Identity, voice and agency in two EAL doctoral writing contexts

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ABSTRACT

Writing is central to the process of developing a scholarly identity and fundamental to the doctoral experience. Writing a PhD thesis in a second (L2) language involves considerable challenge since L2 writers need to master the academic literacy skills that support reading and writing complex texts. This paper explores that challenge in the writing experiences of two English as an Additional Language (EAL) doctoral candidates, Morena and Diego. The discussion draws on an online conversation about writing amongst Morena, Diego and Sara, a teacher of EAL writing and doctoral education researcher. Our conversation revolved around three central themes - identity, voice and agency – and their role in doctoral writing. After discussing related research, we present excerpts from our conversations that suggest how identity, voice and agency impacted on Morena and Diego's writing experiences. We also consider affordances and constraints in Morena's and Diego's social and academic contexts and the opportunities they engaged with. We conclude by highlighting the challenges associated with developing a confident scholarly voice in a second language and recommend adopting a social approach to scholarly writing which supports text-based interactions amongst PhD peers, more experienced others and supervisors.

1. Introduction

All doctoral researchers need to develop the academic literacy skills that enable them to read and engage with complex texts (Braine, 2002), critique more established researchers' perspectives (Casanave et al., 2008) and express their ideas coherently. If they are to become effective scholarly writers (Cotterall, 2011), doctoral candidates also need to learn the conventions and practices involved in participating in their discipline's conversations (Paré, 2010). Achieving this in a second language (L2) is likely to require the investment of considerable time and effort. Despite claims that L2 writers are not linguistically disadvantaged in comparison with native English-speaking scholars (Hyland, 2016), we agree with those who argue that linguistic privilege does exist (Politzer-Ahles, Holliday, Girolamo, Spychalska, & Berkson, 2016; Subitrelu, 2016). Many native speakers of English are likely to have richer linguistic resources, greater exposure to a variety of written texts and more experience of writing in English than their EAL counterparts. Most EAL writers invest more time in acquiring the linguistic skills required to participate in scholarly discourse in English, almost certainly spend more effort producing academic texts of publishable quality and may face bias when submitting their manuscripts for publication. However, our goal in this paper is not to debate the issue of linguistic privilege. Rather, we plan to explore the reality of Diego and Morena's doctoral writing experiences and identify the contextual influences which supported and constrained their efforts

to produce appropriate scholarly writing.

Our interest in exploring Morena and Diego's writing experiences is partly motivated by our observation that research on doctoral writing tends to treat EAL writers as a homogenous group, paying little attention to candidates from non-Asian countries. One recent exception, however, is the study by Doyle, Manathunga, Prinsen, Tallon, and Cornforth (2017). Their paper offers a nuanced discussion of the writing practices of EAL African doctoral candidates in New Zealand, and of context-bound, culturally situated pedagogy. Our paper aims to extend that conversation (without seeking to generalise), by considering the writing experiences of two Latin American doctoral researchers who work and live in different parts of the world.

Diego and Morena are experienced, multilingual, transnational language teachers from Colombia and Brazil, respectively. Sara, an experienced EAL writing teacher and doctoral researcher, invited Diego and Morena to participate in an online discussion about their doctoral writing experiences after seeing the Call for Papers for this journal's Special Issue. Our conversation focused on three themes – doctoral identity, voice and agency – and the role they played in Morena and Diego's writing. The questions that guided our discussion were:

1 How do Morena's and Diego's sociocultural situated realities/contexts and lived academic experiences impact on/interact with their experiences as EAL PhD writers?
2 What do their experiences suggest about the role of identity, voice and agency in EAL doctoral writing?

The next section considers previous research on doctoral identity, voice and agency in PhD writing and identifies the theoretical frameworks we adopt. We then introduce ourselves before describing the approach we took in drafting the paper. The central part of the paper presents the narratives we constructed from our multiple conversations, which began in November 2016 and have continued into 2018 as we collaboratively revised this paper. In the paper, we use the pronouns "we" and "our" to express ideas that all three of us have discussed and agreed upon. However, we have presented Diego's and Morena's narratives in the third person, with quotes from our virtual interactions, because their stories are integrated under the three themes in a way that using "I/ we" would be confusing.

2. Previous research

2.1. Identity

The incremental development of scholarly identity is central to the doctoral journey (Cotterall, 2015). Scholarly identity, in our view, is associated with the feeling of belonging to a community of researchers and scholars; its development can be seen in PhD candidates' increasing confidence as they contribute to conversations within the academic community. Kamler and Thompson argue that writing in doctoral research involves the "mutual construction of text and identity" Kamler and Thompson (2006) as novice scholars present their work to more experienced peers, uncertain of success. Doctoral candidates develop their written identity as scholars by producing and receiving feedback on abstracts, conference papers, journal articles and eventually, their thesis or dissertation. This process of identity development may be even more challenging when candidates write in an L2.

In this paper, we adopt the framework of identity-trajectory (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011) to explore Morena and Diego's writing experiences for two reasons. First, it privileges the multiple and longitudinal dimensions of doctoral study and second, it attends to "individual agency … incorporating students' pasts and imagined futures" (McAlpine, 2012, p. 38). The identity-trajectory framework is made up of three distinct but interconnected strands - networking, institutional and intellectual (McAlpine, Amundsen, & Jazvac-Martek, 2010).

The *networking* strand of McAlpine (2012) framework highlights the array of local, national, and international networks that academics participate in. Some of doctoral candidates' affiliations may be situated outside their host academic community (McAlpine & Lucas, 2011). By accessing networking opportunities, novice academic writers can expand their repertoire of language, ideas, voices and resources. Interacting with other researchers and their ideas can help demystify the writing process, provide useful feedback and boost confidence.

The *institutional* strand relates to the relationships, roles and opportunities doctoral candidates have access to within the university where they are enrolled. Opportunities to engage with departmental activities, peers and staff impact PhD students' sense of belonging and connectedness (McAlpine & Lucas, 2011). Interestingly, the quality and quantity of doctoral candidates' opportunities to attend conferences, collaborate with academic staff and obtain feedback on draft writing have been shown to differ (Cotterall, 2015). In addition, many doctoral candidates occupy multiple roles (student, staff member, colleague, supervisor) within their institutions (McAlpine & Emmioğlu, 2015), which may impact their writing progress.

The *intellectual* strand of identity-trajectory refers to the conceptual work doctoral candidates do. This work is reflected in "a trail of artefacts" (McAlpine & Lucas, 2011, p. 696) in the form of proposals, conference papers and journal articles leading to the thesis - the cumulative outcome of candidates' writing throughout the PhD. However, these artefacts are not the sum total of doctoral candidates' intellectual work. Time spent thinking about and discussing their research with others is an equally important aspect of candidates' intellectual labour.

The connection between writing and identity development is apparent in all three strands of identity-trajectory. Although concrete outputs of candidates' doctoral work are usually associated with the intellectual strand, institutional experiences are also likely to influence their writing by, for instance, providing opportunities to present their work or engage with other researchers. For EAL candidates, networking is an extremely important means of accessing opportunities and resources as a result of developing

relationships. While writing is the central concern of this paper, it is not necessarily foregrounded in every comment that Morena and Diego make, or action they take. Rather, writing is the thread which links everything they do in their PhD. Analysing Morena's and Diego's narratives through the lens of identity-trajectory makes it possible to capture the impact of diverse individuals, practices and events on their writing experiences and their doctoral identities.

2.2. Voice

The socially-situated dimension of voice is crucial in doctoral writing since it is responsible for creating an impression of the writer in the mind of the reader. In the high stakes context of doctoral writing, the reader's impression of the author is critical. For Bakhtin (1981), all texts incorporate and appropriate multiple voices, since the words writers use echo the way previous authors used them. In this sense, the words doctoral candidates choose to express their ideas are not neutral; they carry a history of associations and echoes of previous texts. We therefore adopt Matsuda's definition, viewing voice as the cumulative effect of "the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires" Matsuda (2001). This effect is created when the reader interacts with the writer's text.

Voice therefore plays a powerful role in the reception of academic writing. Matsuda and Tardy (2007) demonstrated how two blind reviewers both constructed the author of a manuscript as a newcomer to the discipline on the basis of gaps they perceived in his disciplinary knowledge and the way he discussed other work in the field. Viewing voice as the effect of writers' use of textual features highlights the vulnerability of EAL doctoral writers who may not always know how the textual choices they make will be received. After all, in academic writing:

> we do not just say what we think and get over with it, but take care to design a text for particular recipients so that … it meets the rhetorical expectations, processing abilities and information needs of readers …. The arguments we make, the positions we take and the ways we try to connect and fit in with others, all contribute to the presentation of ourselves and so influence how others respond to us. (Hyland et al., 2012, p. 135).

Managing these aspects of text in an L2 adds challenge for the EAL writer. Novice academics (writing in their L1 or L2) who are unaware of the impression conveyed by their writing run the risk of being labelled as inexperienced or, even worse, outsiders. Perhaps we should recognise "the development of voice as one strand of the complicated process of discourse acquisition" (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007, p. 246).

The voice that scholars adopt in their writing tends to reflect how confident they feel about their ideas. Unsurprisingly, then, some novice researchers are intimidated when sharing their writing publicly (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). Barnett and Di Napoli (2008) argue that in trying out different voices, research writers may sometimes appear to "mimic or 'ventriloquise' the dominant discourses without identifying with them" (p. 201). Novice academic writers may be more likely to 'ventriloquise' as a strategy for masking their lack of authority. Furthermore, if EAL writers fail to express their ideas smoothly, they are sometimes described as having a "written accent" (Zawacki et al., 2007, p. 5). Ironically, whereas spoken accents are considered normal and occasionally, exotic, the same is seldom true of written accents.

Doctoral candidates are expected not only to develop a unique 'voice' with which to convey their original contribution to knowledge; they are also expected to infuse that voice with a sense of their own personal identity (Ivanič, 1998). This may be a more challenging and contested process for those writing in an L2 (Shen, 1998). First, there is a "tendency … to overlook the voices, or identities" that multilingual researchers already possess (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001, p. 83). In addition, as with spoken language, some EAL authors are keen to retain a distinctive voice in their scholarly writing (see Arianto's story in Phan, 2009). Developing a unique voice in English that reflects the writer's L1 identity without projecting a 'written accent' is something of a tall order.

2.3. Agency

Agency plays a central role in the overall doctoral trajectory and in doctoral writing. Linguistic anthropologist Laura Ahearn's widely-cited definition claims that "[a]gency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" Ahearn (2001). Within sociocultural theory the *agent* is viewed as a profoundly social being whose "individuality rests on, and is derived from, social relationships, culturally organized activities, and use of artefacts" (Lantolf, 2013, p. 19). Exploring doctoral agency through a sociocultural lens encourages us to view doctoral candidates as immersed in complex social structures that have the potential to afford and/or constrain possibilities for their development as researchers. Consequently, our paper explores how Diego's and Morena's respective sociocultural contexts influenced their EAL writing development.

Agency is implicated in the doctoral writing process through the decisions candidates make about their texts as they attempt to insert their voices into the conversations of their disciplinary communities. Making decisions about which theoretical frameworks to reference, which authors to cite and how to frame the argument all demand agency on the part of the writer. In making these decisions, doctoral writers may consult (amongst others) their supervisors, other disciplinary texts or more experienced scholars (in person or by reading their work). Therefore, the highly social nature of doctoral writing and the centrality of decision-making in producing text combine to make agency essential. Translating ideas into text may be particularly challenging for EAL writers who must make decisions both on the content of their argument and on how to express their ideas coherently and appropriately in their L2. More sophisticated EAL writers may experience significant self-doubt because of their sensitivity to the impression created by different word choices or phrasing.

In trying to understand the writing-related experiences of EAL doctoral candidates, we therefore need to conduct a broader

investigation than simply to inspect their texts or the feedback they receive. Doctoral candidates' writing-related agency is influenced by the multiple relationships, resources, practices and experiences available to them. These elements may impact either positively or negatively on candidates. One recent study documents the positive role played by departments in mediating STEM candidates' experiences (O'Meara et al., 2014); another identified limiting departmental practices which resulted in failure to create a sense of community (Cotterall, 2014). Furthermore, when doctoral researchers interact with their environments, their access to opportunities is supported or constrained by, amongst other things, the cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Walker & Yoon, 2017) they bring. Consequently, we also consider the cultural and social capital that Diego and Morena brought to their doctoral writing.

3. The authors

3.1. Diego

I recently completed my PhD in Linguistics at a university in Trinidad and Tobago where I conducted a study of L2 learner autonomy/agency with university students of Spanish. I am originally from Colombia where I grew up speaking Spanish. I learned English in my home country, where I pursued a double major in Spanish and English, aiming to become an English teacher. After completing my degree, I felt insufficiently prepared to begin teaching since I had never been immersed in an English-speaking context. Given that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the closest English-speaking countries to Colombia, I decided to travel there. While in Trinidad, I began to teach Spanish part-time in a Spanish degree programme. A year later, I obtained a full-time position teaching Spanish and enrolled in a Master of Education programme at the same university. I wrote all my coursework, research papers and examinations in English - the language of instruction. I subsequently decided to enrol in the PhD programme because I fell in love with qualitative research. I wanted to explore autonomy in language learning and was fortunate that an autonomy researcher was available to supervise me.

3.2. Morena

I am currently in the fifth year of my PhD in Applied Linguistics at a university in New Zealand, where I am researching EAL doctoral candidates' language learning experiences in their first PhD year. While I grew up in Brazil speaking Portuguese, French was also a home language as my French grandmother lived nearby. As an adolescent, I lived in London for two years, where I completed secondary school and acquired fluency in English. On returning to Brazil, I majored in Portuguese language and literature, but worked as an English teacher. I moved to New Zealand in 2006 where I began teaching English at a private language school. After obtaining permanent residency, I enrolled in a Master's degree. My MA studies were my first experience of writing academic English. As an MA student, I had the opportunity to work part-time in an English language assessment programme at my university. I decided to pursue doctoral studies because of this role, as it sparked my interest in further developing my research skills and knowledge in Applied Linguistics. I then gave up my teaching job, enrolled in the PhD, and shortly after began working full-time in the assessment programme.

3.3. Sara

After completing an undergraduate degree in my native Aotearoa-New Zealand, I taught English in Europe for several years before beginning an academic career as an applied linguist in New Zealand. After almost 20 years of university teaching in Aotearoa, I moved to Japan for three years and then to Australia where I undertook a research project in doctoral education for my PhD. I subsequently taught in the United Arab Emirates for four years before returning to a university in New Zealand where I now work as a Doctoral Development Coordinator. I met Diego at a conference in Australia in 2014 and in the same year I met Morena at a conference in Thailand. Since that time, I have fostered a professional and personal relationship with them. In inviting Morena and Diego to collaborate on this paper, I saw it as an opportunity for them to reflect on their PhD writing experiences while writing for publication, and for me to investigate the writing pedagogy they had been exposed to.

4. Methodology

In this paper we draw on narrative inquiry as a means of investigating and making meaning out of Morena and Diego's lived experiences of academic EAL writing. Narratives typically incorporate the three dimensions of characters, time and place. Telling and analysing stories make it possible to investigate context (time and place) and explore the multiple identities (characters) revealed in those stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Adopting a narrative lens also makes it possible to examine people's perceptions of themselves and of events that occur in their lives, and analyse how their identities develop (Riessman, 2008). The narratives we constructed aim to highlight the opportunities Morena and Diego had access to and the resources they drew on in producing their writing. The narratives also reveal ways in which their writing identities developed over time.

The paper evolved out of an online conversation initiated by Sara, aimed at exploring Morena and Diego's writing-related pedagogical experiences. The conversations were carried out using email, Google Drive™ and WhatsApp™. Initially Morena and Diego responded to a set of questions Sara had posed about writing pedagogy in their doctoral journeys. Subsequently, we engaged in parallel discussions, with Sara asking Diego and Morena distinct follow-up questions, since they were in different phases of their thesis writing. Diego, for example, was asked about people and experiences that provided the most support during his PhD, while

Morena answered questions about her thesis writing process. Morena and Diego then reflected on and wrote about their current contexts as PhD candidates and their previous experiences writing in English. As our conversations evolved and we collaborated in writing the paper, various questions specific to the three themes of identity, voice and agency emerged.[1]

While analysing our conversations on Google Drive™, we reviewed each other's comments and expanded on topics of mutual interest, sometimes using WhatsApp™. Reading the online material repeatedly allowed us to identify similarities and differences in Morena and Diego's experiences as well as critical incidents in their trajectories (Kramp, 2004). While writing the paper together, we continued to generate data as we articulated and debated our views on writing and its relationship to identity, voice and agency. Later, our efforts to revise the paper and responses to each other's contributions generated more discussion. In that sense, we view our data as fluid and not limited to the initial conversations generated by Sara's questions.

5. Narratives

This section presents an account of Diego and Morena's experiences in ways that illuminate the themes of doctoral identity, voice and agency, and includes excerpts of our online exchanges. Although the themes overlap, each is discussed separately to enrich their theorising.

5.1. Multiple roles

Morena and Diego enacted various roles throughout their PhD studies. Apart from being enrolled in the PhD programmes, both Morena and Diego also worked at the universities where they were pursuing their doctoral studies. Morena began the doctorate full-time but took on a full-time management role mid-way through her PhD. Diego combined part-time doctoral candidature with his full-time academic role from the beginning of his PhD. These different roles affected their progress throughout their candidatures as they had to juggle their job responsibilities with their doctoral work.

Working for the university gave Morena the opportunity to network with academics from her department. However, while she acknowledged the advantages of being an 'insider', this did not make her feel like an academic:

Morena: I feel I have been really fortunate in my PhD journey so far as I have had the opportunity to meet academics whose work I admire at various opportunities, but I do see myself more like a "practitioner researcher" than an academic.
Sara: I wonder how you feel about being a "practitioner researcher", as opposed to being a full time PhD candidate or occupying a traditional academic position?
Morena: I actually feel more comfortable with the "practitioner researcher" label than being seen as a novice academic. … I'm professional staff but I occupy a sort of hybrid post as I am also expected to conduct research. (…) But … I don't see myself as an academic and I don't think I ever will.
(Google doc exchange, February 2017)

Though accessing resources from both her staff and student positions, Morena often doubted her ability to successfully conclude the doctorate:

Unfortunately lack of confidence and self-doubt are two of my PhD companions (…) I'm supposedly in the final year of my candidature, but I still feel my writing is almost at the same level as when I wrote my research proposal in the first year. (Google doc, May 2017)

Morena's main supervisor is also her immediate superior in the assessment programme she manages. She believes that her dual roles in the institution may have constrained her progress at times, because of the need to negotiate competing priorities:

After I started my full-time job, supervisory meetings almost always included work items… (Google doc, May 2017)

While Morena was exposed to networking opportunities through work, she struggled to translate those opportunities into collaborations that would enhance her overall doctoral experience. She mostly discussed her PhD project with her main supervisor and did not share her writing with peers or other scholars for most of her candidature. While she took the initiative in attending both work-related and PhD-related international conferences, Morena lacked confidence in her ability to write for publication. Furthermore, until recently, she did not view conference presentations as stepping stones to publication; nor does she recall discussing a publication strategy with her supervisors or anyone else. This situation changed when Sara invited Morena to participate in the discussions that prompted this paper:

Sara: How do you feel about being part of this project? Do you feel that it will impact your scholarly identity in some way?
Morena: I feel honoured to have been invited to participate in this project and I know it will definitely impact on my academic journey. I hope it will give me the confidence to continue my PhD project and get my thesis (finally!) done … Right now I'm not making much sense of how this experience impacts on my scholarly identity (how I see myself) but I've already noticed changes in how others might perceive me. My main supervisor, for instance, who knows and respects you, I think I noticed some change in our interactions. I think my "scholarly status" was upped by my collaborating with you, like, he respects me a little bit more now

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[1] The questions can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

that I'm working with you.
(Google doc exchange, June 2017)

Since that time, Sara has acted as an unofficial mentor to Morena, suggesting readings, recommending resources, introducing her to other researchers, and occasionally providing feedback on her writing.

Diego also combined his candidature with his role as a full-time language teacher at his university. This role enabled him to interact with established academics in his department every day, allowing him to develop close relationships and collaborate on research projects:

I feel I was in a privileged position if I compare myself with the other doctoral candidates in the PhD in Linguistics programme. I had the opportunity to interact with other professors in my department on a daily basis, and they treated me as their colleague and not as a PhD candidate. I was often invited to participate in collaborative research projects with my Head of Department and we published a couple of papers together. I was also encouraged to attend conferences once a year. Having the opportunity to take part in exercises like these benefited me tremendously as I witnessed closely what academics do and how they go about their writing and publication.
(Google doc, April 2017)

Doctoral identity and confidence evolve over time. Diego's retrospective account of his attendance at three successive international Applied Linguistics conferences (2011, 2014 and 2017) illustrates a progression in the way he perceived himself in relation to his wider research community:

When I attended the first conference, I felt like a postgraduate student. I was in the preliminary stages of my PhD. Back then it was difficult for me to articulate what I was attempting to do in my study. At that conference I benefited from the opportunity to meet and interact with researchers whose work I had been reading. In the next conference, I felt a bit more confident, I felt more like a PhD candidate presenting the preliminary findings of my study. I remember that I explicitly asked the audience for feedback… During the last conference, after having defended and completed the PhD programme, I felt more like a newcomer who had just officially joined the academic community. I was a lot more active in seeking networking opportunities with other researchers as opposed to simply seeking their feedback.
(Google doc, August 2017)

Diego's experiences of networking relate to developments in the intellectual dimension of his identity-trajectory. Throughout his PhD, Diego was encouraged by his supervisor to participate in various writing projects, including co-authoring a book chapter (Mideros & Carter, 2014) resulting from one of his conference presentations. His supervisor also asked him for feedback on her draft papers, giving him the opportunity to observe the dynamics of her writing process. Participating in collaborative research projects can strengthen EAL candidates' confidence by exposing them to ways in which more experienced scholars approach academic writing (Thein & Beach, 2010). Moreover, giving novice scholars the opportunity to observe the various stages a piece of writing can go through may help dispel the myth that experienced researchers write effortlessly.

It is also interesting to consider the role of Morena's and Diego's future imagined selves in relation to their identity-trajectories. Morena had never thought of doing doctoral studies before working at the university:

I decided to do a PhD because my former boss told me that if I wanted to continue working at university and be taken seriously, I needed a PhD (…) I began the PhD thinking that it would help me get a teaching job outside of New Zealand. I wasn't sure I wanted to become an academic though. I didn't know if I had what it takes to become one.
(WhatsApp, March 2017)

Morena's uncertainty about her ability to develop as an academic may explain her lack of investment in publishing her research. Researchers propose the 'impostor syndrome' (Clance & Imes, 1978; Craddock, Birnbaum, Rodriguez, Cobb, & Zeeh, 2011) to explain some individuals' perception that they lack the qualities to successfully project their desired identity. In describing her doctoral journey, Morena reported that she initially felt like an impostor given that she had never planned to pursue a PhD. Currently she is unsure what she will do in the future but considers that a hybrid university role (part professional and part academic) might be an option.

Similarly, Diego did not consider pursuing a PhD before enrolling in his Master's degree. Yet, since he had been teaching Spanish at university, he realised he needed to obtain a PhD in order to pursue an academic career:

Since I permanently interact with tenured and tenure-track professors at my university, I became aware very early that if I wanted a career in academia, I had to get a PhD. My interaction with my colleagues has helped me understand what is required and I enjoy it. In fact, I would like to be a full-professor in 15 or 20 years. I see myself publishing a lot.
(Google doc, June 2017)

As indicated above, distinct types of investment can be detected in Morena's and Diego's identity trajectories. Although both started working in academic settings before embarking on their PhDs, Diego, who had a clear career path in mind, seemed more invested in developing his identity as a researcher than Morena.

Morena's and Diego's distinctive trajectories coincided when Sara invited them to collaborate in writing this paper. While they started the project following Sara's lead, each draft they collaborated on gave them the opportunity to make more independent decisions. With the process, Diego and Morena changed. Their collaborative writing activity and their engagement with the

reviewers' comments impacted on their identities. What they wrote and how they wrote it (further discussed in the next two sections) represented a developmental change in their experiences.

5.2. Finding a voice

Although Morena and Diego are highly proficient users of English, they recognise that sometimes their L1 interferes in their L2 writing. In teaching advanced Spanish to speakers of English, Diego commented:

I noticed that my students tended to write shorter sentences than I do in Spanish. Most times I observed basic "S + V + O" patterns. When I began to write for an English-speaking audience I was usually told that my sentences were very long and awkward at times. Generally speaking, Spanish privileges compound constructions over simple sentences … My strategy was simple; I began to imitate my students and I consciously made an effort to write shorter sentences.
(Google doc, April 2017)

Morena reported similar experiences. Although the strategy of writing shorter sentences in English has worked for them both, they still sometimes receive feedback which flags awkward sentences. Another problem that illustrates interference between their L1s and English is what they perceive as an arbitrary use of prepositions in English. Accordingly, misused prepositions are often highlighted in their submissions. Both these features can mark the authors as writing 'with an accent' (Zawacki et al., 2007) in English.

Beyond issues of form, being able to critique the work of other researchers is essential for any doctoral candidate. But reading and engaging critically with texts demands time, practice and feedback for the skill to develop. Many doctoral candidates do not (initially at least) feel equipped to critique the work of more established authors; moreover, without being prompted or encouraged to question what they read, they may not do so. Becoming critical of the views of other researchers is a lengthy, contested process that is closely linked to developing one's desired scholarly identity. As a graduate student, Diego initially felt he lacked the authority to criticise the work of more established authors. Morena felt the same:

I don't feel I am in a position to critique anything. I agree with almost everything I read … and even when I can't make sense of what I'm reading, my first reaction is always to think that the problem lies in me - the reader - not having the necessary knowledge to comprehend a complex idea.
(Google doc, May 2017)

Morena and Diego discussed their efforts to become (more) critical of others' work in their writing. By way of illustration, Diego described a series of stages through which he gradually moved in his PhD dissertation. Much of this work occurred as he produced his literature review:

My supervisor kept pointing out that I needed to be critical because I was being very expository. That took me some time to understand because I felt that I was no one to be critical of others' works.
(Google doc, February 2017)

Diego explained his struggle by describing a trajectory that saw him progress from initially producing a descriptive summary of other researchers' ideas to what may be described as 'ventriloquising' (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008) or mimicking the way in which well-established authors adopt a critical perspective. In developing the first draft of the literature review for his research proposal, Diego was asked to expand on his sources since he had been relying on very few. After following this recommendation, he was advised to stop using verbatim quotations and to start paraphrasing instead. At this stage, the reporting verb Diego used most frequently was 'stated', signalling that he was simply summarising various authors' views without evaluating them. It took Diego almost three years and a great deal of reading before he was able to overcome this descriptive style:

when I began to read the literature, I tended to agree with everything because everything made sense at first sight. Since I had not adopted a position, most ideas seemed fine to me… It was only when I found a theoretical framework that I could identify with, that I was able to articulate critical views of others' works.
(Google doc, May 2017)

In his attempt to be critical, Diego described using concessive clauses introduced by 'although' or 'even though', as well as adversative conjunctions such as 'yet' and 'however'. By using these structures, he felt able to respectfully acknowledge the merit of the cited author's idea – "embedding" his criticism, as he described it - before explicitly expressing an alternative way of viewing that same idea.

Another significant linguistic and rhetorical challenge that emerged during Morena's and Diego's doctoral writing trajectories was that of adopting an appropriate level of hedging (Hyland, 1995) when making original claims and critiquing others' ideas. For Diego, this overlapped with advice he had received about avoiding first person pronouns:

I prefer to use "I argue that…" and "I maintain that…" However, I was encouraged to avoid the use of 'I' by one of my assessors who comes from a quantitative paradigm… [so] I managed to do without it in my dissertation. Although it was an interesting writing exercise, I did feel constrained as I was unable to express certain ideas more comfortably using 'I', which I strongly see as part of the language of qualitative research.
(Google doc, May 2017)

Morena also spoke explicitly of her efforts to position herself appropriately in relation to the claims she made in analysing her data:

I hedge a lot in my writing… but I also write in the first person. In the draft chapter I was working on these past weeks, I used "seem/ appear" often. I was not yet arguing a point, but I used things like "I see (someone's conduct, for example) as (my interpretation of what it meant)" a couple of times.
(Google doc, May 2017)

Interestingly, the authors' respective L1s did not seem to play a significant role in their experiences of adopting (or not) hedging and personal pronouns. This may be because in both cases their exposure to academic texts occurred principally in English

Morena and Diego appreciate suggestions they receive in terms of expressions that could improve the quality of their writing and make it more academically sophisticated. However, on two occasions during the writing of this paper, Diego felt that Sara's suggestion that he replace a word was a case of her "imposing" her native speaker status on him. Both times the issue seemed to arise because of the different varieties of English spoken by Sara and Diego. The first example concerned Diego's use of the word "expository" to describe his early drafts of the literature review for his dissertation. While acknowledging that this was the adjective used by Diego's supervisor, Sara suggested that the term might be misunderstood by an international audience. The second occasion concerned Diego's use of the conjunction "thus", which Sara believed made him sound a little pedantic. Despite Diego protesting that "thus" was commonly used in his colleagues' academic texts in Trinidad, Sara prevailed. Diego reported his experience of the "expository" episode in this way:

I felt both confused and upset. Confused because, for me, 'expository' and 'descriptive' are different. However, Sara insisted that I use 'descriptive' instead of 'expository' despite my supervisor having written on my draft - 'you are being very *expository*, you need to be more critical'. For our paper I decided to leave my 'expository' choice but Sara still changed 'expository' to 'descriptive' in the first draft of our paper, at which point I felt some sort of imposition on her part as a native speaker.
(Google doc, January 2018)

In fact, only when she read Diego's account (above) did Sara realise how negatively her behaviour had impacted on him. When she asked him how he felt about the identity he projected through his writing, Diego explained that his main concern was to convey a message and that he was "unaware of how …[he] might be perceived for …[his] word choices" (email, January 2018). Regrettable as it was, this episode suggests that the issue of 'voice' was not on Diego's radar.

5.3. Exercising agency

Since agency is socioculturally mediated (Hopwood, 2010), the relationships, opportunities and constraints in Morena's and Diego's contexts were examined to help understand how they influenced their identity-trajectories. Both Morena and Diego belonged to broader supervisory teams. However, despite enjoying access to wider networks in their respective universities, they relied principally on their main supervisor's support. Morena interacted mainly with her principal supervisor even though her second supervisor had greater expertise in the methodology she was working with. Diego reported interacting only with his principal supervisor despite being assigned an "advisory committee" comprising two other professors.

Providing access to resources and opportunities that have the potential to enhance PhD candidates' research is an ideal means of enabling the exercise of agency. Such resources (e.g., other scholars, books, conferences, seminars, publication opportunities, sources of funding) can either be recommended by more-experienced others or discovered by PhD candidates. Diego's supervisor regularly shared resources with him:

As soon as I began the PhD programme, my supervisor loaned me a number of books from her personal library. She often encouraged me to present at conferences as a way of getting as much exposure as possible to academic discourses and opportunities to network. Also, when my supervisor saw that I was struggling with any section of my dissertation, she would send me helpful resources and models that she retrieved from books or the internet.
(Google doc, November 2016)

Although Diego's experience may sound like a model supervisory relationship, there were times when he felt overwhelmed by the research projects his supervisor encouraged him to collaborate on:

My main goal from the beginning was to finish the PhD. Whenever my supervisor invited me to participate in additional research projects, I felt that those extra projects prevented me from devoting all my time to my dissertation. To be honest, I didn't immediately appreciate the value of acquiring additional practice in academic writing. At times I wondered if she had forgotten that my L1 isn't English and that it takes me longer to write in English.
(Google doc, November 2016)

Nevertheless, Diego's experience illustrates the supervisor's pivotal role in providing access to valuable scholarly opportunities.

In contrast, while Morena's supervisors suggested articles on related studies for her research, they did not share other resources. However, they did disclose hints about their writing practices:

I do not recall either of my supervisors recommending particular resources that would assist me with my writing process. However, during meetings they have shared insights about how they do things. For example, my main supervisor told me he keeps a notebook to write down his thoughts in bed and advised me not to underestimate the thinking time. My co-supervisor likes to draw diagrams to help him organise his thoughts. Jotting down notes in the middle of the night or other (inappropriate) times is

something I also do. I use the notes function on my phone and then email myself what I wrote. Various possibilities for me to structure chapters or even the thesis as a whole have been drafted like this.
(Google doc, April 2017)

The local PhD contexts described by Morena and Diego indicate that they both relied principally on their supervisors for feedback, guidance and support with their doctoral writing. However, there is no suggestion that they felt dissatisfied with this arrangement. Although both spoke of their respective universities' efforts to bring PhD candidates together, neither reported sustained practices in their local institutions aimed at supporting novice researchers, particularly as they advanced in the writing of their theses. Neither of them, for example, was encouraged to engage in peer-reviewing exchanges. On the contrary, most of their PhD writing was/has been limited to submitting drafts and receiving feedback from supervisors.

Prior to collaborating on the writing of this paper, Sara occasionally provided feedback to Morena and Diego on written drafts. Diego, for instance, initially struggled to produce the concluding chapter of his dissertation. After submitting several drafts, his supervisor commented that the content was there but that the conclusion "did not do justice to the study and to all the work invested in it" (Google doc, September 2017). Unsure of how to move beyond producing a summary, Diego sought Sara's advice. This resulted in Diego revising the Conclusion in a way that highlighted his original contribution and his findings. According to Diego, this "outsider" feedback helped him identify a strategy for moving beyond summarising what he had done.

Our analysis of Morena's and Diego's narratives also focused on the sociocultural constraints they reported during their PhD trajectories. Both highlighted instances where university bureaucracy constrained their progress. Morena only learned that it was possible to "suspend" her PhD temporarily when she was dealing with the passing of a close relative in Brazil. Likewise, since the regulations around converting her doctoral registration from full-time to part-time were unclear, she only took advantage of this change in status in the fourth year of her candidature. Diego struggled to access relevant journal articles and books through his university library. On one occasion, he emailed the librarian about a journal article he needed, only to be asked to complete a lengthy form to request the article via interlibrary loan. This episode and the scarcity of materials in his field discouraged him from using his library. Instead, since he had met many of the authors of key research at the conferences he had attended, Diego contacted them directly to request the articles. In this way, not only did he solve his problem, he also began to actively expand his personal research network.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Scholarly identity, voice and agency are intertwined throughout Morena's and Diego's doctoral trajectories. The cumulative effect of the actions they took during their PhD journeys constructed their identities as researchers and scholars. Over time, their voices grew stronger and more confident as they acted on opportunities to challenge others' ideas and share their writing publicly. Morena's developmental trajectory reflects a shift from initially feeling like an 'impostor' (Clance & Imes, 1978; Craddock et al., 2011) to feeling more like a researcher as she approached the final stages of her PhD while writing this paper. Diego's trajectory was marked by the emergence of an increasingly confident authorial voice. The agency that Morena and Diego exercised when they made decisions about the articles and chapters they were writing, networked with scholars beyond their institutions, and found ways to overcome resource constraints also supported their developing identity. This suggests that the process of identity construction is determined in part by the opportunities available to doctoral candidates in their local contexts and the way they respond to those opportunities. As such, it is highly idiosyncratic.

Diego's and Morena's narratives reflect identity-trajectories marked by positive networking and institutional experiences. Their institutional roles and affiliations gave them access to opportunities to interact with other academics, attend conferences and participate in research projects. Therefore, their identity trajectories probably differ from those of EAL PhD candidates whose institutional role is limited to that of a registered student. Ideally, PhD programmes should offer all candidates rich opportunities to network, collaborate and produce written artefacts during the PhD that reflect their identity as researchers and scholars. Undoubtedly Morena and Diego were privileged by virtue of their roles as university staff members, and also perhaps as speakers of European languages that share some syntactic features with English.

As with the accounts of doctoral researchers reported in previous studies (Cotterall, 2011, 2014, 2015; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011; McAlpine & Emmioğlu, 2015; McAlpine et al., 2010), our experience analysing Diego's and Morena's narratives suggests that in order to develop a confident researcher identity, doctoral candidates need access to rich networking and institutional opportunities and support in engaging with those opportunities. When able to interact freely with other academics (in the target language), they have the potential to benefit from the mentoring and collaboration opportunities which often arise. Diego's and Morena's narratives suggest that, even if not fully confident, they were already developing a sense of scholarly identity and community membership simply by virtue of being immersed in an environment where interacting daily with academic colleagues was the norm. Candidates' confidence is boosted when they have access to supportive interactions and opportunities. As confidence grows, agentive behaviour increases, and candidates seek new opportunities to express their voices and make use of existing opportunities. Nevertheless, even those who possess considerable doctoral capital (Walker & Yoon, 2017) need support and encouragement.

The issue of voice is particularly sensitive for EAL doctoral writers. Morena's and Diego's narratives demonstrate the complexity for EAL writers of constructing a voice in English. The narratives show how Diego's voice developed as a result of a scaffolded process where constructive feedback enabled him to become increasingly authoritative in presenting the ideas in his dissertation. Yet, by his own admission, being able to manage the effect of his written text on his readers remains a challenge. The narratives also show that voice, viewed through a sociocultural lens, is not free from constraints. Doctoral theses follow established rhetorical conventions, as

do disciplines themselves, and epistemologies. Such conventions can constrain PhD candidates' voices. In what he experienced as an imposition of power, Diego was made to avoid using first person pronouns in his dissertation despite believing that qualitative research demanded this kind of subjectivity. Similarly, he experienced Sara's replacing his vocabulary choice with hers as an uncomfortable and unwelcome imposition of power. Ironically, Sara justified her action in replacing Diego's use of "thus" with another word by arguing that the voice Diego was projecting in the text did not 'sound like his voice'.

Both these instances demonstrate EAL writers' vulnerability. On one hand, they are vulnerable when forced to adjust their voices to meet the norms or expectations of others. On the other, they are vulnerable when they risk being misunderstood or misrepresented by their readers. Both Diego and Morena work in the field of applied linguistics, which suggests that most of their readership will be sensitive to language issues and tolerant of 'written accents'. But EAL candidates in other disciplines may run the risk of being misunderstood or misrepresented as a result of the voice they project through their writing. To counter this risk, we recommend adopting a social approach to writing which raises EAL writers' awareness of the construct of voice and how it is read and received by native speaker audiences. We envisage an approach where EAL writers are encouraged to share their writing with more experienced writers (native and non-native) and exchange writing feedback.

Morena's and Diego's narratives are particularly interesting to consider in relation to the exercise of agency. In both cases they interacted mainly with their principal supervisors, appearing satisfied to operate within this primary relationship. In these relationships, it is possible that their cultural capital as staff members of their host institutions granted them certain advantages. Certainly, both had easy access to their supervisors. Diego described himself as "immersed" in an academic community within his university and enjoying rich opportunities to interact with scholars every day while observing how they behave and communicate. Morena's interactions with academics from her institution appear to have been more limited. Furthermore, her interactions with her supervisor, while frequent, were not always focused on her doctoral work. But perhaps the ready availability of their respective academic communities prevented Diego and Morena from considering networking more widely? Whatever the answer to this question, the supervisory team is likely to be the site of many of the experiences from which confidence emerges.

Our paper has explored the experiences of two relatively privileged EAL writers. Morena and Diego brought significant cultural and linguistic capital to their doctoral writing. At enrolment, both were already highly proficient users of English, experienced language teachers and staff members at their respective institutions. Not only do they write in an L2; they also research L2-related issues and communicate with a linguistically sensitive readership. For these reasons, their experiences as EAL PhD candidates are likely to differ from those of other candidates whose English language proficiency is less well developed, or who are enrolled in different disciplines.

One final affordance related to doctoral writing is peer support (Kumar & Aitchison, 2017). Neither Morena nor Diego reported actively interacting with other PhD candidates in their institutions. However, research suggests that doctoral writing groups support candidates' writing and research development (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014). Universities might therefore consider encouraging EAL doctoral writers to form peer writing networks where writing could be shared alongside support with networking strategies. A social approach to scholarly writing that involves interactions with peers, more experienced others and supervisors is likely to foster agency, strengthen novice writers' voices and create networking opportunities, all of which are critical to the development of doctoral identity.

Ultimately, relationships lie at the heart of doctoral writing. Throughout their candidature, doctoral writers construct relationships between themselves, the texts they read, the authors of those texts and those who read the texts they themselves produce. As they write, their identity trajectories are shaped by the relationships they establish with peers, colleagues, friends, and other researchers in the institutions where they are enrolled and beyond. These relationships determine the quality of candidates' experiences because of the access to support and resources they enable. The lesson for EAL doctoral writers is clear: by identifying and engaging with the opportunities on offer, confidence to try out their voices will grow, along with the ability to manage the identity they project through their writing.

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