtaining computers for the school. He construed the field into an expression of his wish to continue to use computers and blogs in his learning, by employing material processes such as “need,” have,” help,” lower,” give,” use,” and “learn.” These linguistic choices encode class activities with computers that were meant to align the students’ use with the way that Gates uses computers “wisely”—in other words, to help others. The tenor of writing a grant application letter is realized in a formal relationship between Mr. Gates and Jose that lexico-grammatical choices such as “Sincerely” and “may” construe. The

mode shows textual cohesion by following the organizational patterns of persuasive essays, such as “catchy words,” “thesis,” “problem,” and “restatement of thesis,” within the formal business letter format. His letter was typed in boldface; like Diany, he was also interested in showing his growing expertise in using computers.

### **6.3.2.2 Jose’s Appropriation of Blogging**

When Jose’s letter was posted on the class blog for feedback exchange, his classmates wrote comments that included compliments, appreciative responses to Jose’s comments, and feedback on conventions. The feedback comments that Jose received from peers endorsed his appropriate use of lexical adjuncts that they had learned from Wanda’s explicit instruction. The following comment excerpts show how Jose and his classmates collaborated on the blog in composing their grant letters:

1. Dear Jose,

I like your story because you told in your story why we need computers. You told in your story we don't have a computer lab. You remmber that you can't put a lot of please.

Posted by: Keisha | May 30, 2006 at 10:41 AM

2. Dear jose

with your story he might let us use the computers.

Posted by: Danny | May 30, 2006 at 10:51 AM

In Comment 1, Keisha stated that she liked Jose’s letter in that he stated why they needed computers. The reason is that Jose provided an explanation of why they need computers, by appropriately using the appraisal adjunct “please” in a way that did not sound like begging. Jose was the person who first pointed out the issue of his classmate’s excessive use of “please” on the class blog, which drew Wanda’s attention and led her to have a class discussion about the difference between begging and persuading with regard to using appraisal lexis. His classmates complemented the “right” experiential and

interpersonal meanings that Jose’s letter construed. For instance, Danny remarked that they might receive computers from Gates thanks to Jose’s persuasive letter, as seen in Comment 2.

In a similar vein, his classmates noted their appreciation for Jose’s comments that pointed out their inappropriate lexical choices. In addition to commenting on the incongruent lexical choice of “Love” for a complimentary close in Diany’s letter, Jose checked his classmates’ overuse of “please” in persuasive letters, as seen in the excerpts below:

1. Dear James,  
I like your story but when you said pleas two times you begd.  
Your friend

Jose  
Posted by: jose Ramos | May 30, 2006 at 10:45 AM

2. Dear Jose,  
Thank you for writing a nice  
letter to me i'll say please only  
one time now.

Sincerly,

James  
Posted by: James | May 30, 2006 at 12:22 PM

In Comment 1, Jose helped James to understand that using “please” twice made his letter sound like begging, communicating that different linguistic choices construct different meanings. Specifically, Jose commented to James that the goal of persuading Gates to grant computers necessitated a controlled use of the lexis “please.” Responding to Jose’s statement, in Comment 2, James wrote that he would use the lexis “please” only once in his revised letter. These feedback exchanges between Jose and James also triggered other students to check one another’s lexical choices and applications that might

have come across as begging. The students often wrote each other comments such as “You can't put to many please because they will think that you are beging” (Posted by: Keisha | May 30, 2006 at 10:45 AM). In addition, they acknowledged others in the class by drawing on Wanda’s authority, as noted in the following comment excerpt:

“i will agrey with the others Beacause he will think your begging Mrs. Simpson said not to say please a lot”  
Posted by: danny | May 30, 2006 at 11:01 AM.

While endorsing Jose’s and other students’ comments, Danny wrote that overuse of “please” would make Gates think that James was begging rather than persuading, increasing the credibility of his comment by making an intertextual link to Wanda’s comment. In these comments, the students focused on field and tenor among register variables more frequently than mode, while rarely commenting on conventions.

Moreover, these feedback exchanges between Jose and his classmates provided Jose’s mother with an opportunity to know her son’s identity in the class. In her presentation on Jose’s nicknames to the class for the curricular unit of writing recounts during the previous semester, Jose’s mother said that his family members called Jose the youngest among six children “Baby Jose,” and that his elder siblings taught him how to read and write. It was a moment that Jose’s mother learned about his position and role with friends in the class, which did not reflect that of a family’s baby who needed her care and assistance. After seeing that he was helping other students as a competent and knowledgeable writer on the class blog, she wrote the following comment to Jose:

jose i read your persuasisve letter and i love it i was very imprest you wrote a very convincing letter good luck .love mom  
Posted by: jose's mom | June 19, 2006 at 09:02 AM

In the comment above, his mother stated that she read his persuasive letter, and appreciated the letter to the extent that she was very impressed by his convincing rhetoric. She expressed her wish that their persuasive letters would enable the students to obtain computers for the school.

### **6.3.2.3 Changes across Drafts of Jose's Persuasive Letter**

Jose's interactions with his classmates in the blog gave him to have heightened awareness of lexico-grammar as a choice, not a rule, in using language to achieve goals. That is, with an understanding of the context of situation, he made meaning-based linguistic choices that encoded experiential and interpersonal meanings of his letter. In Table 6.5 below, I show lexico-grammatical changes across drafts of his letter by examining patterns of transitivity, appraisal lexis, mood, and theme of the clauses that make up a meaning unit.

Table 6.5: Drafts of Jose’s Letter

First Draft	Final Draft
<p>1. May 22, 2006                  2. Dear Mr. /Ms. -----, To whom it may concern:                  3. We know                  4. that you are a busy person                  5. and that you use the computers wisely.                  6. We need computers to blog and to help others how use them.                  7. We hade a web log                  8. We learned how to use it.                  9. The problem is                  10. that we need to give our computer back on June 15.                  11. We don’t have a computer lab in our school.                  12. May you please lower the cost for Pod 10 D                  13. or can you please give us a computer.                  14. As you can see                  15. we really need a computer for our school.                  16. Sincerely,                  17. Jose M. Ramos</p>	<p>1. May 22, 2006                  2. To whom it may concern:                  3. We know                  4. that you are a busy person                  5. and that you use the computers wisely.                  6. We need computers to blog and to help others how <b>to</b> use them.                   7. We had a web log.                  8. We learned how to use it.                  9. We did family writing.                  10. <b>And my mom and brothers wrote to me.</b>                  11. The problem is                  12. that we need to give our computer back on June 15.                  13. We don’t have a computer lab in our school.                  14. May you please lower the cost for Pod D                  15. or can you please give us a computer.                  16. As you can see                  17. we really need a computer for our school.                  18. Sincerely,                  19. Jose M. Ramos</p>

The experiential meaning of Jose’s letter was construed around the goal of persuading Gates to grant computers to his school. To achieve this goal, he constituted the transitivity of the letter by drawing on mainly material processes of the activities of two contrastive participants, such as “we” and “you.” He made choices of relational process such as “are” in Clause 4, and mostly material processes including “use,” “lower,” and “give” in Clauses 5, 12, and 13 for the participant “you.” Through these choices, he constructed “you” as a respected actor who is busy using computers wisely and who has the power to lower prices or to grant computers for “us.” On the other hand,

he presented a collective “we” as a helper who had experience blogging and helping others with borrowed computers, and who wished for a chance to continue learning through computers. He construed these meanings through choices of material processes such as “need,” “have,” “help,” and “learn” as seen in Clauses, 6, 7, and 8. Processes related to “you” do not accompany any circumstance to construct evaluation of his behaviors as a universal fact, whereas processes related to the participant “we” are marked with circumstances representing time (e.g., “on June 15”) and location (e.g., “for Pod 10 D” and “for our school”), as seen in Clauses 10, 12, and 15.

The interpersonal meaning was constructed around a formal relationship between “we” and “you” representing Jose and Gates respectively throughout the letter. “You,” who could grant computers to his school, is the subject and reader of his letter. Respect for his authority was realized in the probability modal verb “may” in Clause 12, and appraisal adjuncts (e.g., “wisely,” “really,” and “Sincerely”) in Clauses 4, 5, 15, and 16. The heading “To whom it may concern,” along with the complimentary close “Sincerely,” extends formal relation between Gates and Jose.

The textual meaning of the letter was built around both the “formal discourse” of written text and the “informal discourse” of spoken text, although it is still more couched in the interactive discourse of face-to-face spoken dialogues. The themes of the letter iterate deictic pronouns such as “we” and “you” throughout the letter, with the exception of the nominalized theme “the problem” in Clause 9. “Theme planning” of written texts is often based on grammatical metaphors explaining the synoptic structure of written language, and is considered higher-level knowledge in academic literacy (Eggins, 1994; Schleppegrell, 2004). The construction of theme and rheme across sentences is a difficult

concept for Jose, an ELL whose English is at an emergent stage of developing academic literacy. Interpersonal and conjunctive textual themes (e.g., “that,” “and,” “may,” “as,” “or”) in Clauses 4, 5, 12, 13, and 14 put a touch of interactive discourse from spoken texts into a persuasive business letter. Most of the themes are unmarked except for circumstantial details describing time and place in Clauses 10, 11 and 12, which lead to less experiential density, a feature of spoken discourse.

There are not many differences in lexico-grammatical choices between the first draft and the revised draft of Jose’s letter in that the transitivity, mood, and theme are based on similar linguistic patterns. The comments he received from his peers endorsed his linguistic choices, which led him to have confidence in putting more ideational components into Clauses 9 and 10 of the second draft. He explained his recount writing as his “special” experience with blog-mediated writing, in that his mother and brothers participated in his school writing activities. He called his recount writing “family writing” with the statement “my mom and brothers wrote to me” in Clause 10. Jose’s “special” experience showed not only what blogging meant for him, but also what parts of blogging became powerful semiotic choices for his grant letter, a high-stakes goal for his class. Table 6.6 summarizes the lexico-grammatical patterns across drafts of Jose’s letter that are explicated above.

Table 6.6: Register Changes across Jose’s Letter Drafts

Register system	First Draft	Final Draft
Transitivity	Material process Mental process Relational process Time Attributive Manner	More material process (e.g., “did” & “wrote”) Mental process Relational process Time Attributive Manner
Mood	Declarative Modalizations Mood adjunct: intensification (e.g., really) Reader as subject Single examples of other mood clause	Declarative Modalizations Mood adjunct Reader as subject Single examples of other mood clause
Theme	Reiteration of depictive pronouns Unmarked	Reiteration of depictive pronouns Unmarked

### 6.3 3 Maria’s Blog-Mediated Persuasive Letter Writing

#### 6.3.3.1 Maria’s Letter and Goals

Maria wrote her letter by appropriating the letter that she had composed with Wanda and other students in the class under Wanda’s explicit instruction on register variables of persuasive letters. While introducing Bill Gates to the students, Wanda explained that he was a person who had a higher position and more power like their vice-principal, Lisa Spolsky, who visited their classroom regularly. Based on Wanda’s scaffolding, Maria wrote her letter to Lisa instead of to Gates as seen in Table 6.7<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Maria also wrote her letter in boldface font.

Table 6.7: First Draft of Maria's Letter

Maria's Persuasive Letter	Text organization
<p><b>May 22, 2006</b></p> <p><b>Dear Ms.lisa</b></p> <p><b>We know that you are a busy person and that you have a lot of computers and that you use them wisely.</b></p> <p><b>We need computers to blog and to teach others and we are the only secant grads that have computers and peoples moms blog to there child and we wish that we had a computer lab but we don't have one.</b></p> <p><b>And we have a web log we write to people and say nice to person.</b></p> <p><b>The problem is that next year we will not have them and my teacher wants to teach the 1st graders that are coming to 2 grads.</b></p> <p><b>And can you lower the cost like 100\$ it will be a good cost peales do it for my cassmass to be happy.</b></p> <p><b>I would appreciate if you please give us2 computers for next year we will take care of them thinks you ms/mr and it wood like to have are blog because we are doing a propjets on the blog it will be fun if you did give it to us we wood be happy.</b></p> <p><b>Sincerely, Maria Simpsonkids</b></p> <p><b>Fuentes</b></p> <p><b>Elementary</b></p> <p><b>School</b></p> <p><b>200 birnie Ave Green MA 01109</b></p>	<p>Catchy: "You us your computers wisely."</p> <p>Thesis</p> <p>Problem</p> <p>Restatement of thesis</p>

Maria encoded the contextual situation of acquiring computers for the school, by drawing on patterns of register variables that were similar to what had used to write the

class letter. She construed the field of her letter into an experience-based wish to continue to use computers, and in particular to continue to “blog and teach others,” by employing material processes such as “blog,” “give,” “have,” “lower,” “need,” “teach,” and “wish.” The tenor of her letter is built around a formal relationship between Spolsky and Maria. To show her respect for Spolsky’s authority, Maria used the appraisal adjunct “Sincerely” as a complimentary close of her letter. She further acknowledged Spolsky’s power by using modalizations with “would” in a way that granted Spolsky the position of joint constructor of the conditions of her feelings (e.g., “would appreciate,” and “would be happy”).

The mode is based on both spoken and written discourses with deictic and nominal themes. The experiential meanings were arranged according to the organizational structure Wanda introduced during her explicit instruction. First, Maria gave her evaluation of who Spolsky was and established her as a provider of computers. She then showed the activities that her class did with the computers including blogging, teaching others, parents’ writing on the blog, and writing to others with polite and friendly comments. In contrast to the experiences that her class had had with computers, she presented a problem. That is, as of next year, her teacher’s second grade students would not be able to have the learning experiences that she and her classmates had enjoyed, because her school did not have a computer lab. After presenting the thesis and problem of her letter, Maria suggested possible solutions such as lowering the price or giving two computers for free. She further commented that she and her classmates would help next year’s students to use computers and to blog. Like many other students who told their classmates and teachers “I want to write long” and equated length with quality,

Maria wished to write a long letter and used all the ideas that her class brainstormed with Wanda for their class letter in her own letter. In addition, she typed her letter in boldface font, making her texts different from those of her classmates, similar to the way she often used capital letters in her comments.

### **6.3.3.2 Maria's Appropriation of Blogging**

The students' belief that a good writer writes long was extended to feedback on the class blog. When Maria's letter was posted on the class blog for feedback exchange, her classmates made comments mostly on her long letter. The following excerpts from the class blog show how her classmates were interested in composing long letters:

1. Dear Maria,  
I think your story about Mrs. Lisa is great  
and long.  
From Steven,  
Posted by: Steven | May 30, 2006 at 10:44 AM

2. Dear Maria,  
I like your story because I have never seen  
you write that long in small letters.

you best friend,

Zory  
Posted by: Zory | May 31, 2006 at 01:39 PM

3. Dear Maria

When you said And we have a web log we write to people and say nice to people.  
It don't make sense to me. the other thing is you can't start with and.

Love  
Keisha  
Posted by: Keisha | June 02, 2006 at 10:16 AM

In Comment 1, Steven complimented Maria's letter, stating that her letter to Lisa Spolsky was great and long, echoing many other students' perception that length is a sign

of being more capable of writing. Zory, who was one of Maria's close friends, made comments on the length of her letter in Comment 2, presenting herself as a best friend to Maria who would have informed knowledge of Maria's writing practice. Zory's comment that she had not seen Maria write a long text "in small letters" implies changes in Maria's ability and aptitude toward writing that she had developed over the course of school year. Few comments other than the length of her letter were made except for Keisha's feedback on coherence, and use of the conjunction "and" in Comment 3. Keisha pointed out that Maria needed to review the wording of the sentence, stating that it did not make sense, even though she did not offer any concrete suggestions. In addition, she commented on the conjunction *and*, appropriating Wanda's comment on students' overuse of it in their writing instead of using periods. The students heavily counted on spoken discourse in writing academic texts, and often constructed chained sentences with the conjunction *and* in such a way that they frequently used casual continuity adjuncts such as "oh," "well," and "yeah" at the beginning of a sentence to signal the opening of a response to prior talk (Eggins, 1994). They repeated *and* to construe the continuity of their writing, which in this case was an incongruent and unnecessary textual component in written text.

After reading feedback from Maria's classmates complimenting her long letter, her mother wrote a comment to Maria:

Maria,

The is a great letter and I hope that you get the computers that you guys want. I think it is a great idea how the Mrs. Simpson is educating the students. We need more teachers like her.

Love your mom.

Posted by: mom | June 06, 2006 at 01:35 PM

In her comment, her mother praised not only Maria's letter but also Wanda's teaching, along with her good wishes for the students to acquire computers for the school. As an appreciative parent, Maria's mother evaluated Wanda's teaching approaches, and stated her opinion that Wanda's persuasive essay project was a "great idea." In closing, she asserted the need for more teachers to teach like Wanda. To intensify the argument of her claim, she used a plural participant "we" to represent her assertion as a collective claim of the Fuentes School students and their parents. Complimenting feedback from her friends and her mother helped Maria to become more engaged in writing, to the extent that she started voluntarily writing a short story about a princess for her classmates and teachers, demonstrating her passion for writing.

#### **6.3.3.3 Changes across Drafts of Maria's Persuasive Letter**

While revising the first draft of her letter, she also made changes by using the spell check function of MS Word and by drawing on help from peers and teachers. Most of the changes were related to conventions, such as reducing use of the conjunction "and" and correcting spelling errors. She put a new addressee of her letter, "Dr. Pauline," who left a letter to the students on the class blog saying that she might help them to get computers for the school. Below Table 6.8 shows changes in lexico-grammatical patterns across drafts of Maria's persuasive letter.

Table 6.8: Drafts of Maria's Letter

First Draft	Final Draft
<p>1. May 22, 2006                  2. Dear Ms. lisa                  3. We know                  4. that you are a busy person                  5. and that you have a lot of computers                  6. and that you use them wisely.                  7. We need computers to blog and to teach others                  8. and we are the only secant grads                  9. that have computers                  10. and peoples moms blog to there child                  11. and we wish                  12. that we had a computer lab                  13. but we don't have one.                  14. And we have a web log                  15. we write to people and say nice to person.                  16. The problem is                  17. that next year we will not have them                  18. and my teacher wants to teach the 1st graders                  19. that are coming to 2 grads.                  20. And can you lower the cost like 100\$                  21. it will be a good cost                  22. peales do it for my cassmass to be happy.                  23. I would appreciate                  24. if you please give us2 computers for next year                  25. we will take care of them                  26. thinks you ms/mr                  27. and it wood like to have are blog                  28. because we are doing a propjets on the blog                  29. it will be fun                  30. if you did give it to us                  31. we wood be happy.                  32. Sincerely, Maria                  33. Segerkids                  34. Fuentes                  35. Elementary</p>	<p>1. May 22, 2006                  2. Dear <b>Dr. Pauline</b><sup>5</sup>                  3. We know                  4. that you are a busy person                  5. and that you have a lot of computers                  6. and that you use them wisely.                  7. We need computers to blog and to teach others                  8. and we are the only <b>second graders</b>                  9. that have computers.                  10. People's moms blog to their child.                  11. We wish                  12. that we had a computer lab                  13. but we don't have one.                  14. And we have a web log                  15. we write to people and say nice <b>things</b> to a person.                  16. The problem is                  17. that next year we will not have them                  18. and my teacher wants to teach the 1st graders                  19. that are coming to <b>2nd grade</b>.                  20. And can you lower the cost like <b>\$100?</b>                  21. It will be a good cost.                  22. Please do it for my cassmass to be happy.                  23. I would appreciate                  24. if you please give us 2 computers for next year.                  25. We will take care of them.                  26. Think you Dr. Pauline                  27. it <b>would</b> like to have <b>our</b> blog                  28. because we are doing a <b>propjet</b> on the blog.                  29. It will be fun                  30. if you give it to us.                  31. <b>We</b> would be happy.                  32. Sincerely,                  33. Maria                  34. Fuentes                  35. Elementary</p>

<sup>5</sup> Boldface has been added to changes made by Maria in her second draft.

36. School	36. School
37. 200 birnie Ave	38. 200 birnie Ave
38. Green MA 01109	39. Green MA 01109

Maria’s interest in writing a long letter led her to include not only details of the activities her class had engaged in throughout the blog project, but also what Wanda would do with her incoming second grade students the following year. The transitivity of her letter encodes experiential meanings (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 195) that the three participants “you,” “we,” and “I” constructed as active doers. First, Maria starts her letter with an evaluation that “we” have about “you” by drawing on a relational process (e.g., “are”) and material processes (e.g., use and have) in Clauses 4, 5, and 6. After getting the reader’s attention, she introduced the experiences that “we” had with computers to provide a reason why they needed computers for their learning. The behaviors of “we” in the learning activity include blogging, teaching, writing, and saying polite and respectful things as noted in Clauses 7, 10, and 15. After elaborating on their experiences, she stated that her teacher could not provide next year’s students with the kind of learning experiences that “we” had had with computers. As a solution, she suggested that “you” lower the price or donate two computers. She then concluded the letter by expressing the feelings of “I” and “we,” restating and rephrasing her proposition. Another pattern that is worth noting is that the participants’ processes were unmarked with the exception of “on the blog” in Clause 28, which decreased the lexical density of the letter.

The tenor of the letter was constructed into a formal interpersonal relationship between Maria and the addressee of her letter. Attitudinal lexis (e.g., “wisely” in Clause 6) was employed to accentuate Spolsky’s authority as a “busy” professional, in Clauses 3-6. In addition, her “wise” use of computers was framed into a generalized fact that “we

know” in order to validate her elevation of Spolsky. Through uses of a range of different moods (e.g., interrogatories, modulated subjunctive, and imperative), Maria showed her understanding of power and the different social position of the vice principal. For instance, she first utilized the interrogative mood with a modal verb “can” to ask for a low price in Clause 20, and restated her demand in the modulated imperative mood by drawing on the appraisal adjunct “please” in construing intensification in Clause 22. Maria’s use of mood included the subjective mood when Maria requested two computers for school in Clause 24, by using the subjunctive conjunction “if” with the intensification appraisal lexis “please.” The subjunctive mood was used again when Maria summed up her propositions in Clause 30. In addition, she expressed feelings that she and her classmates would have in the modulated declarative mood, as seen in Clauses 23, 27, and 31. These diverse moods and modalizations created “a less authoritative, or suggestive tenor by balancing the power inequality inherent in the modulations” (Eggins, 1994, p. 315). Maria’s various uses of mood and modality indicate her growing understanding of relationships between her audiences and appropriate linguistic choices that she had to make.

The mode of the letter is realized not only in the synoptic structure of written texts, but also in the dynamic structure of spoken texts in a way that indicates Maria’s emerging academic literacy. Most of the themes are deictic pronouns as seen in other focal students’ texts. Maria’s letter, however, also has a few nominal group themes, as seen in Clauses in 10, 16, and 18. In particular, the theme of “The problem is” in Clause 16 demonstrates that Maria started to use the abstract and incongruent rhetoric of written language. Another noticeable pattern is that Maria used conjunctive textual adjuncts as

themes (e.g., “that,” “and,” “if,” and “because”) in Clauses 4-6, 8-14, 17-20, 24, 27, 28, and 30. These textual themes are mostly the themes that link clauses, not sentences; therefore, the number of clauses per sentence and throughout the whole text is increased. This increased number of clauses leads to a high level of grammatical intricacy in her text that is less common in the discourse features of written texts (Eggins, 1994; Thompson, 1996). Themes are not marked except for the topical theme “we” in Clause 17, and the unmarked themes reduced lexical density.

Even though there are not significantly substantial changes across drafts of her letter, the interactions that Maria had with her audiences, including classmates, her mother, and Pam Pauline led her to make changes mostly in the mode of her letter. Responding to feedback about her overuse of the conjunction *and*, she deleted unnecessary occurrences of *and* in Clauses 10, 11, and 27 by turning those chained sentences with “and” into independent sentences. She corrected conventional mistakes in spelling, period usage, and wording in Clauses 15, 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, and 30, and revised the letter in a way that incorporated more standard grammatical features. On another note, Maria changed the recipient of her letter from Spolsky to Pauline, both of whom were women in authority as a vice principal of her school and as a professor of her teacher, respectively. Wanda’s instruction on the tenor and possible audiences of their grant letter enabled Maria to have a clear understanding of the position and hierarchical power that these addressees had, and to use an appropriate title for Pauline throughout the letter, as seen in Clauses 2 and 26. Table 6.9 summarizes lexico-grammatical patterns across drafts of Maria’s letter.

Table 6.9: Register Changes across Maria’s Letter Drafts

Register system	First Draft	Final Draft
Transitivity	Material Mental Relational Time Manner	Material Mental Relational Time Manner
Mood	Declarative Modalizations Modulation (e.g., “please do it”) Mood adjunct: intensification (e. g., please) Reader as subject Examples of other mood clauses (e.g., “can you . . .” “if . . .,” and “please do . . .”)	Declarative Modalizations Modulation Mood adjunct Reader as subject Examples of other mood clause
Theme	Reiteration of deictic pronouns Examples of nominal group themes Frequent textual themes starting with “and” Unmarked	Reiteration of deictic pronouns Examples of nominal group themes Unmarked

#### 6.4 Collective Action for Obtaining Computers

When the students finished their final drafts, Wanda and the students had a class session in which they emailed their letters to the grant agencies she had introduced earlier. For this activity, Wanda and I created a grant application letter, which introduced who we were, our uses of blogging and computers in Wanda’s teaching, the students’ learning achievement, problems in securing computers, and a formal request for computers. We also collected all the students’ letters into a single document file and then changed their various salutations into a standard “To Whom It May Concern” before sending the letters to the grant agencies. We informed the students of their addressee change and showed them the teachers’ letter. We showed the students how to compose an email and to attach the letter document.

In selecting grant organizations, we deliberately tried local grant opportunities to increase the chances of receiving a grant. The class emailed the grant application letter with the students' letters to a local grant agency, XYZ. One of its representatives responded back to the teachers with information about internal regulations, as seen in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10: Received Email from XYZ

Date: Mon, 19 Jun 2006 12:15:38 -0400  
From: [REDACTED]  
Reply-To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: RE: Questions about applying for your grant  
To: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your interest in the XYZ Technology Grant. Unfortunately, one of our restrictions is a distance of no more than 50 miles; you are almost 90 miles from Boston. We do have an office in Spring Valley, CT, which is only 38 miles from Greenville. If they offer the Grant next Fall, they would be the ones to whom you would apply. I'm sorry that I couldn't be of more help. Good luck in your quest for the technology that is so important in today's world.

[REDACTED]  
XYZ  
MA State & Local Government  
[REDACTED]  
Boston, MA 02110  
(617) 988-[REDACTED]  
Fax: (617) 350-[REDACTED]

The distance regulation mentioned by the representative was new information that had not been listed on the organization's website. Although Wanda's class did not succeed in getting computers from the grant agency, this email response provided the students with opportunities to learn how to expand use of academic literacies and Internet resources for interests and concerns in their lives.

Luckily, the efforts of Wanda and the students in getting computers paid off when Pauline, who managed technology grants for teachers, offered a computer to the students. One afternoon, she came to the school with a brand-new laptop and handed the laptop to the class as a surprise gift, which delighted the students immensely. This gift enabled the students to have more pride and confidence in their writing, and provided momentum for them to write voluntarily to each other on the class blog at home and in public libraries outside of school during summer vacation. It also led Wanda to share blog-mediated writing with other teachers in the Greenville school district through district-wide professional development opportunities, teachers of other school districts at Wanda's new work place, and Pauline's graduate students in Boston in following years.

## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter explored the focal students' textual practice of writing a persuasive letter to obtain computers for their school. In their writing, the students used blog-mediated writing experiences as ideational choices to form grant application letters. The situational context of their writing provided the students with the collective goal of acquiring computers for the school as well as individual goals for blogging, and a clearly designated audience. Wanda explicitly taught appropriate process types, appraisals, and vocatives for the field and tenor of their grant letters. Her scaffolding allowed the students to differentiate process types such as "begging" from "persuading," and to make appropriate lexico-grammatical choices for effective persuasion. They also developed a clear understanding of interpersonal relationships with the audience of their letter through opportunities to write formal letters to someone with hierarchical power.

The register analysis of the blog comments and letters shows that the focal students developed a substantial understanding of context-driven linguistic choices in forming texts. Their blogging interactions helped the students to use appraisal lexis congruent with the field and tenor of formal grant letters, in a way that encouraged the students to use “please” only once, and to use “Sincerely” instead of “Love” as a complimentary close in their letters. The students, who used to use “please” repetitiously to ask others for something they wanted, considered constrained use of the appraisal lexis “please” as an appropriate linguistic choice made for persuasion. The interactions on the class blog showed a different approach to composing texts, meaning-based linguistic choices rather than forwarding structures, linguistic forms, or conventions as universal rules in writing. The kind of approach that the students drew upon was closely connected to Wanda’s scaffolding approach to explicitly teaching the field and tenor of persuasive letter writing.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In this dissertation, I have explored the textual practices of three ELL students as they learned academic writing genres through blog-mediated writing. Drawing on ethnographic methods and systemic functional linguistics, I aim to investigate the relationships between students' use of blogging for social and academic goals in their academic literacy development (Dyson, 1993, 2003, 2008; Harste, 2003). This study is intended to bridge dichotomous views of academic and social goal-oriented approaches to studying computer-mediated language and literacy development inside and outside school. The study also shows connections between language use and language development by highlighting linguistic features of semiotic choices that the students make for their texts, unlike recent studies exploring literacy practices that focused exclusively on situated uses of language in various social and cultural contexts (Christie & Martin, 2007).

In Chapter 2, I have presented a literature review of computer-mediated language and literacy development. Studies of classroom-based language learning have focused on achievement of academic goals defined by teachers (Blake, 2000; Chun, 1994; Smith, 2003). On the other hand, studies of computer-mediated literacy practices outside the classroom have illuminated the social goals that learners bring to online communicating settings from their offline discursive lives (Lam, 2000, 2004; Yi, 2007). In addition to different goals, these types of studies have been grounded in strikingly different views of language, the role of learners, and context. In the literature on classroom-based computer-

mediated language and literacy learning practice, language learning has been viewed as the acquisition of language skills and functions through computer-assisted instruction or computer-mediated interactions. Mainly focusing on computer tools or produced texts as context, limited attention has been given to context complexity of language learning. Therefore, learners' experiences in computer-mediated practice have been seen as the achievement of instructional goals established by the teacher before learning had begun. On the other hand, studies of out-of-classroom practices have focused on the construction of new learner identities through online language socialization processes. Language learning has been explained in relation to meanings and discourses that learners design by drawing on semiotic resources available in online communication settings.

Even though it has been argued that learners improved their English proficiency based on learner self-assessment and reflections on their online social interactions, there have been no systematic explanations of relationships between language development and new ways of language use in online contexts. This gap, along with limitations in the current literature of computer mediated language learning, led me to probe the interconnected relationships between the social and academic goals of learners in any learning task as active agents who shape their own learning experiences.

In support of the purpose of this study, Chapter 3 provides a definition of learning and language that draws on a sociocultural perspective of learning and language use (Bakhtin, 1981; Halliday, 1985; Kress, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). I define learning as appropriation processes in which learners transform tool-mediated practices for their own goals and interests. In this vein, I have elaborated upon speakers' and writers' transformation and redesign of semiotic resources in language use, in relation to contexts.

I have further explicated language in any text or utterance as choices that speakers and writers make in realizing cultural and situational contexts. Their constructed texts and utterances engender social consequences to the speakers and writers in relation to the discourses norms or ideologies of their contexts. In addition, the consequences shape speakers' social identities in their discourse communities, which could have positive or negative impacts on their literacy development.

Working from the theoretical framework of the study, I have presented in Chapter 4 a research design that was intended to find instances of appropriation and transformation in language use. Descriptions of the context introduced the participants, and the blog-mediated curricular units that Wanda Simpson a classroom teacher designed to support ELLs to learn academic genres in collaboration with ACCELA (Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, in press; Willett & Rosenberger, 2005). On the broader, macro-contextual level, explanations of literacy education policies (e.g., No Child Left Behind legislation and anti-bilingual initiatives) and ACCELA school reform initiatives were provided along with detailed descriptions of the local school context. Wanda's modifications of the writing curriculum envisioned the blog as a pedagogical tool for providing ELLs with bigger and more diverse audiences for their writing. This feature of blogging was utilized to increase students' engagement with text, to create deeper connections between home and school, and to establish a more developed understanding of the relationships between author, text, purpose, and audience.

Ethnographic methods and systemic functional linguistics provided the methodologies that guided the study (Carbaugh, 2005; Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992;

Egan-Robertson & Willett, 1998; Eggins, 1994; Schleppegrell, 2004). Through an ethnographic analysis, I observed the focal students' appropriation of socially and culturally developed conventional school-based writing genres for their own goals. Systemic functional linguistics analysis was another analytical tool used to examine the discourse and linguistic features of the students' textual and classroom interactions, and the relationship between their use of language and language development. The unit of analysis that I drew on in this study was the blog-mediated writing text, each of which was bounded by the contexts of curricular units on recounts and on persuasive essays (Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). Chapters 5 and 6 present a comprehensive investigation of the research questions posed for this study. Chapters 5 and 6 provide detailed analyses of the focal students' textual processes and products during the recount and persuasive essay curricular units.

## **7.2 Findings**

To explore the focal students' literacy development through the textual practices of borrowing, reworking, and transforming conventional school-based writing genres for their own goals, I posed the following questions:

What interactional processes are ELLs engaged in while learning academic genres through blogging? In other words, in what ways do students appropriate blog-mediated writing to accomplish their academic and social goals?

What are the discourses and register features of linguistic choices the students make for their blogging interactions, and how do they interweave linguistic features of blog-mediated interactions into their texts?

How do these language uses support their academic and social goal achievement? For example, how do these language processes allow the students to understand that certain linguistic choices are valued in realizing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings that they intend to construe through academic texts, and to negotiate new textual and social identities as language learners, if any?

Analyses of the data collected from the curricular units of recounts and persuasive essays provide answers to these questions. In the following section, I present the four key findings of the ELLs' experiences with blog-mediated writing.

### **7.2.1 Focal Students' Appropriation of Blogging**

The focal students used blogging practices in learning conventional writing genres to achieve academic and social goals from the official and unofficial domains of their school, peer, and home lives. First, the students were actively engaged in learning the "language of schooling," which is closely related to achieving the academic goals of the curricular unit. Presenting themselves as "language detectives," they checked the ideas, organization, lexico-grammatical choices, and conventions of each other's texts, by appropriating the conventional genre features of recounts and persuasive letters, and the lexico-grammar of academic language that Wanda had taught them.

The students appropriated blogging-mediated writing for diverse purposes that reflected interests and concerns from official and unofficial domains of their classroom life. For example, Diany's interest in becoming a popular friend led her to appropriate blogging for maintaining friendships and for getting attention from peers and teachers. To this end, she wrote her recount by focusing on the dramatic activities and excitement that she had experienced during a family trip to Puerto Rico (e.g., hearing *Coqui*, sun showers, swimming in a deep lake). Her choice of dramatic experiences moved almost all the girls in the class to write comments on Diany's Puerto Rico experiences and to write about their own. Receiving numerous blog comments encouraged Diany to become more invested in learning more about computers and the Internet so that she could make her texts different from others in the class, and gain more recognition among friends and

family members.

Similarly, Jose intended to use blogging to increase his symbolic capital among the boys in the class, who competed with each other in multiple school activities. However, his mother's differing view of recount writing led her to write a story about the numerous nicknames that Jose's family had used for him since infancy. Against his mother's insistence, Jose wrote a new recount for the class blog about a topic that would get more attention and respect from his friends, instead of laughs. He wrote about his family's multiple trips to Six Flags and tried to re-scribe his social position among the competing boys in the class.

On the other hand, for Maria, who was a struggling student repeating the second grade, blogging was a tool for her to prove her academic competence to her peers and to her mother. Her mother scaffolded how to use blogging for social purposes by frequently visiting the class blog and by writing comments on Maria's work. To show confidence in her writing, Maria wrote a long recount by using details about her first birthday party, and often used capital letters and larger fonts to increase the length of her texts. Maria competed with her classmates in writing longer texts, which grew from a belief that longer texts equaled better writing.

Throughout the curricular unit of persuasive letter writing, the students frequently appropriated blogging to pursue not only their individual goals, but also the collective interest in acquiring computers for the school. In doing so, they helped each other to revise their texts in pursuit of the collective goal, and focused less on individual goals.

### **7.2.2 Register Features of Students' Blog-Mediated Interactions**

Register analysis of the texts and blog comments in the curricular units of recounts and persuasive essays shows that all three students were developing an emergent understanding of conventional genre orientation, and appropriate lexico-grammatical patterns in the register variables (e.g., field, tenor, and mode) of these genres. In addition, they showed a growing understanding of lexico-grammar congruent with the registers of general academic written language that was different from everyday casual conversations they had among friends. For example, they checked one another's writing to make sure that they avoided "and-chained" sentences and first-person pronouns (e.g., "me and my mother") that were incorrect or were incorrectly placed in their school-based writing.

There were differences in the register features of blog comments exchanged among the students between recount writing and persuasive letter writing. In recount writing, their feedback comments to one another focused on mode, including conventions of academic written language and the organizational structure of recounts (e.g., finale). In contrast, their comments on persuasive letters concerned the field and tenor of the letters. Specifically, they pointed out appropriate lexical choices realizing the idea of "persuading Mr. Gates" and congruent uses of the appraisal lexis "please" in a restricted number (e.g., not using more than once) so they did not sound like they were "begging." In addition, they were aware of the formality and power relationships that they had with the reader (e.g., Bill Gates), and made sure that they selected appropriate lexis for the closing statement (e.g., "Sincerely" instead of "Love") that reflected the interpersonal relationship.

This difference was also closely connected to Wanda's sharing of the teacher's roles with an expanded audience. That is, in recount writing, parents were invited to scaffold their children's work. The parents showed the students how to write memorable life experiences for audiences on the blog, scaffolding the field and tenor of their recounts. Wanda explicitly taught how to organize ideas into a conventional written genre by addressing the mode of their text, something that the expanded audiences did not address. On the other hand, in persuasive letter writing, Wanda's explicit instruction also included the field, tenor, and mode of their grant letter writing. Wanda showed appropriate lexico-grammatical choices for the register features through explicit instruction on patterns of transitivity (e.g., process type) and tenor (e.g., appraisal lexis), and its interconnected dynamics as meaning potential.

The students appropriated multiple voices from interactions in the blog to revise their drafts, which brought register features of the second draft into greater alignment with those of conventional writing genres and written academic language. The most salient changes occurred in the mode of the texts, which reflects the common type of feedback comments exchanged among the students and competition among students to display their developing computer skills. One of the functions that the students enjoyed was correcting conventional errors by using the spell check function of MS Word, which increased textual cohesion.

### **7.2.3 Roles of Social Goals in Learning Academic Genres**

Developing academic literacies through mediation of blogging meant not only learning how to read and write school-based conventional genres, but also building social relationships with friends and family members who could share their interests and

concerns from rich life experiences. These social goals that the focal students aimed to achieve through blogging impacted lexico-grammatical choices in their texts. In recount writing, for example, Diany used a lot of appraisal words with “feeling” and “being” verbs to express her excitement and dramatic experiences from Puerto Rico, to grab other students’ attention. This feeling-oriented storytelling made her recount less aligned with conventional school-based recounts, which value sequenced storytelling events with action-oriented verbs.

Jose wanted to show off his family’s multiple visits to Six Flags to the class. His goal was realized in a recount that described changes in his feelings about going to the amusement park after twenty visits. The salient register features of his writing included overusing variants of the material process “go” for his numerous visits (e.g., “go” and “went”) and feeling changes (e.g., “wanted” “hated,” and “used to it”). Repeated use of the process type “went” with the deictic pronoun “I” increased grammatical parallelism, which is considered an inappropriate pattern in academic writing.

In the case of Maria, she focused on showing her academic competence to her mother, classmates, and teachers on the class blog. Like many others in the class, she wanted to write longer a recount than her classmates. She wrote long a recount about her first birthday party with detailed descriptions of her outfit, guests, cake, birthday photo, and presents, making her story longer by using SV sentences. This increased grammatical intricacy with a high number of clauses, a sign of everyday spoken language.

In persuasive letter writing, the students had a common interest in writing a grant letter that would be strong enough to obtain computers for their school from external

organizations. This context of situation offered them the same goal and audience for their text production. Having the same situational context brought them to the same register features in their letters (Butt et al., 2006). All the students made lexical choices appropriate to formal grant letters (e.g., use of “Sincerely” instead of “Love,” and restricted use of “please”) with a keen awareness of the field and tenor of their text, elements that the emergent writers had difficulty understanding in their writing. Also, the students’ focus on a common goal allowed them to pay more attention to linguistic choices appropriate to their goal than personal interest in their individual letters did. Specifically, the feedback exchanged on the blog led the students to correct the inappropriate lexical choices that were better suited to individual goals such as building friendship.

#### **7.2.4 Students’ Textual and Social Identities**

Analysis of the students’ blogging shows that blog-mediated writing held academic and social meanings for the focal students. That is, students learned standard ways of making meaning that were valued in school, while simultaneously engaging in new forms of literacy practice in which they negotiated and formed different social relationships with peers and teachers through use of a diverse arrange of semiotic resources. In addition, the constructed textual relationships and identities through blogging were expanded into the social relationships and identities that the students encountered in the classroom and their home.

Diany’s recount not only brought her closer to friends who had connections with Puerto Rico, but also helped her to gain popularity among those friends. Achieving these social goals encouraged Diany to be more committed to school writing and blogging,

which led her to have different relationships with teachers and her mother as a competent student and a computer expert. Moreover, these new relationships led her to have a different view of herself in a way that could make her feel special (e.g., “feeling like J-Lo”).

In the case of Jose, his new recount about multiple visits to Six Flags could not help him to increase his symbolic capital among the boys, because of the strong impression made by his previous recount about nicknames from his infancy that was insisted upon by his mother. His mother gradually acknowledged Jose’s interest and complimented his writing; she did not intervene in his schoolwork, out of concern about him as “baby Jose” the youngest of six children. In the persuasive essay curricular unit, his feedback comments on other classmates’ letters impressed his mother and the teachers enough to have a different view of his academic competence as a student.

Maria’s long recount caught her classmates’ attention, and allowed her to be recognized as a capable writer by both her classmates and her mother. Active support from her mother in building academic competence (e.g., comment about her coworkers’ compliments on her recount) allowed Maria to construct a capable writer image in the class and to perceive herself as a “lucky” daughter. Indeed, Maria became a proud daughter to her mother, not a less capable daughter who was repeating the second grade.

### **7.3 Discussions and Implications of This Study for L2 Literacy Education**

I conducted this dissertation study in an urban second grade class, and did not intend to produce general knowledge about computer-mediated language and literacy development. In addition, my active participant role in the study could have led me to be less objective in collecting and analyzing data, even though I tried to achieve validity in

my data analysis through triangulation. Acknowledging my own biases concerning language, learning, and computer mediation, however, I believe that the findings of this study can provide educators and researchers with valuable points to consider in helping ELLs to gain access to necessary support and resources for language development and academic achievement. Specifically, the findings point to the importance of educators and researchers (re)theorizing ELLs' academic literacy development through mediation of computer technologies. This discussion addresses learners' goals, explicit instruction in academic genre and register, and contexts in tool-mediated learning that are critical to understanding computer-mediated academic language and literacy development from learners' perspectives.

### **7.3.1 Relationship between Academic and Social Goals**

An analysis of the focal students' textual experiences in learning academic writing genres through mediation of a blog suggests that developing academic literacy is a social practice in which learners seek to achieve both academic and social goals. These goals had different effects on their academic literacy development. For example, in this study, playing the role of detective for the language of schooling, the students often checked and commented on the organizational structures and lexico-grammatical choices of texts for their academic goals. These interactions led the students to write their texts in a way that used more school-based language and to make linguistic choices that brought their texts into closer alignment with standardized recounts. This kind of language use was directly connected to students' development of knowledge of metalanguage for academic writing genres.

On the other hand, for their social goals, the students played the role of popular friend, with competence and cultural capital sustaining social relationships. Social goal-oriented storytelling focused on getting attention and recognition from friends, family members, and teachers. Out of a sense of competition and friendship, the students drew on dramatic experiential elements and increased the length of their writing through repetition. These inappropriate lexico-grammatical choices caused the formation of excessively feeling-oriented registers that overused appraisal lexis, high grammatical intricacy, and grammatical parallelism. Such uses of language disconnected their texts from conventional academic genres valued in schools.

Students' social goal achievement in learning academic discourse, however, led them to become more engaged in schoolwork and to have different social relationships with friends, teachers, and parents. The different social relationships with members of communities of learning allowed them to negotiate and construct different identities as learners, friends, and daughters or sons. Hence, social goal achievement was just as important as academic goal achievement in their blog-mediated writing, even though educational ethnographers have been portrayed as opposed to academic work (Erickson, 1987; McDermott, 1977). Furthermore, acknowledging students' social goals and creating room for their social work led the students to use rich life experiences in school learning that affirmed their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and to extend their use of academic writing for social purposes beyond the context of school.

In fact, social purpose becomes a driving force for academic work in a symbiotic relationship. Specifically, in the case of young children, this happens more frequently. The academic language development of young children coexists with social work and is

intertwined with unofficial official genres from school, peer, and home worlds (D'Amato, 1988). As such, their learning to make semiotic choices to construct meanings is grounded not in “imitation or rote learning of form” but in uses of “intellectual, social, and affective energies” for social purposes in the “language life of classroom life” (Dyson, 1993, p. 215-222). Attention to learners’ social work in literacy development (Dyson, 1993, 2003; Gebhard et al., 2007; Harste, 2003; Williams, 2008) highlights the awkwardness of making clean-cut boundaries between academic and social goals, in that boundaries between home and school, popular and conventional, old and new, and mainstream and non-mainstream literacies have become blurred in attempting to understand children’s literacy development in the diverse social worlds of urban schools.

### **7.3.2 Explicit Instruction on Academic Genre and Register**

In regard to academic literacy development, the study provides some points to reflect upon and explore further in future studies. As identified in this study, explicit instruction in the register features of academic genres illustrates the changing purposes and audiences that explain genre dynamics. Genre-based pedagogy is implanted in multiple versions that are contingent upon local contexts with different sociocultural, political, institutional, and curricular circumstances, and upon student backgrounds. In the case of teaching language and literacy to linguistically and culturally diverse students, researchers (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Delpit, 1995, 1998; Wong-Fillmore, 1985) argue for explicit instruction about what “have been referred to [as] *power code*, control of which gives one access to power, capital, and authority” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006, p. 251).

Wanda’s perspective on teaching academic literacies to her ELL students reflects

the view of educators who maintain discourses of power. In other words, gaining expertise in academic registers of school subjects and genres enables students to have access to educational knowledge and to social goods and services (Gee, 2004). From this perspective, Wanda is concerned with the social and discursive consequences to her students of failure to learn school-valued ways of reading and writing. In addition, she contends that school is the only place linguistically and culturally diverse students can be exposed to academic language. She would serve her students well by providing them access to the “language of power” and opportunities to learn to be successful by school standards, without becoming a victim of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991). Following this belief, she designed scaffolding of recounts and persuasive letters in a way that would enable students to gain knowledge of conventional genre and register features as semiotic resources, before creating their own texts.

This principle is extended to Wanda’s ways of using students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their learning. That is, she encouraged and supported the students in drawing on and appreciating experiences, interests, and concerns from their rich and diverse lives as resources for literacy. At the same time, she made sure that the discourses of their texts should be aligned with the “language of power” and with the “culture of power” that are valued in schools. To that end, her explicit instruction was designed to support students in developing competence before performance, in such a way that students first mastered genre features, and only then could they begin “playing with language.” She articulated her approach to implementing a permeable curriculum as an efficient way to allow students to enjoy the playfulness of language uses in various sociocultural contexts without risking the development of competence in school-based

disciplines and genres (informal interviews, 2006, 2008).

Regarding this type of praxis, scholars advocating genre flexibility and multiliteracies critically point out a possible danger of becoming regulatory and mechanical, merely a matter of knowing the rules. In addition, acquiring school-based literacy does not always lead to future economic gains or political power in contemporary, high-tech society (Luke, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2000; Pennycook, 1999). Additionally, scholars with a function-oriented view have problematized notions of power code, in that “academic registers are discourses of power for functional, not merely status, reasons” (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, p. 251). However, multilingual scholars have criticized approaches that teach school-based ways of reading and writing as power code for functioning within a hegemonic system. In other words, it privileges academic literacy before the multiliteracies that are valued among peers, families, and communities (Dyson, 2008; Harman, 2008; Williams, 2008). Conversely, it is also maintained that knowledge of linguistic technology in constructing texts and knowledge could help students toward a critical view of or subversive action against hegemonic discourses, by introducing marginalized perspectives at a specific time and space (Martin, 1998).

From critical perspectives of language (Gee, 1996, 2004; Luke, 1996), school-based literacy is one type of literacy among many others, which confirms the values and objectives of the dominant group of a society, and maintains their status quo. The non-dominant groups tend to be co-opted, and to invest in school-based literacy with great effort as a means of upward mobility. Developing an ability to use linguistic resources in standard ways that are approved by a social institution leads one to make sense of the

world and of human experiences in ways that the dominant group of the institution ratifies and envisions. Within this kind of critical approach, language and literacy are sites of struggle for different discourse communities that seek to render their ways of speaking, reading, writing, thinking, interpreting, and valuing language as dominant norms. Thus, the notion of literacy practice is a conceptualization of the relations between reading/writing activity and social structure. Concepts, conventions, and practices for literacy are ideological and political technologies that normalize one's social formation (Gee, 1996, 2004; Street, 1984).

It is necessary to mention that another critical approach to literacy, one that believes that academic language instruction is not meant to replace valuable home and peer ways of using language (Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Willett & Rosenbeger, 2005). Supporting ELLs' academic literacy development can occur in a way that values the multiple social and linguistic worlds to which the students already belong, to help them to stay connected to their communities and participate more fully in multilingual and multicultural economic and political worlds (New London Group, 1996). To achieve that goal, it is necessary for educators to know students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and to have critical insights into pedagogical and curricular discourses that could deny, dilute, or dissolve diverse cultural and linguistic resources. This effort creates curricular spaces in which multiple linguistic and cultural resources from school, peers, families, and communities coexist as valuable discourses representing students' lives, interests, and concerns in their distinctiveness. In the long run, as Willett and Rosenberger (2005) contend, "ongoing and inclusive dialogues among all stakeholders" hold the potential to "open up spaces for creating transformative practices" (pp. 192-193).

The differing views discussed above lead me to pose questions about resourcefulness in language games and rules-based know-how in genre- and register-based pedagogies. How can a teacher teach genre features explicitly in a way that is neither mechanical nor hegemonic? More specifically related to Wanda's concerns, when can learners be allowed to play language games in learning academic genres—after mastering the rules or while learning the rules? In my view, answers to the question of how a teacher can support ELL academic literacy development through the resourcefulness of language games, rather than through learning strict rules and hegemonic practices, are rooted in experiences that the students construct themselves through academic genres. On this point, Dyson (1993) explains:

[C]hildren's understanding of varied sorts of official ways with words (the so-called code of the "culture of power" [Delpit, 1988]) would be grounded in the experiences of the children themselves, who have brought to bear on texts their powers to name and to analyze. And they would have done so to engage in social work that made sense to them, including to explore collegially, to construct collaboratively, and to teach. (p. 223)

### **7.3.3 Computer-Mediated Literacy Development**

The second-grade students used blogging not only as a cognitive tool to develop their written language, but also as a tool to communicate and to achieve their social goals. This study suggests that researchers examine and re-conceptualize computer-mediated language learning as a situated semiotic practice. In the context of Wanda's blog-mediated writing curriculum, ELLs studied academic writing genres that were defined in the curriculum, using semiotic resources and cultural tools while interacting with other learners and with the teacher. The focal students' blog-mediated academic literacy development was shaped by the discourses of academic literacies, learning, computer

technologies, linguistic and cultural diversity, and distribution of material resources at the institutional, regional, and national levels. Conversely, their literacy practices have made an impact on use of computer technologies, views of ELL students, and development of academic literacies in their institutional and local settings.

Understanding focal students' experiences with developing computer-mediated literacy in this situated practice entails understanding the ecological relationships among contextual elements—e.g., use of computer technologies, limited technology resource environments, pressures to teach standardized academic genres, and ELLs' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Specifically, this kind of examination focuses on the participants' subject positions, specific interests, and goals regarding situated learning practices. This approach necessitates avoiding reductionist views of technology use in education as an asocial practice, in which the same skills can always be developed with the same tools. It also calls for rejecting efficacy models based on positivist material discourses, and shifting research foci from the effects that computers have on learning to how computer technology is used for learning, for an understanding of what and how learning experiences are constructed. Thus, the notion of situated semiotic practice runs counter to static, essentialized views of computer-mediated language and literacy development.

This study also aimed to explore how computer technology could be used as a pedagogical tool for literacy education and as transformative educational tool for promotion of social equity. Providing students from lower-level socioeconomic backgrounds with opportunities to develop computer literacy is important for supporting their academic and future life success in the digital era, a time in which computer technologies continue to penetrate further into everyday life and become part of

pedagogical practices. In solving digital divide issues for students from low-income communities, I argue that cultural access to ideas and communities of using computers is as important as physical access to computers (See Warschauer, 2003a, 2003b). In this study, many of the students were the first in their families to learn how to use computers and Internet resources. ELLs and their teachers need access to cultural and social capital that would provide them with knowledge of computer technologies for social and educational transformation. In this, they can envision ways of using available computer resources that they have in their schools and communities. For example, Wanda requested that the principal allow teachers to use a computer cart that the school already had in its possession for pedagogical purposes. In addition, I found that after Wanda's blog-mediating writing project<sup>1</sup>, the Greenville school district added a link, "Access to the Internet Outside the School Day," to all the homepages of its schools, listing nearby public libraries.

#### **7.4 Implications for K-12 Educators**

Findings and discussions from this study have implications for K-12 educators who aim to provide transformative educational experiences for ELLs in diverse urban schools settings with multiple challenges such as lack of resources, the pressure of high stakes testing, growing numbers of ELLs, and ever increasing poverty. Based on this study, I conclude with the following recommendations:

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<sup>1</sup> When Wanda's class started this blog project, there were no school web pages that explained computer resources outside school. During the project, Wanda and I had several discussions about how her class tackled accessibility issues (e.g., collaboration with ACCELA and use of public resources) and used the Internet in the class and the library, with the district instructional technology director and the webmaster. The discussions focused on using a blog and on policy issues related to protecting student identities.

First, providing expanded audiences for student writing through mediation of a blog does not necessarily bring meaningful purposes into school learning. School-mandated curriculum must be (re)designed to address students' social and political interests and goals, as Wanda did. It is meaningful purposes and authentic audiences that increase student investment in school learning.

Second, successful scaffolding of academic genres entails explicit instruction on registers of academic texts, including linguistic patterns of transitivity and tenor beyond structure and cohesion, as seen in Wanda's curriculum. Specifically, thoughtful and well-planned instruction is needed on transitivity patterns and its interconnection with mood and theme, considering that the field of a text was found to be the most difficult concept among three register variables for the emergent writers to understand.

Third, developing critical views of context-dependent language use supports students not only in meeting academic demands across the curriculum, but also in achieving various social and political goals from official and unofficial domains of life. This kind of expertise is based on engaging in flexible visions of the powerful discourses of language and culture, and dynamic relationships between basic knowledge and funds of knowledge.

Fourth, the students learned how to read and write academic texts, interacting with multiple voices, other texts, and other writers and readers while pursuing diverse goals emerging from contextually situated social practices of learning. In light of this, transformative practices enacting a permeable curriculum entail validation of student interests and cultures from their peer worlds, their homes, and their communities in schooling. That kind of curriculum creates social spaces where students can pursue a

range of academic and social goals by appropriating diverse semiotic resources available from their official and unofficial worlds. Also, in those curricular spaces, students can negotiate and perform multiple identities beyond that of academically struggling ELLs.

Fifth, given the challenges in using computer technologies for everyday instruction in academic literacies (e.g., tight school schedules, mandated curricular work, and lack of resources and support), collaborations involving school, home, community, and university are critical for educational transformations through powerful uses of computer technologies, especially in economically struggling communities that rely on under-resourced schools for access to technologies.

Last, solving digital divide issues for students from low-income communities necessitates providing not only material access, but also cultural access to ideas and communities of computer use. In urban schools, a good starting point would be to support students, parents, and teachers in knowing currently available computer and Internet resources in schools and public facilities, and in envisioning meaningful uses of those resources for learning and teaching.

## APPENDIX A

### TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

=	latching (utterance quickly following the previous one)
<u>No</u>	emphasis ( <u>underline</u> )
//overlap//	overlap (indicated at beginning and ending of overlapping utterances)
(laugh)	description of phenomenon
XXX	inaudible
[]	short pause
[ ]	medium pause
[ ]	long pause
inco-	incomplete utterance, dropped abruptly

## APPENDIX B

### MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SECOND GRADE WRITING

#### *Composition*

#### **General Standard 19: Writing**

*Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.*

We write to tell stories, to record actual and imagined sights, sounds, and experiences, to provide information and opinion, to make connections, and to synthesize ideas. From their earliest years in school, students learn to provide a clear purpose and sequence for their ideas in order to make their writing coherent, logical and expressive.

GRADE Level	LEARNING STANDARD
PreK-4	<b>GRADES 1-2</b> (Continue to address earlier standards as needed) <b>For imaginative /literacy writing*</b> 19.5: Write or dictate stories that have a beginning, middle, and end. 19.6: Write or dictate short poems. <b>For informational/expository writing</b> 19.7: Write or dictate letters, directions, or short accounts of personal experiences that follow a logical order. 19.8: Write or dictate research questions.

- Imaginative/literary writing to be assessed at the local level.

## APPENDIX C

### SIX TRAITS THAT WANDA USED IN HER EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Peer-Editing Page for my \_\_\_\_\_

My name \_\_\_\_\_ My buddy is \_\_\_\_\_

**Idea and Organization**

- Read aloud your entire article
  - Did all of your sentences make sense?
- Now just read aloud:
  - title
  - the beginning (the big picture)
  - closing statement
- Check to see that you “zoomed in” to tell :
  - who, what, where, when, and why



**Word Choice**

- Read an example of where you used rich, interesting language. Write down the words.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sentence Fluency**

- Check to see that you **don't**:
  - start every sentence about the same
  - start sentences with “And....”
- Check to see that you used:
  - transition words like “first, next, then, sometimes....”

**Voice**

- Read aloud a place where:
  - the writing sounds like you are talking to the reader.

**Conventions**

- Check to see that you have:
  - Capitals where needed
  - periods, question marks, or exclamation marks
  - space between words
  - legible handwriting

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