LEARNING TO WRITE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: ELLS' LITERACY PRACTICES IN AND
OUT OF THEIR WESTERN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

by

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**ABSTRACT**

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The definition of literacy is constantly changing and expanding. A sociocultural view of Literacy considers literacy to be multiple, multimodal, and multilingual as situated in and across the social and cultural contexts. As technology, new media and social network has reformed many aspects of writing, they provide ELLs (English language learners) with supports and resources while at the same time raising new challenges. Although adolescent ELLs are a very active group that use technology, new media and social network, they remain an under-represented group in the L2 writing research; and very little is known about the the social practices of these writers as they use technology and digital media to develop and maintain social relationships in the local and global contexts. It is important to examine their writing practices across the school, home, and community contexts as they are immersed in technology and digital literacy practices.

In the light of a sociocultural and socio-critical view of literacy, I conduct the year-long ethnographically oriented multiple case studies of 4 high school students in a Western urban community in the United States in order to understand their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices in the digital age; and to examine the relationship, potential link and possible gaps between these practices. I observe their in-class writings in a 6-week period, and throughout the year collect multiple sources of data from formal and informal interviews, survey, field notes, literacy log, writing samples, and their self-select writing artifacts. I also become a member of their web-based social networks and gain access to their writings on the web logs, forums, Facebook, and Twitter. In the inductive analysis of the data, I notice important and recurrent themes such as the writers' identity construction and negotiation, socialization,

and language use.

Findings reveal that while school-sponsored writings provide opportunities for both individual and collaborative writings and chances of sharing, students consider certain tasks more meaningful than others. As the four participants in this study engaged in a wide range of self-sponsored out-of-school literacy practices, every participant was unique in their choice of the types of literacy practices, their preferences for the medium of composing, the sharing of their writings, and the language choices for their writings. One important findings is that their choices of languages, code meshing, and frequent use of internet and urban slangs showed their eagerness to belong to an adolescent social circle which valued their ethnicity, gender, linguistic heritage, and popular cultural literacies. As they consider English "extremely important", they all value their heritage languages as part of their identity construction. The links between the school and self-sponsored writings are obvious. There is overlapping in topics, genres, recurrent themes, language uses, sociocultural experiences that feed the writings. The writing processes are also impacted by each other. As for the gaps, while self-sponsored writings provide more chances for sharing and expressing, they are more informal and sometimes even fragmentary. I argue that while it is important to acknowledge the richness of students' self-sponsored writings and the potentials of technology and social networks, educators should not over-romanticize these writings or the role of technology, as they may also become distractions. It is also important to focus on the meaningful connections and possible gaps rather than drawing a boundary between the in-school and out-of-school literacy.

This study offers new understandings and insights into the writing practices of the English language learners in the digital age. It calls for future longitudinal studies that connect the secondary and post-secondary education which will provide more complete descriptions and useful information on how they could be better prepared for college writing classes.

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## 1.1 Statement of Problem

As a fast growing number of English Language Learners (ELL) enter into American's public schools, where 1 out of 5 persons over the age of five (18%) speaks a language other than English at home (US Census Bureau, 2000), the topic of educating culturally and linguistically diverse students has provoked heated discussions among the educators and policy makers. While ELL students as a group continue to lag behind their peers in academic performance, one of the most crucial areas that these students need help with is in the development of literacy (August & Hakuta, 1997; Grant & Wong, 2003; Nieto, 2002). ELL students face multiple challenges as English serves as both a medium of communication and the language in which subject areas are taught (Faltis & Wolfe, 1999; Duff, 2001).

While the issue of literacy development remains pertinent for both younger and adolescent ELL students, in this dissertation project, I focus on the writing practices of a group of urban adolescent ELL students for several significant reasons. First, adolescent ELLs are the largest sub-group among the second language writers in the U.S. Educational settings; and yet among the very diverse ELL students, adolescent ELL students remain an under-represented group despite their demographic significance. The field in L2 writing research still occurs predominantly with international ESL writers at institutions of higher education (Fitzgerald, 2006), and there is very little research on the ELL students in the secondary level or in urban settings (Faltis, 1999; Fitzgerald 2006). Faltis argues that immigrant and bilingual students in the secondary level may be "the most underrepresented, understudied group of students in the United States" (Faltis, 1993, p.2). As Harklau (2000) has observed, there is a significant lack of understanding of the writing practices of English language learners in the middle and high school grades. For

example, less than 3% of published scholarship in Journal of Second Language Writing had focused on high school L2 writers in U.S. and international settings (Matsuda & DePew 2002). This lack continues to exist, as pointed out by many researchers (*e.g.*, Ball, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2006; Yi, 2007; Yi, 2010). Therefore, more research is needed to address the literacy experiences of the adolescent English language learners.

Another reason that I choose to address this particular group is that it is a very active group that uses technology and new media in their writings, and yet little is known about the the social practices of adolescent ELL writers as they use technology and digital media to develop and maintain social relationships in the local and global contexts. Lam (2009) found that in the United States, "the study of literacy and socialization with new media has dealt relatively little with young people whose first language is not English or who have allegiances to multiple linguistic communities, despite their current demographic importance in the United States" (p. 377). As recent technologies have reformed all these aspects of writing, the meaning of "writing" and "writer" has expanded in the age of new media and new literacies. Writing may become instantly "publishable" with the new technologies such as blogs, zines, and blackboard systems. At the same time, writing may involve virtual communications. The internet-based platforms such as MUD, MOO, Yahoo messenger, MSN, emails, and online video games provide chances for communications in virtual settings. The writers can remain anonymous, and even take on different "identities" in these communications. Writing may also involve an authentic, large audience. Posts published in blogs, zine, and web usually attract a large number of audience, and can have lots of feedback. I examine the ELL adolescent writers' literacy practices and social experiences that involve the use of technology as they write in and outside of their school.

Additionally, although ELL students of all ages face challenges in relation to English and schooling, the adolescent students encounter unique social challenges as they transit to young adulthood, develop a sense of identity in relation to self and peers, and negotiate different ex-

pectations and values. As observed by Harklau (2003), "learning to write in a second language is not simply the accrual of technical linguistic abilities but rather is intimately related to identity—how one sees oneself and is seen by others as a student, as a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority" (p. 155). Recent literature in the field of L2 writing argues that "any understanding of L2 writers must begin with the acknowledgment that identity negotiation and social interactions during the age of adolescence are significant to discussions about how these teenage students respond to their writing tasks, writing instruction, and educational contexts" (Ortmeier-Hooper & Enright, 2011, p.171). In addition, the challenges these adolescent second language writers encounter become even more complicated when situated in the larger social, cultural, and political contexts.

## 1.2   Purpose and Nature of Study

This ethnographically oriented multiple case study intends to examine the literacy and cultural learning experiences of a group of ELLs (English language Learners) within and across the sociocultural contexts of a Western urban high school. In this study, I intend to focus on their writing experiences both inside and outside of the classrooms, and discuss the possible connections and gaps between their in and out-of-school writings. I assume that the students' literacy and learning experiences are influenced by the broader and local sociocultural contexts; and that language is not only a subject that they need to learn, but also a tool in itself that they can use to explore the world, to communicate their intentions and opinions, to express emotions, to question, think, challenge, and celebrate. In other words, writing plays an important role in their social lives, and is a tool that they can use to express and empower themselves. This is particularly important for second language learners, since they face more stress than their first language peers as they simultaneously learn the language and use the language as a tool of learning. Based on the discussion of their in and out-of-school writing practices, I explore the relationship between writing and the construction of their social identities, which

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include their identity as second language learners. I pay attention to the students' understanding of learning and literacy, such as the purpose of learning English and the reason why they need to learn writing; and the interactional dynamics these students have with their teachers and peers as they communicate. I then discuss what resources are available for these students and the challenges that they face as second language writers, and possible ways that could help them to spontaneously use the resources and ask for help.

## 1.3    Significance of Study

Issues discussed in this study are not unique to this site and these students at all. This study contributes to the field by understanding the complexities of ELLs' literacy learning experiences, especially their writing practices, as contextualized in their sociocultural world; describing the support they have and challenges they face; discussing language use and interactional dynamics in their literacy and cultural experience as they utilize technology and digital media; and probing the factors that contribute to or impede them from becoming active agencies in their own learning. It enriches the theoretical and instructional discussions of ELL education in general and second language writing in particular by emphasizing the role of language as an interactional and empowering tool. In addition, it also contributes to the interactional dynamics, and power relations between me, the researcher and the participants. Finally, there's a mismatch between a homogeneous population of beginning teachers for a more heterogeneous and multicultural population of students (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Teachers, especially mainstream classroom teachers, are ill prepared for these ELL students (Hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Nieto 2002; Zeichner, 2003 ). The research findings will not only benefit classroom teachers who have a student population of linguistically and culturally diverse students, but will inform teacher education as well.

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by the sociocultural model, which emphasizes the important role of social interaction in the learning process (Vygotsky,1978); and the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972, 1994), which examines language use in the social interactional events. Literacy is conceptualized as social and cultural practices which both shape and are shaped by particular contexts (Ferdman, 1991; Gee 1996; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 2007). As the learners participate in the daily interactional situations and events, they also negotiate their understanding of the social world and their own social role (Dyson, 1997). Such an understanding of literacy as the construction of meaning within the sociocultural context "attempts to account for aim, purpose, audience, text, and the context in which reading and writing occur" (Perez, 1998). Writing research along the same lines considers such contextual factors as school characteristics, class discussions and activities, parental input and peer interactions influence students' writing development (Ball, 2006). As the ELLs learn English as the second language, language is not only a target for acquisition, but also a media that they use to interact with others and to express themselves. It is therefore important to understand the ELLs' writing practices across the contexts in the sociocultural light. This study is also informed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS) tradition, which values students' out-school practices. Literacy should be understood beyond the confinement of schooling (Gee, 2002; Schultz, 2002). Students' sociocultural practices outside of the schools should be considered as "fund of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) which could inform the in-class teachings, and should be included in the writing research. Based on such understanding, I pay attention to the ELLs' language use and interactional dynamics as they learn to write in the classrooms.

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## 1.5 Key Terms

**English language learners (ELL):** Federal definition[1] of an English language learner refers to an individual who is 3 to 21 years old and is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school; who is not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments, or to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English. While English language learners is a general term that refers to those students for whom English is a second language, based on the students' oral English proficiency skills, they may be further classified as initially fluent English proficient, limited English proficient, or re-classified English proficient. Those students who are "re-classified English proficient" are considered to be ready for mainstream classrooms in which English is the sole language of instruction (Rivera, Lessaux, & Francis, 2009).

**School-sponsored writing and self-sponsored writing:** I borrow these terms from Janet Emig (1971)'s discussion of two modes of writing. Based on her observations of 12th grade students' composing processes, she discusses about two modes of writing: extensive writing and reflexive writing. She describes the former as school-sponsored writings, which is usually a detached writing task, such as prose writings assigned and evaluated by teachers on pieces of literature texts or topics that have been studied on. Students have relatively little or restrained time allowed for the planning, prewriting, writing, and reformulating, and usually receive technical suggestions on their writings and are seldom required to revise, since revision is usually not built in the design of such writing tasks. In contrast, reflexive writings are usually self-sponsored writings, which means that students write on a variety of stimuli such as interest or human relations, and their writings are usually evaluated by themselves or peers. As for

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[1]Public Law 107-110, Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101, (25)

the writing process, students usually have longer prewriting and writing period, more perceptible starting, stopping, and contemplating, and more opportunities for revisions. Besides such factors as the context (*e.g.*, assigner and evaluator), stimuli of writings, and time restraints, another major difference between these two modes of writings is that the self-sponsored, reflexive writings usually bring more satisfaction and pleasure for the students as compared to the school-sponsored writings.

In this research I borrow these two terms (*i.e.*, school-sponsored writings and self-sponsored writings) to describe and differentiate the writing tasks and practices in relation to the context, stimuli and time restraints discussed above. In addition, I choose to use these terms instead of the terms of "in-school writings" and "out-of-school writings" since students may do self-sponsored writings at school, and likewise do school-sponsored tasks at home. I do not, however, necessarily agree with Emig's observations that school-sponsored writings trigger less emotions or satisfaction. Instead, I leave these issues open for discussion based on the findings of this research project.

## 1.6   Research Questions

I begin the study with this broad research questions in mind: How do a group of ELL learners in a Western urban high school learn to write as contextualized in their sociocultural worlds in the digital age? In order to answer this question, I explore their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices, their home and school literacy-related experiences that feed their writings, and the possible home-school link as reflected in their writings and their sharing of the writings. I therefore examine the research question in three layers:

First, what do their school-sponsored writing practices look like? I examine their writing as situated in their schools, typically assigned by their teachers, especially in their English and other writing-involved classes. I start out by examining the contextual factors, such as the state and the school's expectations and general requirements for their writing and literacy in general;

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their own expectations and general in-school reading and writing experiences; the resources available, and their perceived resources (*e.g.* access and availability) as they learn to write. I explore their understanding of the English language and writing (*e.g.*, a mere task or a means to explore the world and express themselves). I then focus on their writing processes (in both individual and collaborative writings), and examine their interactional contents and dynamics in certain literacy events, such as the classroom discussions and writing conferences. I pay particular attention to their sharing of the writings in class discussions, reading aloud, teacher-student conferences, peer workshops, or other official and unofficial occasions. I make note of the occasions that they refer to their home and community-based, literacy-related practices in their class discussions or writings, *e.g.*, when they transform the information that they obtained from a book, a TV program, or other life experiences into certain writings. I also pay attention to those literacy practices such as body discourses (*e.g.*, dress codes, gestures, *etc.*) and oral language discourses (*e.g.*, Words, accents, and plays on language)[2] as they write or talk about writing. I look at their writing products to explore general patterns, language use, the recurrent themes of their writings, and the possible home-school links.

Second, what do their voluntary, self-sponsored writing practices look like? I look at their expectations, and the resources and their perceived resources. I'm particularly interested in how they engage themselves in such self-sponsored writings. I ask what kind of voluntary writings they do, through what medium (print or computer) and which language, for how long, and what they generally write about. I will focus on the artifacts that they choose to present and share with me, which they believe that best represent their spontaneous writings. I again look at their body discourses and oral discourses that facilitates their writings; and look for common patterns that turn up in their writings. Paying attention to the type of home and community-based literacy-related practices that feed their writings, I examine whether they share their writings with others (beside me); and if so, how they share their writings.

Third, what is the possible relationship between their school-sponsored and self-sponsored

[2]These two terms are used in a study on gangsta literacy conducted by Moje (2000).

writings, and what serves as their home-school link? I question whether the in and out-of-school writing products are connected, or there exists certain gaps in relation to topics, genres, recurrent themes, aspects of their sociocultural experiences presented in their writings, certain language use as they communicate with their readers, and the general body literacy and oral literacy as they talk about their writings. In addition, I explore the way they share their writings across the various contexts. I examine on what occasions (such as through reading aloud, discussions, or teachers' presentation of students' writing as examples, *etc.* within the classroom); in what manners (*e.g.* self-initiated or teacher-initiated) they share their writings; and what opens up or closes such sharings (*e.g.* Teachers' questions or storytelling). I explore possible home-school link as they share their home and community-based literacies that feed their writings (*e.g.* Transforming the information that they obtained from a book, a TV program, or other life experiences into certain writings; or transforming a school-related experience in their self-sponsored writings). Finally, I also explore the meaning of in-school and out-of-school writings in students' lives, such as the ways they perceive their own participation in the in-school and out-of-school writings; whether they favor or value certain types of writings more than others; if so, why, and what factors affect their participation in such activities. Based on this, I continue to discuss what kind of social identity construction and negotiation are reflected in these writing practices and the sharing of writing; and how such identity negotiation across the contexts create opportunities for their engagement in socio-culturally based learning.

## 1.7    Overview of the Chapters

In this chapter, I discussed the purpose and nature of this study. I review the literature in Chapter 2 which discusses the ELL students' literacy practices in and out of school; and the relationship between technology, online reading and writing and social network. I lay out the methodology of this study in Chapter 3, in which I introduce the city and the community, the high school, the mainstream English classes, and the participants. I also explain the data

collection and analysis procedures in details. I then detail the in and out-of-school writings of the four participants in Chapter 4 and 5. I wrap up the study, summarize the findings and reflect upon theoretical issues related to the the English language learners' literacy practices in the final chapter (Chapter 6). In addition, I explore the implications for the educational literature, classroom practice and teacher education.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This research project explores the nature of ELL students' literacy practices in and outside their urban high school. I situate this research in the field of literacy and first (L1) and second language (L2) writing and connect my research to previous theoretical and empirical work. I first examine the socio-cultural view of literacy and learning. Next, I review a number of studies that have investigated adolescent students' writing practices across contexts both in L1 and L2. Lastly, I address the issue of technology, social media and youth writing in the multimedia environment. This literature review lays a foundation for the data collection and data analysis in the following chapters.

## 2.2 A Socio-cultural View of Literacy and Learning

The concept of "literacy" is constantly changing and expanding. While the term "literacy" traditionally referred to functional skills of reading and writing in relation to print-based texts such as decoding, analyzing and comprehension, over the past several decades it has expanded to become a social practice within a sociocultural, historical, and institutional contexts (Gee 1999). Literacies have also moved beyond the singular print-based texts and become more multiple, mutimodal, and multilingual as the New Literacy Studies scholars have recently added a "digital strand" by including digital hypertexts and new media into the research tradition (Mill 2010). In addition, literacies are considered to be ideological instead of neutral, as they often relate to power and differences (Street, 1984; Pennycook, 2001). Lankshear and Knobel (2003) summarize the three major factors that contribute to the changing meaning of literacy over

the past decades. First, it has been influenced by Paulo Freire's (1987) work which considers literacy as the ability to "read the word and the world" (p. 5), and literacy education as a way to achieve empowerment and liberation. Second, it has been influenced by the dramatic discovery of the large extent of illiteracy among adults in the US during the early 1970s. Third, it has been impacted by the socio-cultural perspective within studies of language and the social sciences, such as the New Literacy Studies (NLS).

### 2.2.1 Literacy as Situated Social Practices

New Literacy Studies has been influential on both the theoretical expansion and educational research of literacy as sociocultural practices. In contrast to a more traditional view of literacy as a set of cognitive, functional skills of individuals, a sociocultural view considers literacy as social practice and participation in which people use the tool of language for interactions and communications. These practices and participation are considered to be "situated", as the everyday use of the written language is always considered in relation to the local and broader social and historical contexts, such as the particular time and places (Barton et al., 2000). People also participate in various communities and groups as they purposefully use, practice, and learn literacy in different domains, such as home, school, and work place. In accordance to the conceptual expansion, educational researchers have shifted their examination of the literacy practices from academic and school-based only to broader contexts which include the local and even global communities. For example, scholars in the past decades have examined the children's literacy practices both in school, and out-of-school, which will be further elaborated in the next section.

### 2.2.2 Literacies as Multiple and Multimodal

Scholars in the sociocultural tradition have considered literacy as "multiple" and "plural" (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Gee, 1996). The New London Group (1996), in particular, have

called for "multiliteracies" which can be inclusive of the new technologies and new media of communication. Such reconceptualization of literacy has been influential in educational research, as scholars made reference to multi-modaility of literacy. With the world becoming increasingly globalized and networked, people reach a broader community as they access and utilize the hypertexts and other resources in the web-based environment. In addition to the network of texts and hypertexts, researchers have examined the literacies which are situated in networks of social relationships within multiple communities (*e.g.*, Gee, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). The notion of multiliteracies also apply for a growing population of cultural and linguistic diversity, which has significance for the field of second language writing since language learners are bilingual or multilingual in nature.

### 2.2.3    Literacy as Meaning-making and Identity Negotiation

The focus in New Literacy Studies research has been on the relationship and connections between people and their literacy practices. The texts that people use and produce are impacted by their sociocultural environment; while at the same time they also exert an influence over their participation in various social communities. This corresponded with Vygotsky (1962)'s theory of language learning, in which language is both impacted by social relationships and interacts with and further shapes the sociocultural environment. In their everyday life, people negotiate their social identities with others as they participate in the situated social, cultural, and historical practices and interactional situations in their daily lives (Dyson 2007). This notion of literacy and language learning as a tool for people's social interactions, identity negotiations and meaning-making has become particularly important for language language learners, as ELL students' learning to write in a second language is "intimately related to identity—how one sees oneself and is seen by others as a student, as a writer, and as an ethnolinguistic minority" (Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, &Warschauer, 2003, p. 155). As literacy scholars examine the language learners' identity negotiations and their writing experiences, they found

that adolescent ELLs often have "a shifting identity" that is constantly changing (Ortmeier-Hooper 2010) or even "oppositional identities" (Li 2008) which is a result of a clash and conflict in the sociocultural values that they hold in their multicultural, multilingual contexts.

## 2.3 Literacy Learning across Contexts: Adolescent Writers' In-school and Out-of-school Literacy Practices

Kress (2003) argues that "it is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors". The notion that literacy is a social practice in multiple contexts has provided new insight for literacy research within and beyond the school settings (Dyson 2003; Hull & Schutlz, 2002). Dyson (1989, 1997, 2003) focuses on the students' incorporation of rich and sophisticated "unofficial" literacy resources within the school contexts. In the field of L2, Li (2008) also acknowledges the importance of out-of-school literacy, and argues that literacy practices of culturally-diverse students must be understood in the interactive contexts of both their familial and cultural milieu and their schools. She also advocates that, the minority families and children to "become successful cultural translators who are able to move across diverse social and cultural borders and rewrite the hegemonic domination of certain discourses, instead of just reproducing them." (p. 25)

### 2.3.1 Importance of Out-of-school Literacy

As mentioned earlier, the adolescent English language learners remain an under-represented group in the field of second language writing. Although L2 writing research still occurs predominantly with international ESL writers at institutions of higher education (Fitzgerald, 2006), our comprehensive literature review on the multilingual/ bilingual writing research on preK-12 student population within the time period of 1995-2005 shows that there are some notable research on the adolescent L2 writers (Curcic, Wolbers, Juzwik & Pu, 2012). A few researchers have examined the L2 writers' in-class writing practices and have supported the use of students' lin-

guistic and cultural resources in a dialogic and interactive manner. For example, Tsui and Ng's study (2000) argued that the L2 adolescent writers' interactions with teacher and peers improve writing; while the studies conducted by Gutierrez (1993) and Larson (1995) both supported a positive impact of interactive languages (*e.g.* narratives, group presentation, oral transformed into written forms) upon writing instruction. However, these studies have focused exclusively on the in-school writing practices, and have not include in the discussion the L2 writers' out-of-school writing practices.

### 2.3.2 L2 Writers' Out-of-school Writing Practices

There are only a few studies that examined the L2 writers' out-of-school writing practices (*e.g.*, Black, 2006; Black, 2009; Lam, 2000; Lam, 2004; Lam, 2006; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; and Yi, 2007). In Lam's (2004) study, she presented a case of a Chinese immigrant student, who created a website for the fans of a Japanese singer. His experience of hosting the website and interacting with other fans and visitors in English helped him develop a "textual identity" and gain confidence. Similarly, in another study, Lam (2006) presented another case of two Chinese immigrant high school student's experience of maintaining a fan website. Black's (2006) study explored the experience of a Chinese immigrant student's practice of fan fiction writing, through which she built her online identity as a respected fan fiction writer. This also motivated and encouraged her to become a self-sponsored writer in English. Skilton-Sylvester(2002) examined the voluntary writing practices of Nan, an ELL student who immigrated from Cambodia. Although she had very limited proficiency in academic English, she managed to engage in a variety of self-sponsored writing activities on her tough life in Philadelphia. Yi's (2007) study looked at a Korean immigrant high school girl's out-of-school writing practices, which helped her construct a "writer identity". Based on these research, the Asian (Chinese and Korean) L2 adolescent writers who had difficulties writing academic English all improved their English writing skills through online literacy practices, and constructed online identity as writ-

ers. These research contribute to the understanding of the writing practices of L2 adolescents, and yet they didn't look at the possible connections between the in-school and out-of-school writing practices.

### 2.3.3 Adolescent Writers' Out-of-school Writing Practices in L1

Since there is only limited research on L2 adolescents' writers, I also borrow from the line of out-of-school literacy research in L1 (*i.e.* English as the first language or mother tongue) writing research. Similar to those findings in the L2 research mentioned above, researchers (*e.g.*, Camitta, 1993; Mahiri & Sablo,1996; Tierney, Bond, & Bresler, 2006) have found that students who tend to consider the in-class academic writing as irrelevant and inauthentic voluntarily engaged in meaningful and rich writing activities outside of school. These writing activities played important roles in their identity formation and personal status construction as they use writing for self-expression, and for building and maintaining social relationships. Based on these findings, the researchers advocate for an inclusion of out-of-school literacies into theoretical and pedagogical considerations.

### 2.3.4 Linking the In-and-out of School Writing Practices in Both L1 and L2

There is very little research on the connection between the students' in-and-out of school writing practices. In the field of L1 writing research, Schultz (2002) examined 22 students' out-of-school writing practices, and argued that understanding of students' out-of-school writing can serve as a resource for teaching and broaden a teacher's understandings of the students' capacities. In the field of the L2 writing research, Yi (2010)'s study explored a recent Korean immigrant student's writing products in the creative writing classroom and her journal writings outside of the classroom. This student drew upon her journal writings for her creative writing class; and she also mentioned about the creative writing class assignments in her journals. This study revealed that ELL's writings across in- and out-of-school contexts were influenced by

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each other, especially in relation to topics and genres. Although these findings are important for the field, both of these two studies focused on the writing products and ignored the writing processes. They discussed what the students wrote without mentioning how the students engaged in their writings in and out-of school. In addition,writing was considered as an individual writing practice rather than collaborative endeavors. There was no discussion on the sharing of their writings either in or outside of the schools; nor the interactions the students had when they talked about their writings with other peers and/or teachers. There is also very little discussion of the students' sociocultural practices that feed their writings. In other words, these studies mainly discussed about the students' writing products, rather than the writing practices and their literacy-related sociocultural practices. Based on the literature review, this study intends to fill two gaps in the field: the writing practices of an under-represented group–the adolescent ELL writers; and the relationship between their school-sponsored writing practices and their voluntary, self-sponsored writing practices, which is a topic that needs further research.

## 2.4 Technology, Online Reading and Writing, and Social Network: Current Research and Future Directions

Researchers have recognized that "the interpreting and representing ideas and information in social contexts, both inside and outside of schools, is increasingly digitalized" (Mills 2010). In my review of articles emerging from L2 writing studies on the relationship between technology, online reading and writing and social network, I focus on those that provide insight into how adolescent L2 writers' use of technology impact their literacy practices.

Web is a very important location for adolescent literacy practices. A PEW Internet and American Life Project (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007) report reveals that adolescents in U.S. are very active participants in online spaces. Among the 935 adolescents interviewees who are between the ages of 12 to 17, 93% considered Internet an important venue for their social life. Besides the computer-mediated communication such as emailing, blogging,

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online gaming, adolescents also have gained easier access to the internet and social networks via their cellphones, especially the smartphones. The PEW Internet and American Life Project report reveals that most of the teens also users of mobile technologies, with 75% of all the teens own a cell phone as of 2010; while the medium texters send out an average of 21-100 texts a day (Lenhart, 2012). Scholars such as Hirvela (2004) has noticed that internet is probably the most important contact point and the primary medium for English writing for English language learners. It is important to note that almost all the out-of-school literacy practices of L2 writers discussed previously occurred on the internet, since "adolescent literacy practices out-of-school are so vibrant because of their access to technology and affinity for social networking" (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009).

A large number of researchers have examined the differences between paper text and hypertext in both L1 and L2. Although both require several of the basic skills such as decoding, monitoring understanding, vocabulary knowledge, and attending to structural cues (Kim & Kamil, 2003), Internet-based hypertext have unique features such as being non-linear, multimedia, and self-referential, and therefore provides "new text formats, new purposes a more egalitarian relationship between readers and writers (Spires and Estes, 2002). There could be new challenges to read and understand hypertext. Specific challenges of hypertext to language learners are listed as follows: the need of navigating through the linked text; evaluating the relevance of information; reading text in non-linear ways; and integrating information presented in different media and of varying degrees of relevance (Kim & Kamil, 2003; Reinking, 1997). Researchers also point out that the there are many "distractions", or "seductive details" in hypertext texts that may recall "inappropriate knowledge", such as hyperlinks to other pages, graphics and photos, video tapes, sounds, advertisements, animations, flashing images, and other animations (Harp & Mayer, 1998; Kim & Kamil, 2003; Selfe and Hilligoss, 1994). In this sense, users should also acquire strategies to make decisions about the content of text, and have control over the timing or speed of the reading (Kim and Kamil, 2003). Additionally, hypertexts are predominantly

expository in nature, while expository texts lack much instruction in the classrooms (Kim & Kamil, 2003). All these factors lead to a different reading style, and a request for different reading strategies. For example, Neilsen (1997) suggests that readers only scan text on the web rather than reading the pages word for word. According to his observation, 79% of the participants always scanned new hypertext pages they encountered, and only 16% of the participants read the pages word for word (Cited in Kim & Kamil, 2003 p. 168).

Technology not only changes the relationship between the reader/writer and the text, but also changes the relationship among the users. Beside being hyperlinked and more hybridized and intertextual, the digital literacies are also more productive, immediate, collaborative, dialogic (between author and reader), linguistically diverse, and more informal (Mill 2010). Scholars in the field of L2 writing have also examined the impact of the technology on learners' writing processes, such as on their use of emails and web-based writings. For example, Lam (2000) examines a case of a Chinese student Almon in California, who connected to a community of users from various countries via emails and online chatrooms on topics of popular and youth culture. As they use English to communicate with each other, they also employ different dialects with various levels of formality. Previously very silent in the English classes, Almon's web engagement helped him with language acquisition and improve his English proficiency. Lam argues that the out-of-school multiliteracies are more engaging and empowering as compared to the more homogeneous classroom literacy. Yi (2008) investigates on the collaboration of a group of writers as they each compose a portion of a story in the form of relay writing. These writers gained confidence and improved language proficiency as they engaged in the process of collaborative writings for a broad audience. In a more recent research conducted by Lam (2009), an immigrant high school student, Kaiyee, used instant messaging to develop and maintain social interactions with multiple linguistic and cultural communities. Her participation in the social networks has helped her improve language proficiencies in both English and Chinese. Lam argues that the adolescents' positioning in the digital networks enable them to develop

diverse perspectives and improve competence.

The literature review shows that the digital literacies have provided the L2 learners with new opportunities as well as challenges. It has helped the L2 learners to go beyond their local and physical contexts to reach a global and virtual community, to change their roles from consumer/reader of the information to become creators (from gathering information to the circulation of information). Technology creates a bridge for culturally and linguistically diverse students who are leaning English (Chatel 2002). While most of the research in the field of L2 were conducted in the cognitive and functional aspects of language learning, very few have examined the use of digital media in the adolescents' everyday lives or relationship between their socialization and their literacy practices; and even fewer have connected their out-of-school literacy practices back to their academic learnings. It is therefore very important to conduct more research to understand the L2 writers' literacy experiences across the institutional contexts as they engage in new media and multimodal practices.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

Passing some oriental supermarket and Vietnamese restaurants in Little Saigon, a MacDonald, an auto shop, and a Metro adult education school, I drive to the neighborhood that embraces Java City high school. Along the tree-dotted streets are one-story single family houses built in 1920s and 1930s with gray and brown roofs.

This is a busy Monday morning. Although it is still early March, it is already warm in Java City. Many students on the hallway are in their hoodie sweatshirts and jeans; and some even in t-shirts and shorts. It is the break time, and the hallway is very crowded. Students of different colors are standing in small groups chatting, laughing, or busy texting on their cellphones. Some are gobbling down their snack that they buy from the little campus store next to the auditorium. With a loud "hi" some give each other a hug as they head to different classrooms for their next class. Posters are everywhere, encouraging the students to work hard and informing the students about the upcoming basketball match, speech contest, elections for the student union leaders, and other after-school or community events. The trophies for the various sports competitions are proudly glittering in the display cabinets; and the pictures of the Honor students for the month are smiling to me from the glass door of the administrator's offices. After I sign in on the guest log, I head to Mr. Diaz's classroom. I pass Mr. Moreno's office on my way. Mr. Moreno is the ELL coordinator who has been in this school for 9 years. He is in charge of the placement testing for the ELLs based on their English proficiency levels. He has been a great resource person that helped me learn about the school, the community, and the ELL students. He also introduced me to Mr. Diaz, the teacher that I work with for my research project.

I am here to observe the second period. This is an ideal period not only because the students are active and more cooperative according to Mr. Diaz; but also because Mr. Diaz and I could discuss afterward since he has the 3rd period free. Mr. Diaz's classroom is very spacious, and

neatly organized. There is a TV and a big screen hanging above the white board. On Mr. Diaz's desk, there are piles of student works, his laptop, and pictures of him and some former students when he taught English in Japan. On the back of the classroom, there is a big blackboard with a question written in white chalk: What do you want to see more on campus? And below that some students have scribbled: Black people! The students are now sitting on their regular seats, busy writing on their notebooks. As I sit quietly at the the back of the classroom, I shift the focus of my observation from time to time, since I am here for a group of students: Phoenix, Keres, Marissa, Edward, who have volunteered to participate in my dissertation project and become my major informants.

## 3.1   How I Approached the Research Questions?

My research project is a year-long qualitative ethnographically oriented study. My overall research question (as detailed in Chapter 1) is: How does a group of ELLs learn to write in and outside of their classrooms as situated within and beyond the sociocultural contexts of their Western urban high school? I kept the question open, and adopted a linear approach as I kept revisiting, reflecting on, and revising my questions throughout the study as informed by the real data. Intending to hear different voices, obtain various perspectives, and understand multiple realities, I adopted a qualitative multiple case approach (Merrian, 1998). I utilized a "maximum variation sampling" approach to "document unique or diverse variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions and to identify important common patterns that cut across variation" (Patton, 1990, p. 182). I have therefore included both male and female students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and English proficiency in this study. I also strove to choose both outspoken and silent students for the same purpose. I consider both qualitative research and writing as a way to encourage participation, interaction, and open communication. The goal of my research is to empower the participants rather than exploiting them as subjects. My beliefs about research and writings have shaped my overall research design, such as my role

and participation in the study, the way that I collect and analyze data, and the final write-up.

## 3.2  Method

### 3.2.1  The City and the Community

Every week as I exit the highway and drove across the downtown area toward Java City high school, I can't help but notice how busy and vigorous this city is. The teachers and students that I worked with live in a big metropolitan Western industrial city. Once a largely farming community with bucolic hillsides and valley, Java city gradually shifted its economy from agriculture and food processing to industrial manufacturing after WII. The recent decades have seen the booming of local high-technology and electronic industries with the rapid growth of thousands of technology companies, which have accelerated the transition of the city from an agricultural center to an urbanized metropolitan area with large concentration of technology expertise. Currently, it is one of the largest cities in the nation in terms of population, land area, and industrial development. Several of the nation's largest technology companies serve as the top employers in the city. Java city has a large population rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. The racial makeup of Java City was 42.8% White, 33.2% Hispanic or Latino, 32.0% Asian, and 3.2% African American. According to the school district report (2009), the residents speak 56 different languages.

Java city has also witnessed a rapid growth of foreign-born residents (39.0% of the whole population as of 2010) in the last three or four decades. These include many high-tech employees from East and South Asia, Eastern European immigrants, as well as poorer immigrant workers from Latin America. Java city also has a very large Vietnamese community. Despite its large population, Java city is proud of its low crime rate as it has been ranked as one of the safest cities in the country with a population over half million people. According to a 2007 estimate, the median income for a household in the city was the highest in the U.S. for any city

with more than a quarter million residents. However, the living cost in Java City is also among the highest in the nation as the rapid economic growth during the past decades sky rocketed the housing prices and pumped up the costs in all areas of living.

Java city is home to several colleges and universities, and over 200 public elementary, middle, and high schools as of 2010. Most of the public education funding comes from federal contributions (10%), the state business and personal income taxes and sales taxes (60%), and local property taxes (23%). The recent statewide and district budget cut has caused the university enrollment to diminish, and has affected the K-12 public education in very negative ways. For example, the massive budget cut has reduced expenditure per pupil, and therefore resulted in the cut of the art and physical education, the supplementary and after school programs, the home to school transportation, and educational services such as bilingual aids for English Language Learners, *etc.*. Most public libraries are now only open 3 days a week; and there are fewer librarians. The school district that I conduct this research in has laid off 133 teachers and lots of administrative staff and school counselors in 2009, while those teachers that have not got the pink slips take 2.5 percent pay cut during the 2010-11 school year, which translated into five fewer days of instruction. The student to teacher ratio has also been radically raised. In short, all aspects of the public education in Java city has been affected in depth.

### 3.2.2 The School

It took me more than 6 months to finally meet with the students that participate in this study. I gained access to the school and the classroom through a mixed approach of both bottom-up and top-down. Right after I moved to Java city (which is more than 2000 miles away from my home campus in Midwest) in Fall 2010, I read the school accountability cards which I downloaded from the urban school district website. I then made numerous phone calls and sent out emails to the staff members who are in charge of the secondary education in the urban school district in Java city. I introduced myself and the research project that I planned to carry out, and sent them

a copy of the IRB application for the university human research protection program. I soon got an email from the manager of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, who sent out emails to all the high school principals in the school district to see if anyone is interested in the study. After we heard back from some of the principals, I discussed with the manager on the most suitable site for my research, and finally decided on Java city high school.

I had an hour-long meeting with the principal, Ms. C., who later introduced me to the ELL coordinator, the school counselor, and the personnel staff, *etc.* She also signed me up as a volunteer to help ELL learners with their English writings. After I finished a physical examination, an official background check and finger printing through the district human resources department, I was considered to be "legally" present on the campus, although I still have to wait for the final IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval from my university before I can contact and recruit students for my study.

A small comprehensive high school serving 1036 students (graders 9-12), Java City high school is the second oldest school in the state, which will soon celebrate its 150th anniversary. Up until the opening of another public school in 1943, Java city students only attended this high school, hence some of the city's history is embedded within that of this school. About two decades ago, in order to draw students from every part of the district, it became a magnet for the IB (international Baccalaureate) Diploma Program. For example, for Reading and Writing, the freshmen begin an in-depth study of international literature that culminates in the IB Diploma Higher Level English courses. It has also recently began another magnet program that prepare students for design and engineering careers. Divided by a long drive way named after the school's mascot, Java city high school presents its big soccer fields, football stadium, and baseball diamond on the left; and science building, music and media center, cafeteria, and five wings of classroom building on the right side. School library is located on the second floor of the administrative building. During the break the students hang out and chat on the big lawn outside of their school building. Just like Java city, this school is also very "high-tech", with

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| | |
|---|---|
| African American | 2% |
| Asian | 7% |
| Filipino | 3% |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 78% |
| White (Not Hispanic) | 9% |
| Socioeconomically disadvantaged | 73% |
| English Learners | 31% |
| Students with disabilities | 10% |

Table 3.1: Ethnicity and the English language learners (2010).

over 700 student laptop and desktop computers and digital projectors in almost every classroom and library room. Students have access to the internet anywhere at school since there is a full, high-speed WiFi network on campus. A community member who lives nearby told me that this school had great turn-around over the last four to five years in the school's look with the new engineering building as well as the new sign and clean grounds.

I choose this school since it is the most suitable one for this particular study. There are 8 high schools in the school district, 7 regular high schools and 1 charter school for college preparation. I have chosen the current school based on the suggestion of the Secondary School administrator of the school district, and the unique characteristics of this school. It is the most culturally and linguistically diverse school in the region (Table 3.1). The majority (78%) of the students are Hispanic/Latinos of any race, and 10% of the students are Asian and Filipinos. It also has the largest number of ELL students enrolled. According to the school accountability report card, 31% of their students are labeled as English language learners (the highest in the school district). In addition, this school also has a reputation for its strong ELL program. Like other urban schools, the poverty level in the school is high, as 73% of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Expenditures per pupil in the year 2009 is $10, 131, which is 9% above the district average.

Students that I chatted with are generally proud of their school, and believe that the school only "gets a bad rap from things done in the past"; and that it keeps improving under the new

administration. Most students were surprised to see how diverse and welcoming the school was when they first arrived. There is a rich variety of languages on campus. Mr. Moreno, the ELL coordinator, showed me a language code sheet which include more than 20 languages. Many teachers and staff (such as the one in the register's office) speak both English and Spanish. Despite the budget cut, they provide language aid for students who speak Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The students that I talked to believe that it is unjustified for people to give the school a poor academic image just because there is a large non-native English speaking population.

The students love the fact that they have IB program, the design and engineer project, AP classes, and the free SAT classes. There does exist a big gap in academic performance in this school between the IB and non-IB students, and that affect the way the two groups interact with each other. However, according to the students, everyone still "almost gets along with everyone else". Although many are not satisfied with the choices of extracurricular activities on campus, they generally admit that there is a wide offering and lots of clubs.

Most of the students in this high school don't work, because some of them are undocumented and don't have working permit. Some of them do work in places such as the mall and the supermarkets in the downtown. Like other urban schools that is located in the center of the city limits, Java City High School has its security issues like drugs, gangs, and violence. The students that I talked to told me that there are 2 gangs on the campus: the Blue and the Red. However, some also believe that gangs are typically acknowledged as a "subtle element" in the school, while violence and fights are only rare occurrence. "Friendly" and "Welcoming" are the two words that I frequently hear from the students and the teachers as well. Some students feel sorry for their friends who attended other schools which are "full of less friendly and stressed-out kids". In general, there is not much parental involvement. Several teachers that I chatted with mentioned that the Asian parents usually come and participate a lot, and the parents of the IB students are also very active; while the majority of the Spanish-speaking parents tend to be

less involved. This is partly due to the fact that they work different shifts, and therefore they may not be available for PTAs.

According to Mr. Moreno, this is also due to the parents' misunderstanding of themselves and the teachers. Some think that the teachers won't understand them since they only speak Spanish; and yet this is not true, since many teachers are bilingual themselves. They also think that the teachers know the best, and therefore they don't have anything to contribute to the PTA. Like most urban schools, Java faces challenges in terms of the students' academic performance. During the time of my visit, Java was going through a new accreditation process by the WASK (a Western association of schools); and it has successfully received a 6 year term of accreditation based on its school performance (Table 3.2).

| Indicator for School Performance | | School | District | State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Standard Test | English Language Arts | 40% | 56% | 52% |
| (Percent of students achieving at the proficient or advanced level) | Mathematics | 23% | 51% | 48% |
| | Science | 38% | 57% | 54% |
| | History-social sciences | 37% | 49% | 44% |
| Dropout rate (1 year) | | 2.1% | 2.4% | 5.7% |
| Graduate rate | | 86.9% | 86.7% | 78.2% |

Table 3.2: School performance (2009-2010).

The school used to have very high mobility and drop-off rate. According to Mr. Moreno, "I could have 25 students at the beginning of the semester, and then toward the end of the semester, I had 25 brand new students who are totally different (from those at the beginning of the semester). " This situation has changed though due to the economy during the recent 3 years (*i.e.* The economic recession). Those parents who couldn't find a job and couldn't afford the expensive living cost here would move out of the state. Now there may be 1 or 2 students that would drop out or come in at the end of the semester.

### 3.2.3 The Teacher and the Class

I gradually got to know some ELL teachers and mainstream English teachers during my volunteer work; and got a spectrum of experiences on the campus way before I started my research. I learned a lot from Mr. Moreno, the ELL coordinator; and Mr. Diaz, the teacher that I later worked with. This was the first year of Mr. Diaz's teaching here. He taught in another city for 1 year, where he received M.A. in Education from a prestigious public university. He learned about the opening from his friends and former classmates here in the Java city, and considered himself "lucky" to get this job. He also speaks Spanish, just like the majority of the students here. Mr. Diaz now teaches 5 regular English classes, 3 junior classes and 2 senior classes. According to him, most of the students' decoding skills are generally 9th grade level; while their comprehension is only 6th-7th grade level since vocabulary is one big obstacle. Lots of students would rather remain silent rather than respond and be wrong. Parental involvement for the classes are rare. He has had 4 PTA this semester. No parent has initiated the communication with him about the students' grade.

Upon receiving my IRB approval, I had in-depth discussions with Mr. Moreno and Mr. Diaz to find an ideal classroom for my study. We decided on a senior-level English class for this particular study. We chose the class based on the following criteria. First, this is a a regular (or mainstream) English class instead of an ELL only class. The students that have been placed in the regular English classes are those that have come to the country for more than 3 years. They have gained some English proficiency, and yet are still struggling with writings. Therefore, writing is considered to be a very important element in their English classes. In contrary, those in the ELL -only classes are newcomers with very low English proficiency levels who can barely write. The teachers place more emphasis on vocabulary and basic reading skills rather than writing. I chose the first group of students based on the purpose of this particular study. Second, there is the largest number of ELLs in this class. Third, this is a class that generally is the most active and cooperative one according to Mr. Diaz. The students in general show

interest in learning and writing.

Although 34 students enrolled at the beginning of the school year, there are only 29 students in the spring semester. Among them, 14 students have been labelled as ELLs, which include 6 LP (Limited Proficiency) and 8 RP (reclassified proficiency, which indicates a relatively higher proficiency level as compared to LP). The majority of the students in this class identify themselves as Hispanic or Latinos (White and non-White), and most of them say that they speak Spanish at home. There are also 2 Asians (Vietnamese), 2 Pacific Islanders (Filipinos, whose mother tongue is Tangalo); and 3 White students who also speak Portuguese at home.

Mr. Diaz follows a structure or routine for his English class. He always begins with the warm-up writing activities (See Appendix D). Usually it's 4 to 5 sentences that respond to a question. On Mondays he would also mention the weekend journals and ask what, who, where, and why questions so that students can talk. He will then talk about the vocabulary before teaching the literature text. After that there will be quizzes. He does both teacher-student conferences and peer conferences in the class, although there is usually not enough time for the one-on-one teacher-student conferences. Beside the warm-up writings, throughout the spring semester between January and May 2011, Mr. D. also assigned reading logs for the book club, the pacing guide (Appendix E), and academic essays.

### 3.2.4   The Informants

Among the 7 English language learners who showed interest in the study, I selected 5 key informants based on the teacher recommendation and their own willingness to participate. I had to drop one of the informants in the middle of the semester, since she was absent a lot.

Phoenix, Keres, Marissa and Edward are the four key informants for my study. Phoenix and Keres are the only two Vietnamese students in this class. Keres was born in U.S., and was labelled as ELL when he entered Kindergarten at the age of 5. Phoenix was born in Vietnam, and she came to U.S. with her mom at around 10. They are both relatively new in Java City

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High School, as Phoenix transferred to the school in Fall 2010 from another school district in Java city, and Keres moved in late 2009 from another city. Marissa and Edward are both Hispanic/Latinos, and they speak Spanish at home. They were all 17 years old at the beginning of the Spring semester in 2011, and Edward and Keres turned 18 when I started the research project.

In order to get to the know the students better, I also talked to their classmates; their other teachers, and the school counselor and the language aids.

## 3.3    Data Collection

Since fall 2010, I started to collect the resources about the city, the school district and the school from the relevant website, the local newspaper, and school documents such as the students' yearbook, and the school accountability report, *etc.*.

I collected the primary data from Spring 2011 to Mid Summer. There are 3 sets of primary data that I collected: the students' school-sponsored writings; their self-sponsored out-of-school writings; their school, home, and community-based literacy-related experiences that feed their writings. I collected a data set from multiple resources, which consists of observational field notes, survey questionnaires, formal and informal interviews of students and their teachers; and artifacts such as their written work. In addition, video and audio-taped classroom interactions (such as discussions and writing conferences) were transcribed.

In order to gather data on the school-sponsored academic writings, I visited their English classes daily for a whole unit for 6 weeks. I did this not only to understand their in-class writing processes and capture their talking about the writings, but to get to know each participant better by observing them in their normal school settings. I introduced myself as a researcher at the very beginning, during the recruitment; but at the same time also foregrounded myself as a second language learner and writer who not only has interest in their writings and lives, but someone who understands and wants to understand more about their experiences. Nonetheless,

in this initial stage, I was still considered an "outsider" in their classrooms [1]. I kept reminding myself that like in any relationships, it took time and patience to build mutual trust. Although I always brought with me a notebook and a hand-held video camera with me, I decided not to use the video camera during the first week, so that they would not feel uneasy as if they were suddenly "studied" by some "intruder". Instead, I tried to be as non-obtrusive and non-disruptive as possible, sitting quietly at the back of the classroom with my notebook and pen. Just like them, I was also a "writer", as I claimed. After all, writing is a common literacy activity in this English class that they engaged themselves in. After a few weeks of immersion in the classrooms, the students got more and more familiar with my presence, and both their and my own comfort level increased. Some students readily greeted me with a smile every time I came to the classroom; and some even came to ask questions during the break. All (but one student who was absent a lot and later dropped from the study) were already very relaxed as I interviewed them for the first time, which I could tell from their facial expression, body language, and their readiness and willingness to share with me.

During my observation, I quickly jotted down or drew the physical environment of the classroom, such as their seating chart, their dress codes, *etc.* I also kept observational field notes which included both the descriptive and reflective data (Bogdan & Biklen 1998). Besides the physical environment of the classroom, I paid special attention to their interactions with the teachers and their peer classmates as they shared or talked about their writings. I also made notes on their self-sponsored writings during the class periods, such as writing and sharing notes, writing down homework assignments, *etc.* Copies of their in-class writing products was collected. With the students' permission, Mr. Diaz forwarded some of their writings that they submitted to his email account. When I talked with the students about these writings, I made note of the occasions that they referred to their home and community-based, literacy-related practices in their class discussions or writings, *e.g.*, when they transform the information that

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[1]Although I have been in their school for a while as a volunteer, I did not have the right to officially approach these students before I got approved by the IRB office.

| Writing Activities | Time: How long did you write? (start-finish) | Place: Where did you write? | Medium: In what environment and through what medium did you write (*e.g.* Paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*)? | Note / comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (*e.g.* writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Emailing | | | | |
| Hand-written notes | | | | |
| Scribbling | | | | |
| Website forum/BBS | | | | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook/Twitter | | | | |
| Text message | | | | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Others | | | | |

Table 3.3: Self-sponsored writing log.

they obtained from a book, a TV program, or other life experiences into certain writings.

In my original design, I planned to visit the students' other writing-involved classes on a regular base throughout the school years, such as their social studies class, *etc.* I revised my plan to collect some writing samples from these classes instead, since every student attended different classes, which resulted in lots of conflict in time and schedule. The voluntary, non-academic writing was more difficult, or challenging to gather since most of these are personal and private, such as diary, text messages, or online chatting with friends, *etc.* Besides, the participants may not remember their informal notes or scribbles at all. In order to gather data on the voluntary, non-academic writing in the out-of-school writing contexts while remaining unobtrusive, I took the following 3 steps.

First, I have brainstormed a literacy activity log (Table 3.3; Appendix C) with all the possible

writing activities (*e.g.*, keeping a diary, scheduling by writing to-do lists, calendar/planner writing), emailing, chatting online, exchanging notes, and scribbling), and had the students check them and add if there are extra activities. I ask for the types and length of writing activities as well as the language, and the medium of the writing (print or computer-based). Questions in the literacy activity log was worded in a kid-friendly way. For instance, in the initial log I used such terms as "medium of writing: print or computer-based" (Appendix C), which caused some confusions for the students. In the revised activity logs, I ask the question "In what environment and through what medium did you write (*e.g.* paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*)" instead. I conducted a preliminary, semi-formal interview with the students before the classroom observation period to see if students have anything that they want to add to the list; and whether certain writings activities are conducted more frequently than others. I have used the literacy activity sheet as a conversation prompt. When I went to the classroom to recruit the students, I provided guidance on using the literacy activity list; and also define "writing" to them because they may not think some activities as writing.

Second, I provided them with the daily literacy activity log, and had them do it for 6 weeks. Since it might be too much work for them to do the log daily for the whole period and became a distraction, or worse, an "extra task" that took away their precious time, I only asked them to do a 7-day log during the first week. In the following 5 weeks a sampling method was adopted, and they only need to do it once or twice every week. I gathered their literacy logs to look for patterns.

Third, after the observation was over, I interviewed them again in the summer. This interview was conducted in a home or out-of-school settings that they felt most comfortable and relaxed in. I invited them to present to me some writing products that they feel comfortable to share with me. They chose a typical sample of their self-sponsored, out-of-school writings which they considered to be closely related for their own identity. I then discussed with them about their sharing of other self-sponsored writings afterwards, based on their own comfort

level. Both interviews were audio-taped and video-taped and transcribed. In order to gather information on their school, home, and community-based literacy-related experiences that feed their writings, I not only rely on their in-class talk and writing products, but also frequently talked to the students, their teachers, and school counselor after classes. As suggested by the ELL program coordinator and their teachers, I also visited the public library which is close to the school, as well as participated in some cultural events that the students showed great interest in. I went to an event called "Christmas in the park" in Winter 2010, as Mr. Diaz told me that many students mentioned this event to him. In addition, in order to understand their general experiences in the high school, I also conducted a survey (see Appendix B) for all the English language learners in the whole class. The students' writing artifacts, along with observational fieldnotes, survey questionnaires, formal and informal interviews of students and their teachers, and the literacy activity sheets are used as the primary source. All the interviews were transcribed word by word. I watched the classroom-observation videos and did selective transcription in order to facilitate the above data sources while at the same time avoiding unmanageable amount of data.

In total, I accumulated a data set which consists of 15 survey responses, 44 Literacy activity logs, 300 pages of in-class student writings (warm-up writings; term papers, self-advertisement project, *etc.*), 150 pages of out-of-class student writings ( self-selected artifacts; facebook, twitter, tumblr entries, *etc.*), and 10-hour long interviews with the students, teachers, and the school counselor. There are also teaching artifacts (*e.g.*, lesson plans, assignment, *etc.*) and my own observation protocols, memos and field note documents. Throughout the data collection process, I kept examining and shifting my own role(s) as I interacted with the students. Some voluntarily sent me emails and online messages, and shared with me their personal writings, which became part of the secondary data.

## 3.4 Data Analysis

In order to organize the collected data, I built a folder for each of the four key informants. I numbered the pages and listed a "Table of Contents" as an index for me to easily locate the detailed information. I divided the content pages into 5 sections. The first section is "basic information" of the student, beginning with an official person summary report that I obtained from the student administrator, which include the primary information of the student such as name, gender, birth date, contact information, and race/ethnicity information. On the next page, I summarized the students' activities, interests, and entertainment as described by themselves either in their writings, their conversations with me, or even from the "info" section of their Facebook page. I included here their 6-week literacy activity sheets and the survey question-naire. The second section is the interview transcripts (both initial and final) that I typed out. I left a margin on the right of each page for the purpose of coding and notes. The third section is the students' "school-sponsored writings", and the forth is their "self-sponsored writings". I marked the writing artifacts that the students chose as "representative" or "favorite"of their writings, and used different color codes for their writings in L1 (their home language) and L2 (English). In the last section labeled as "Other", I included other documents that are relevant, such as my own research memos, transcripts of the teachers' and school counselor's interviews that mentioned this particular student, *etc.*

I had another folder for my field notes and other written documents that I collected. I divided them into the "City, Community & School" section and the "Class" section. I numbered and arranged chronologically my observational notes and other relevant materials; and used a table to document the date, time, settings (*e.g.* Classroom, library, or office, *etc.*), major participants, the number of the field notes, a brief summary for the field notes, and a list of the artifacts that I collected that day. This table provided me with an overview of my observational data across the different settings. Keeping in mind that my overall research question deals with "students learning to write inside and outside of the school in both L1 and L2", I adopted a recursive

approach for data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), constantly reading and coding my data throughout the whole process of data collection. For example, I read my notes and the students' in-school writings as soon as I obtained them after my class observations, when everything was still fresh in my memory. After I completed data collection, I revisited these writings as I read my observational notes, the interview transcripts, and the students' in and out-of-school writing artifacts, and wrote research memos as I tried to link the codes for evolving categories.

Through the reading and re-reading of the raw data, I explored the general or recurrent topics, themes and patterns in the students' writings; and the specific occasions where the students connect their in-and-outside of school literacy practices in their writing (*e.g.* Whether they mention one practice in the context of the other) and the sharing of their writings. As I examined the kinds of writing practices that they engage themselves in and the types of writings that they value as meaningful and choose to share (or not to share), I noticed important and recurrent themes such as the writers' identity construction and negotiation, socialization, and language use (see Table 3.4). These are therefore categorized further analysis .

Discourse analysis was conducted on the language use, the opportunities for interaction and the interactional dynamics among the participants. In order to examine on what occasions and in what manners they share their writings as well as their home and community-based literacies that feed their writings; and what opens up or closes such sharings, I select key events which represent the everyday or routine literacy practices, such as classroom discussions, writing conferences, and peer workshops, *etc.* Participation structure (Philips, 1972) was used to examine the interational dynamics, such as who talks, when, and under what circumstances. An inductive method was adopted in the analysis of the collected data. Instead of using a strict set of pre-selected coding categories, I bear in mind some rough categories such as source of the discourse utterance, and the cognitive level of such utterances; and at the same time read the data closely and let the coding emerge naturally. Comparisons among the 4 different cases (Phoenix, Keres, Marissa, and Edward) were conducted in order to understand the similarities and differ-

| Sample major coding categories | General school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices (process and product) | Writing as Identity Construction and Negotiation (Focus: self) | Writing as a social act (Focus: communication and sharing) | Role and use of Languages in Writing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sample sub-categories | Institutional expectations; Pedagogical practices; Writing Process [Resources and Perceived resources for writing; Quantity of the writing (*e.g.* Time frame); Place of writing; Medium of writing; (paper/print/computer/phone...); Rituals of writing (*e.g.* Music, *etc.*); Anxiety level of writing; ] Writing Product [Topics; Purpose; Genres; Recurrent themes; Recurrent general patterns; ] Whether they mention one practice in the context (in/out of school writing) of the other; Similarities and dissonances across th contexts; Oppositional vs. Bidirectional, *etc.* | Self-image; Self-identification (*e.g.* Writer's identity); Race; Gender; Cultural identity and heritage; Meaning/value of writing; Purpose of writing; Writers' favor or value of certain types of writings over others; Understanding and critical thinking of life and world; Voice; Own theory of writing; Oral/body literacies as they talk about their writing; *etc.* | aspects of their sociocultural experiences presented and transformed in their writings ("funds of knowledge"); Individual and collaborative writings; Peer culture; Writing opportunities; Opportunity for interaction; Writings to share or not to share (private vs. Public); Who initiates the sharing, in what manner, to whom (interactive dynamics as represented in the key writing events); Target readers; certain language use and language style as they communicate with their readers; Anxiety level of sharing their writings; *etc.* | Multilingual writing; Language choice; Language preference; Language switch and Language transfer between L1 and L2; Own reflections on language; Joint development of L1 and L2 writings; |

Table 3.4: Sample emerging coding categories.

ences of the learning experience of the English language learners. For each case, I first describe their general school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices, which include both writing process and products. I then examine their engaging of writing activities to explore the similarities and dissonances as they write across the contexts. I focus on the discussion of their identity and socialization as reflected in their writing practices in relation to their language use and choice as they write.

In addition to triangulation of observation notes with interviews and writing artifacts, I also invited the key informants to perform informal and formal member checks at different stages of data analysis in order to enhance validity. After all, these are their writings, and I want their perspectives and voices to be represented. The students made comments and provided insights for my interpretations of their writings and other literacy activities. I also invited them to read the draft of the chapter that dedicate to their writing practices.

As the data analysis was ongoing, I reflected on the form of the following chapters. Instead of writing the data chapters based on the primary coding categories, I decided to dedicate the data chapters to the recounting of the students' stories. In order to bring my readers into their writings, and their world, I tried to tell the stories in the ways that captured their uniqueness, since each case is unique. Qualitative naturalistic inquiries can sometimes be recursive and messy, and yet I still chose to narrate the case studies in a chronological order as in accordance with the qualitative naturalistic inquiry to see how the stories unfolded. The stories of these 4 students' in and out-of-school literacy practices and sociocultural activities were not based on their own revelations. Rather, at some points of my research, I felt as if sitting in front of a messy pile of jigsaw puzzles. I had to patiently search, find, and put the tiny scattered pieces together in order to see the whole picture. Therefore, as I re-presented their stories, I chose to provide a whole picture of their literate lives with a focus on their self-sponsored writing practices, the meaning of writing for the participants as they perceived it, and a dominant aspect in their writings.

I followed a rough outline as I presented the four case studies, integrating the descriptions and interpretations of each participants' literate lives. In each story, I started with a description of each participant, which included the general background information such as their race, age, gender, language learning experience, and their general literacy practices. As the stories how I met with the participants and got to know each of them unfolded, the students' family background, schooling experience, and their personalities and interests were also revealed. Next, I provided thick description of the participants' in-school and out-of-school writing practices with attention paid to a dominant pattern that emerged from both the writing processes and writing products. Based on the discussion of a representative sample of their writings, I then interpreted the role that writing played in their lives, and the meaning of writing for that participant. Finally, I summarized the discussion about their writings in relation to identity construction, formation, and negotiation.

As mentioned above, after I put together the picture of their literate life through my own interpretations, my participants provided me with feedbacks and corrected my mis-readings and biases. Therefore, the stories that told in the following chapters were still a fruit of our collaborations and bi-directional interactions.

# CHAPTER 4

## STORIES OF THE 2 MALE ELL WRITERS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to recounting the stories of 2 male ELL writers (Keres and Edward) as they were situated in their social and cultural world in and outside their urban high school. Drawing on multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, field notes, their literacy activity sheets, and their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing samples, I provided thick description of their individual and collective literacy practices within various contexts across the school borders, with a focus on their writing activities. As I investigated the type of home and community-based literacy-related practices that feed their writings, I also gathered rich information about their various family background, schooling and language learning experiences, sociocultural activities, and influences of popular culture, which I considered of significant importance in understanding the nature of their lives as literate beings embedded in their own social worlds.

In order to understand the nature of their writings both in and beyond the realm of their school, I paid attention to both the writing process and product in their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices, and asked what kind of writings they did, through what medium (print or computer) and which language, and what they generally wrote about. I looked for common patterns that turned up in their writings, such as recurrent themes and topics, language use or rhetorical characteristics, and possible link or gap between their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writings, *etc.* As I explored writing as identity construction and negotiation for these ELL writers, I focused on the artifacts that they chose to present and share with me, which they considered most meaningful or best representative of their spontaneous writings. Finally, as writing was a social act, I also investigated what aspects of their sociocultural expe-

riences were presented and transformed in their writings; and how they chose to share (or not share) their writings with their audiences in the official world of school and unofficial world of peers.

In the following section, I started with the story of an advanced ELL writer, Keres, as he engaged in the type of writings and literacy activities which connected his desire to become more competent in academic English. I then told the story of Edward, who presented a contradictory image as reader and writer.

## 4.2 Keres: Story of an Advanced ELL Writer Striving for Academic Success

Keres was a senior student at Java city high school. He turned 18 right before I started the classroom observations. He was part Vietnamese, Japanese, and Chinese. He spoke Vietnamese at home, and had also taken courses on Chinese and Spanish. His hair was neatly cut, and he loved to wear T-shirts.

Keres was considered a "very good writer" by his English teacher. As seen from his literacy activity log, he spent lots of time on his assigned essay writings. His focus on academics also fed and framed his self-sponsored writings. Keres discussed with his friends on school-related issues on his social network. He chose to write in formal and complete sentences on public web forums; and he also actively seek for opportunities to interact with others in a type of discourse that was academically or institutionally recognized.

Keres was a highly motivated student. He was determined to apply for one of the state universities with a major in civil engineering. When his teacher asked him his expectations for the senior year, he responded, "This year I really don't care about what goes on at school, and don't plan to get too comfortable over here in my senior year...In this class I would prefer to work alone without the interference of everything else." (Keres-notebook, 8/27/2010) As he was among the first few students who, after my introduction about myself and my research project in

the class, signed the consent form and turned it right away to Mr. D, I was very glad that he did not consider my observation and interviews as "interference". He was also one of the few Asian students in the class, and I was very thrilled when he and another Asian student volunteered to participate in the study, as I believe that their stories could reveal important information about minority urban high school English Language learners' experience and literacy practices.

It turned out that he considered my interviews on his writing activities as an academic activity, and he expected to better understand and improve his English writings through this study. Unlike other participants who considered me as an "elder sister" and readily invited me into their lives, Keres seemed to label me as a "researcher" from the very beginning, and always communicated with me in a formal manner. For example, when I asked whether I could cite his writings in his in-class notebooks, he sent me an email in a formal tone:

> "I'll grant permission the use of this source to your work . . . And you're so very much welcome to ask for any sources in my access. I will try to find whatever is available." (04/06/2011)

### 4.2.1  Keres' Emphasis on Academics and its Impact upon School-sponsored Writings

His emphasis on academics had a great impact on his school-sponsored writings, such as his treatment for different genres and various topics. As I decided to be as non-obtrusive and non-disruptive as possible and sat at the back of the classroom during my classroom observations, I got the chance to collect and read his in-class writings every week, which included his essays and warm-up writing notebook. He treated the argumentative essays more seriously than the warm-up writings. According to Mr. D., Keres was one of the few students that really took his essays seriously, and put lots of efforts and energy into the essay writing. Although most of his classmates handwrote their essays, Keres always wrote his essays on computer and printed them, even though he didn't have a printer at home and had to go to the public library for the task. He also opened a gmail account just for the saving of his essays.

As a second language learner, Keres made great efforts to make up for the limited exposure of the English vocabulary that he had at home. He therefore paid much attention to vocabulary, diction, and grammar, and considered these strength in his writings. He checked for synonyms of words and tried to use a rich variety of words in his essays.

Keres treated the warm-up writing in a much different way. In Mr. D's English class, there were 6 broad categories for the warm-up writing topics: language, literature, weekends, school, family and relationship, and social-political issues. Generally, Mr. D required them to write 3-5 sentences for the warm-up writings. Keres usually elaborated more for the topics that related to the literature texts they were reading and the socio-political issues. However, he always wrote extremely briefly when it came to the topics related to personal issues. For example, he seldom mentioned his family members or friends for those entries on "weekends", and in most cases simply listed, rather than described the things that he did. A typical example of his weekend entry was like the follows:

> "I was planning to go out of town this weekend but changed my mind. I stayed
> at home and did some reading and homework (instead). There may be plan here and
> there, but there won't be much. I think that's pretty much it." (Keres, 11-24-2010)

He used such vague words as "some reading" and "plan here and there" in his narrative; but he did not get into further details. It seemed that he did not feel comfortable sharing his personal life, especially feelings on the notebook, even though he knew that Mr.D would only scan the writings and left a stamp. He showed his awareness of the audience clearly when he responded to the prompt question "When do you feel most guilty?":

> "Normally I would keep this confidential, but I will start loading this off my
> chest in this situation." (Keres, 12-2-2010)

### 4.2.2 Keres' Writings and his Personal and Social Life

Keres never chose to share his writings on personal issues publicly with his classmates, at least during the 6 weeks that I was there in the classroom; although he did briefly share his opinion on "voting" once.

I did not learn much about his out-of-school literacy practices from his warm-up writing notebook. There was also very little information mentioned on his personal life, including his family, friends, and his after-school activities. As I hadn't had a chance to talk with him during the break, I had to rely on the interviews to get to know him better. It was certainly not an easy task to get him come out of his shell. Keres was the first student that I interviewed. After talking with Mr. D., we both agreed that the school library would be an appropriate place for my first round of interviews with the students. Keres came promptly for our first interview. This first interview was supposed to be semi-formal, and the purpose was to get to know the participants better. Since he didn't do the first literacy activity sheet, I started the conversation to ask about his plan for the upcoming Prom, which I hoped to serve as an icebreaker. However, he just bluntly told me that he's not going to the Prom at all, and remained silent afterward. Our conversations remained a little awkward for a while, with me asking questions and him giving very brief answers. I decided to change the topic to ask about his personal interests, such as the type of music that he loved. This question seemed to turn him on, and helped him to open up a little bit, as he told me about the that he played three instruments: piano, classical guitar, and bass. He then told me that he subscribed to lots of blogs of some musical D.J.s, and also emailed them from time to time. It seemed that his interests and hobbies were tightly woven with his literacy activities. From there, our conversations on his literacy experiences became smoothy; but he still remained very brief when our topics touched his personal space, such as his family, and his socialization, *etc.*.

I learned from the first interview that he participated in discussions on the web forums. However, he did not consider his discussions on the web forums as "writings". This is in

accordance with recent research findings that most of the teens who engage in some forms of electronic personal communication do not consider themselves "writing"(Lenhart, et al., 2008). I explained to him that anything he wrote online would be considered as a type of "writing", and I invited him to choose an artifact that represented his self-sponsored writing. I emphasized that it should not be an academic essay done for the classes.We had several email exchanges before the second interview, and I made sure that he understood what I expected to discuss with him.

Unexpectedly, when he came to the interview, he brought with him some academic essays that he wrote for certain classes. Seeing my disappointment, he explained that those writings that he did on his own were either "personal", or some "subjective" opinions and feedbacks that he posted, which he did not even save a copy. He didn't think those "subjective" pieces deserve any serious consideration. Since I did not want to add to his already busy schedule before graduation, I offered to postpone our second interview to the summer, after the spring semester was over.

We met for our second interview in a public library close to his home, since he did not have a car, and had to walk there. Probably due to the factor that this interview was conducted after the spring semester was over, and he knew that he was admitted by the State college he applied to with financial aid, Keres was much more relaxed and willing to share this time. His identity has been transitted from a busy, anxious senior student to a proud high school graduate and prospective college student. This also impacted our relationship as well. Although he still considered me as a "researcher", he ceased to treat me as a distant and remote observer, but someone who sincerely cared about him and shared with him his pride and joy. He even invited and added me as a contact on his Facebook page toward the end of our conversation, so that I could have a glimpse of his personal life.

Keres still didn't bring his "self-sponsored" writing sample this time, but luckily, I brought with me my laptop this time, and there was WIFI in the library. We checked out some web

forums that he frequented, and used the search engine to look for some old posts of his. He picked one post as the sample writing which he believed was quite representative of his posts on the web forums. We got to talk more about his family, schooling, and socio-cultural life and activities that fed his writings.

Keres lived with his parents and younger brother. His parents immigrated from Vietnam to U.S. before he was born. They could understand English although they didn't speak it. Keres talked to his parents at home in Vietnamese; and spoke English when he talked to his younger brother. Although his first language was Vietnamese, he could barely read or write in it. He felt that he had a negative impact trying to learn English late-term for the "unnecessary price of the native tongue" (Keres, 8/23/2010).

His extended family were scattered. He had an uncle in Java city who worked as a civil engineer, which was partially the reason why he decided to major in Civil Engineering in college. He had lots of relatives down in the Southern part of the state from his dad's side; and the relatives from his mom's side lived in Hannoi and Saigon, Vietnam. He found it a most life-changing and inspiring experience when he took a trip to Vietnam. He felt at home and really wanted to communicate to his extended family members there freely, and to understand his own cultural heritage. After he came back, he took courses on Vietnamese, hoping to re-learn it. He also enrolled in some language courses in Chinese, and did very well for the first semester, but he had to drop out since he found it too difficult to learn by the second half.

Keres moved to Jave city High school in 2009 with his family. This was actually the second time that he moved as a high school student. His family lived in a Southern city of the state as he started his freshmen year in 2007; and then moved to a Northern city shortly after, where he spent the first two years of high school. He found that it was very difficult to measure up over there, with the majority of student body mainly Caucasian and Asian, and competition extremely intense. He didn't have a good studying environment at home, since the apartment that his parents lived in was very noisy. He had to study at the public library, and it took him 45

minutes to walk back to their apartment. When the market crashed in 2008, his family lost a lot of savings from a bad investment, and both parents lost their jobs. They were forced to move again. In August 2009, his family moved into an apartment in Java City, right by the major high way. Only after they settled down, his parents then looked for schools for him and his younger brother near their apartment, and enrolled them in Java City High. This school was the closest one that they could reach, and also had easier registration requirement compared to the other option in the area.

Keres loved his new school, and believed that it was a very good decision to attend this school. Although there were not a significant amount of Vietnamese students here, and the majority of student body were Latino students, he found this school to be fairly welcoming. Since he transferred as a junior, he found that he hadn't had much problems as being stereotyped or teased, since the issue of intolerance was usually among the younger people.

In the second interview, Keres admitted that it was not easy for him to make friends at Java City high school. He ascribed this to the fact that he was "different" from his peers, just as he once wrote in his warm-up writing:

> "I know one particular word other people would describe me, and that is particularly peculiar. In other words, I'm known to be just plain weird. I'm known to be different because of the way I think, which my values are much apart from others, the things I say, which I do make people very silent towards me, the music I listen to, which I'm known not to listen to what everyone else listens to, and so on. In other words, there isn't a lot I have in common with other people here." (Keres notebook 03-29-2011)

It seemed that he didn't consider himself being "peculiar" in others' eyes in terms of such broad and clear-cut categories as race, ethnicity, or cultural heritage. Rather, he considered himself more as an individual, and focused on such issues as personal value, ways of thinking, and interests (*e.g.*, music that he listened to). Although he used such negatively connotated

word as "weird", he was actually proud of what he was; and did not want to change who he was to become more "trendy" or more "popular". He considered himself lucky since it was not too hard to get along with other people here being such a "peculiar" and "weird" person, as he managed to join a small social circle of about 10 kids of both girls and boys. They always met in front of the hall nearby the office to chat and plan for after-school activities. Keres was introduced to the circle by his best friend, Josh, who was a Latino student that he met in his English class. Keres was proud of his friends, since these were all "smart kids" that focused on hard work and good grades, who had nothing to do with the gangs and drugs. He did make efforts to negotiate his identity as he socialized with his friends though. Under the influence of his Spanish-speaking peers, he started to study Spanish beginning his Senior year, using this course to make up for the Foreign Language credit. He didn't get the chance to have lots of serious conversations with his classmates in Spanish outside of his Spanish classes, but he did find it easier for him to reach out and get along with his Latino peers after he learned some Spanish. When it comes to writing, he would occasionally wrote in Spanish, but according to him, those were usually not serious, but just "fooling around and for fun". His knowledge of Spanish became a type of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that helped him to obtain a sense of belonging at this school where the majority of students speak Spanish.

Keres' social life, along with his emphasis on academics, influenced his out-of-school literacy activities and self-sponsored writing as well. He used his writing to interact with his friends in his social circle. On his social network page, he shared with his friends about his favorite books, movies, TV programs, music, and video clips. Although he was not aware of it, he also actively seek for opportunities to interact with people outside of his social circle in a type of discourse that was academically or institutionally recognized.

With his knowledge in multiple languages, Keres had access to a wide range of popular and youth literacy resources from different cultural backgrounds. He read widely after school, mainly in English and ocassionally in Spanish and Vietnamese. He listened to broadcast in

Vietnamese, Spanish, and British/American English. As for the print-based materials, he read literacy canons such as The Great Gatsby and The Lord of the Flies. Books on popular culture, such as The Heroin Diaries: A Year in the Life of a Shattered Rock Star, was also on his reading list. Besides books, he also habitually read the local newspapers. If there were topics in the news that triggered his interests, he would submit opinions and feedbacks to the editors via email. Usually these topics would be related to the local social and political events, and most of the time involved issues like the current state budget, and the policies of the current governors. Keres did not save these emails, but according to him, these were usually short pieces of opinions and feedbacks.

His personal writings were mainly done on paper and was kept private. For example, he handwrote his diaries to keep track of important things in his life twice a day, which he only kept for himself. He even sent handwritten letters to his girlfriend, which was not very common now among his i-generation peers. Just like he never allowed his warm-up notebook to be too revealing, he never shared with me any of such personal writings throughout the research; and always refrained himself from talking too much about this in detail. I loyally followed this rule as well, never allowing my antenna to probe too deep or cross the boundary.

### 4.2.3 Keres' Online Reading and Writing Practices

Although Keres described himself as "not an internet person", he actually did lots of reading and writings online. His web-based literacy activities fell into 3 major categories: Web logs, web forums, and web-based social network.

**Web logs:** Keres did not consider himself very much of a blogger. Although he did use Twitter for a while, he never really enjoyed it. Twitter is a micro-blogging service that enables its users to send, read, and respond to short text-based posts called "tweets" of up to 140 characteres. It was created in 2006, and as of 2011 it has gained worldwide popularity and become one of the most popular micro-blogging and social networking site1. Keres found this type of micro-

blogging very distractive, since one could get bombarded by the messages sent by others. It also to some extent invaded his sense of "privacy", as he did not want others to have access to every little detail of his life. Rather, he preferred to read the weblogs which could give him some useful information. He subscribed to the weblogs of some musicians and musical D.J.s, faithfully followed those blogs and read lots of song lyrics, and sent emails to the D.J.s and other music fans from time to time to keep himself connected. What he mainly did was not to create, but to remix the song lists and share them with friends.

**Web forums:** He frequented a website called Crunchyroll, which was an American website and an international online community of more than five million members focused on streaming East Asian media such as anime, music, *etc.* He wrote self-introduction on the forum by telling others his real name, age, and his passion for music. "Duh! Music is my life!" he stated, and shared a list of the East Asian bands that he listened to. According to him, he also joined discussions on the animation or music there; although I did not get the opportunity to read those posts since he didn't save a copy. He was very aware that most of his peers at his high school did not listen to this type of East Asian music. As he found a group of people in this online community who enjoyed the same type of music as he did, he felt connected to his minority cultural identity.

As for the North American popular culture, he subscribed to a few popular music channels on Youtube, one of the most popular video-sharing website since 2005, on which users can upload, view, share, and leave comments on videos[1]. He also subscribed to some political documentary websites and the Youtube channels with a focus on social or political issues to keep up with the current events in the world. He wrote comments under those videos sometimes. For example, he encouraged people to vote in his state by writing that "Election day is especially important because we (are) the people to decide who we bring into office and what laws we pass that will take into effect. In other words, we have these days to change the politics of our state."

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[1]`http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube`

He has also made up some forums by himself, which were more like short surveys evolving around certain video games and some social issues.

By engaging himself in these writings, Keres created his public identity as a "thinker" who loved to explore and critically reflect upon social and political issues. He explained to me the meaning of his writing for him in our second interview:

> **J:** Do you consider yourself a writer?
>
> **S:** well, writer?
>
> I can't claim, although I do still write for some occasions.
>
> But this is rather subjective.
>
> Because I really don't.
>
> Writing is really not much of a hobby for me.
>
> But it's more like keeping me active in some organizations and communities.
>
> Like I sign for petitions, making efforts to have other people to help other people.
>
> Achieve certain aims (Keres, interview #2).

Although he did not consider himself a "writer", he used writing as a medium of empowerment as he exhibited a critical stance on social issues and actively participated in social organizations and communities.

**Social network:** Although he was not a big fan of online social networks as some of his peers did, and was never addicted to them, he did still read the updates of the webpages of his friends, and discussed about various issues on his own page. Like most of his peers, he also created a profile on Facebook, one of the most popular social networking service and website[2]; and visited it on a regular base, although not daily. Interestingly, all his "contacts" online were actually friends that he met offline, such as his classmates, schoolmates, or relatives. He only

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[2]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook

interacted with a limited number of friends; and those that he communicated regularly with were mainly from his own small "circle". He shared some audios or videos of the music that he loved, and discussed about them with his friends. He discussed about the school schedule on his page, expressed his opinions for school-related issues, and scheduled meet ups with his friends after school. He even discussed about homework and his participation in some academic support groups with his friends, as seen in the following example.

**Keres:** I have to check through my transcript...

**Josh:** What classes you need??

**Keres:** I wanted to take gov/economy and orchestra but i'm having a hard time clarifying myself on my schedule...o.o looking through it, i feel little confused about which classes i passed and which ones i haven't...

**Josh:** Damn JCH*[3] why can't it just be simple

**Keres:** exactly

**Josh:** Oh well damn ib

**Keres:** To be honest I don't see a point in taking full IB

**Josh:** Just looks good on college app

**Keres:** I think it's just for the college credits (oh and have you thought of something of the link I just posted?)

**Josh:** Hmmm well its hard to see it on mobile grrr

**Keres:** i'll tell you about the joke when we go back to school

**Josh:** Lol okay its like 2 days away

**Keres:** I know right?

**Josh:** Did you ever get orchestra back?

**Keres:** They didn't tell me anything about the schedule change yet

**Josh:** Damn hurry back ahahahaha

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[3]*Java City High

> **Keres:** Yep, still waiting. Hmm...I think I'll go to the office first thing in the morning

Here, Keres was discussing with Josh about such topics as the transcript, classes, schedule, government class, economy class, the orchestra, IB class, college credits, college preparation, and the school office, etc, which all belonged to the official world of school. The fine line between the in-school and out-of-school was actually blurred; and the social network had become an extension of his face-to-face communications with the friends, and a bridge between his official world of schoolmates and classmates and unofficial world of friends. This conversation cited above also revealed some unique characteristic about Keres' writings on the online spaces. Keres seldom used acronyms, and almost never used curse words as Josh and some of his friends did. He chose to write in complete sentences and paid attention to spelling and grammar even when he was just "chatting" with his best friends on his own social network page. Again, he seemed not to value those "trendy" or "cool" discourse among his peers such as cursing; but placed more value on the institutionally accepted discourse.

Besides the personal interests and school-related topics, the recurrent themes on his Facebook pages were social and political issues. For example, he sometimes shared links to some news articles and Youtube videos, and encouraged his friends to participate in the pledge of stopping the Internet Blacklist Legislation in order to protect free speech and internet innovations. What distinguished him from the other participants on the sharing of videos, was that he was not only sharing, but also engaged himself in very serious discussions related to the video. He seemed to lay an emphasis on his opinions rather than emotions on public forums; and seldom allow his writing to be overly revealing his feelings. Through the discussions of these topics, he also had the chance to interact with the strangers that he met on the web forums.

The piece of sample writing that Keres selected in our second interview was a typical example of his sharing and discussion on the videos about social and political issues. It was a video clip from the CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System, a major US commercial broadcast-

ing television network) news broadcasting, about a town in a Southern state laid off its entire police force after the city council cut the police budget to zero to make up for a budget deficit of $185,000. Keres posted the link of this video on both his personal page and a public page on Facebook and added a comment in bold font: **"At least there's one less necessity to pay for with taxes. Now go buy a gun."** A few minutes later, this comment attracted some other Facebook users[4], and they started to have a discussion on this topic: At least there's one less necessity to pay for with taxes. Now go buy a gun. 9:19 a.m.

> **Bibo:** At least Chief B recognizes the the police are not supposed to be in place to generate revenue. (9:24am)
>
> **Keres:** Clarification please? (9:28am)
>
> **Bibo:** The police chief, in the posted video, said, in response to the claim that the police department didn't generate enough revenue through tickets, that police departments are not revenue generators. This starts at about 50 seconds into the video. (9:50am)
>
> **Bibo:** My point is that here's a decent cop that isn't merely a tool for the state. (9:51am)
>
> **Keres:** Okay now I get what you're saying. But the police does have expenditures as well. (9:55am)
>
> **Bibo:** I do not dispute that. Expenditures are an integral part of almost all endeavors. However that is not a valid reason to mandate that police generate revenue through tickets. If government at any level cannot operate within their budget hold a bake sale. Come up with a legitimate means of generating income, like we are expected to do, and leave us alone if we're not harming others. (10:12am)
>
> **Keres:** Of course not, the police have duty for safety of the people. Un-

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[4]All the names in the cited discussion were pseudonyms.

fortunately, the means of revenue from tickets and fines aren't justified. It's common in my area unfortunately, the police trying to claim a driving violation for example. (10:15am)

**Bibo:** In my area at the county level deputies have been told that, with the current economic state, they should issue few warnings. I learned this from a friend with connections therein. When he was told this, he tells me, that all he could think was how right I am. Honestly I wish I were wrong. (10:26a.m.)

**Keres:** So what's going on around that area? (10:28a.m.)

**Bibo:** How do you mean? (10:51a.m.)

**Keres:** The state of the police enforcement in terms of economic means, how are they getting by? (10:59a.m.)

**Bibo:** Locally, I honestly don't know. I haven't researched it yet. But I do know that this states economy is in the crapper and because of that I speculate, based on the use of quotas by law enforcement and the ever-present "authorize us more money" campaigns every local election cycle in addition to what seems to be an emerging pattern, that they will soon be operating in the red. I think this will lead to more citations for the sole purpose of generating revenue. I have heard of a federal investigation into the activities of the local prosecutors office, but I can't say if that is related. Again, I hope to be wrong. (11:10a.m.)

**Bibo:**Sorry to cut this short, but I must prepare for work. Good day to you, sir. (11:16a.m.) Keres:See you too. (11:18a.m.)

**Paula:** Or... you know... tax fraud, kidnappings, etc? (11:57a.m.)

**Keres:** Idk, some vigilante? (12:00p.m.)

**Matzuda:** How about... oh I don't know, a simple tax increase? (1:34p.m.)

> **Keres:** I can say with absolute confidence the Republican party, especially members in power, don't want it (but the taxpayers will still have to pay). (1:37p.m.)

When asked why he decided to start the conversation here rather than adding to the already existing comments on the Youtube webpage, he replied that, "There are pages and pages (of comments)...too many comments on the Youtube, and people don't usually follow up on you unless there are strong emotions involved." (Keres, interview #2) In other words, by posting the link in this forum, he consciously picked his own target audience, and had expectations for the participants to have some "real" discussions. Another reason that he provided was that he felt a sense of membership in this much smaller web community.

After Keres initiated the discussion, he monitored this thread closely. Although this discussion was an asynchronized one that involved 4 participants, it was also an ongoing discussion that lasted for more than 4 hours with the first comment posted on 9:19a.m. and the last comment posted on 1:37p.m.. During the time period, Keres kept a close eye on the thread that he started, and almost always responded within 5 minutes after other people posted a comment. He also took an active role as the discussion host, by asking open-ended questions such as "Clarification, please?" and "What's going on in that area?"

This online discussion shared discourse features of both oral and written language. A good example would be that they used both "cop" and "police" in the conversation. It was also interesting to note that, although Keres did not know any of the people that participated in the discussion, they still followed a kind of etiquette and said goodbye to each other as if in real life, face-to-face conversations. Bibo, the participant who engaged himself in a serious discussion and produced the most input, called Keres "sir" after he said his farewell. By doing so he was not only showing some respect to Keres the discussion host, but also added a formal tone to this discussion.

The discussion also shared some common features with the academic discourse, such as the linguistic and rhetorical forms. Except for the use of "IDK" (the acronym for "I don't know") once, which showed his familiarity with the internet slang, Keres did not use abbreviations elsewhere. Both Bibo and him spelled all the words correctly and also wrote complete sentences. They also used formal diction as "clarification", "in response to", "dispute", "research", "justified", "emerging pattern", "for the sole purpose of", "vigilante", etc, which were more common in the written discourse. In the contrast, the other two participants, who simply left some simple opinions without further elaboration, wrote in a less formal manner by using the punctuation mark "..." and wrote incomplete sentences. Their conversation did not develop into discussions as between that of Bibo and Keres.

Academic writing in the English-speaking world is concerned with argumentation, summary, synthesis, evaluation, reflection, and analysis (Lillis & Turner, 2001). As Bibo and Keres engaged themselves in the discussions, they also utilized some elements that were common in the writing of an argumentative essay, such as stating the issue, stating the position, supporting the argument with details or examples, writing in a cohesive manner, supporting the argument with details or examples, responding to the readers' reactions, concerns or objections, and writing a cogent conclusion. For instance, both Keres and Bibo cited examples from their local area or other resources (*e.g.* "It's common in my area...", "I learned this from a friend with connections therein") and to support their opinion that "the means of revenue from tickets and fines aren't justified". In so doing, they transformed their sociocultural experiences into evidence of their arguments. Another example was when Bibo cited the police chief, he started his statement by using the exact phrase that Keres used ("At least..."), either consciously or unconsciously. He also provided the information where this citation was ("This starts at about 50 seconds into the video."), as if he was expecting Keres to ask, "Where was that?" They also made evaluations of each others' opinons ("of course not", "I do not dispute that") as they followed up with each other. Instead of re-stating the same points, their conversations flowed and developed.

The above-mentioned elements of Western Academic writing, especially the rhetoric and socio-linguistic norms, were considered to be one of the biggest challenges for the second language writers. Typical writing courses targeting at the English language learners have included the learning of such skills as recognizing and understanding audience, paraphrasing and summarizing information from various resources, providing examples to support conclusion, and writing ffective thesis statement as important objectives (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). These were also listed as learning objectives in Mr. D.'s English class. Although he never considered these as "writing" before my interviews, Keres chose this as a sample representative of his writings, which showed that he highly valued the participation in this type of writings, which served as an opportunity to extend his learning of the academic writing. When Keres engaged himself in the the web-based discussions that shared similarities with the academically accepted argumentative essays, he got the chance to "escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and come into contact with a broader environment" (Dewey 1916, p20) through such interactions. He also gained himself access to a type of "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1986) which was valued by the institutions.

### 4.2.4   Summary

Overall, Keres' motivation for academic success had influenced his school-sponsored and out-of-school, self-sponsored writings in many aspects, such as topics, genres, and characteristics of the language. For example, he frequently wrote on similar topics such as school, music, and socio-political issues in both his in-school warm-up writings and his self-sponsored writings. It was obvious that he preferred certain genres to others, as he never wrote poems, or short stories, but preferred discussions. He also valued certain discourses more than others. He placed more emphasis on argumentative essays than warm-up writings. For his "public" writings, he chose to write in complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar. He unconsciously used certain types of self-sponsored writings, such as his engagement on web-based discussions, as

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opportunities to interact with others in academic discourse and extend his learning of the academic writing. For him, academic writing was a type of "social capital" that could help him have access to higher education and better career.

Keres used writing as a social practice to establish and negotiate his own identity. He drew a clear line between his private and public writings as he wrote outside of school; and between what he was willing or not willing to share. He wrote his private writings, such as journals and love letters on paper, which he chose not to share with others. At the same time, he kept his discussions on schooling and society open and public. To some extent, the boundary between his official and unofficial world was crossed and blurred, as the major audience of his self-sponsored writings were the same social circle of friends that he had at school. Besides the interactions with his "circle of friends", he had also managed to expand the scope of social interactions in his self-sponsored writings. He used writing on the web forums as a venue to keep himself active in some communities and organizations while articulating a critical stance, such as signing petitions, submitting opinions to local newspaper editors, and discussing about social or political issues on the Youtube channels that he subscribed to. Through this, writing became a medium for him to articulate a critical stance, and helped him establish his public identity as a "thinker".

## 4.3   Edward: Story of a Poet and a Struggling Academic Writer

Edward was a 18-year old male Hispanic student in Java city high school. He's short, tanned, and very energetic. As a sport fan, he did wrestling for 2 years, and took a weightlifting class during the senior year. Despite his very busy schedule as a senior student, he managed to go to gym regularly. He planned to study Kinesiology at a local community college after graduation and his professional goal at that time was to become a sport trainer.

Edward's family immigrated from Mexico and now lived in the downtown area in Java City. The whole family shared a condo with some relatives in a clean neighborhood in the

downtown area, where the trendy and the dumpy constructions co-exist in close proximity. His family attended a local Catholic church, but Edward stopped going there since 7th grade as he considered himself not a "church-goer".

Spanish was his first language. His parents, brothers and sisters all spoke Spanish at home. Edward considered himself "lucky" as compared to his elder brother, who came to U.S. at 10 and didn't know any English at all. "He struggled a lot, and even today he still kinda has an accent, sort of, and my sister too. I don't have an accent, so a lot of people confuse me for being Filipino sometimes." (Edward interview #1) He learned English by watching cartoons, and was proud that he was the only one in his family that did not "have an accent". He still remembered that English was his best subject during his elementary school years, which made him "one of the smartest students" in his classes. As a high school student, Edward was labeled a"RP" (Reclassified proficiency) student, which meant that he was considered a limited English proficiency student when he enrolled as a freshman, but later passed a literacy test of the school and was reclassified and put into the mainstream English class. He took Spanish courses during the first two years of high school, and put "Spanglish"[5] as the "language spoken" on his Facebook page.

### 4.3.1   A Reluctant Reader and Procrastinating Writer

He was recommended to me by Mr. D., who commented that he was a "good writer". I expected to see lots of reading and writing activities from him before meeting with him for interview, as I had with the other participants. When I saw his initial literacy activity sheet, however, I realized that this would be a difficult case for me. Edward very briefly answered the questions about his top 3 out-of-class activities: exercise, texting, and listening to music. His literacy log showed very few types of literacy activities. He left most of the items blank and only

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[5]**Spanglish** refers to the blend (at different degrees) of Spanish and English, in the speech of people who speak parts of two languages, or whose normal language is different from that of the country where they live. The Hispanic population of the United States and the British population in Argentina use varieties of Spanglish.

checked two items on the sheet: Facebook: 23 hours/day, everywhere; and text message: 24/7, everywhere. There was no mentioning of his engagement with any other literacy activities; and neither did he answer any other questions related to his literacy practices. I started to wonder why he volunteered to participate in my study while refusing to provide detailed information about his literacy life.

I had a glimpse of his in-class notebooks before the first interview, hoping to get some ideas about his personal and literate lives. I found it challenging to read his writings, since he wrote most of his warm-up entries in pencil, and his handwriting was very hard to recognize. The longest entries that he produced were almost all about the weekends. He spent many of his weekends with family, relatives, and friends. He worked on some weekends as a Cashier at big retailer supermarkets, such as Target. He loved to bike on his beach cruisers with friends, visiting the flea markets with family members, and watching wrestling tournaments. He used some Spanish words in his writings, especially when he talked about food.

Edward did not appear very accessible at first, since he did not like to smile. We managed to have a great chat about his family and friends in our frist interview based on the information that I learned from his in-class notebook. I learned that he fit well in the school and felt very comfortable here. Most of his friends attended the same school, and they went outside of school over the weekend to eat downtown and party. The conversations became less smooth when we started to talk about his reading and writing practices. When asked whether he did blogging or twittering, he seemed as if these were some kinds of insults:

> **Jiang**: Do you blog?
>
> **Edward**: Blogging? No.
>
> **Jiang**: No? Twittering?
>
> **Edward**: NO! NO twitter, NO.
>
> **Jiang**: What about a website called "tumblr"? Do you...
>
> **Edward(interrupts)**: OH NO, only girls. ONLY Girls.

He used three "No"s in a row; and as if that was not enough, he also emphasized that "only girls" loved such social media as Twitter or Tumblr, which was not the fact at all. He also denied himself to be a hard-working student or even a reader in the following conversations, as quoted below (underline added by me):

> **Jiang**: What do you do when you are not studying?
>
> **Edward**: Honestly I never study Chill on the couch, listen to the music, cool
>
> out of it Go to gym. That's pretty much it.
>
> **Jiang**: Do you write something?
>
> **Edward**: I text message all the time.
>
> **Jiang**: What do you guys talk about?
>
> **Edward**: Generally, it's like "let's do something".
>
> **Jiang**: Do you read anything?
>
> **Edward**: Do I read?
>
> **Jiang**: Yeah, like, beside the things assigned by your teachers?
>
> Any novels? Any magazines?
>
> **Edward**: I read because I have to
>
> Not because I want to
>
> So if someone says "Read this for fun"
>
> Then I'm like "No"

Although he told me that he never read any webpages, he reluctantly admitted that he did read his friends' Facebook pages when he was talking to them over the phone. He pointed out that he only read those pages when he was "not working". He also used to visit the web forums and leader boards when he played the online video games. Those, he emphasized, was not for the purpose of "reading" per se, but for winning the video games; and he had stopped playing video games because this was a very busy time and he needed to do his work to graduate. When asked whether he read any newspapers, he told me that he only read magazines on sports

and fitness, but refused to go in details about those magazines, as if those were something inappropriate for him. Edward appeared more relaxed and confident as he talked about certain topics (*e.g.*, sports, hip-pop music, video games) while refrained from other topics such as Twitter, study and reading. It was probable that he considered such topics as sports more "cool" and "manly" than Twitter or "study". This seemed to explain his different attitude toward the topics, and yet i still found it hard to understand why there was a string of unwillingness attached for him to admit that he ever read anything for fun. I left a question mark on this issue in my post-interview research memo, since I expected a boy to talk passionately about the sport and fitness magazines, especially when he was such a big fan of sports. After our first interview, Edward voluntarily added me as a friend to his Facebook, so I got a chance to peek into his out-of-school world. I was very excited, since I considered it a great opportunity to see the ways in which his engagement with reading and writing were enacted in the online social spaces. He used text messages most of the times, and I did not have access to those personal and private data. I expected to learn more about his social world from this famous social network website. Like all the other participants of this study, he had hundreds of friends on his Facebook account. However, unlike his peers, he was not that active at all on the social media, although he claimed to be on Facebook for 23 hours a day. He frequently added people as new friends, and pressed the "like" button for many links, such as local restaurants, movies, music platform, pop singers, youtube videos, and radio stations. Those were the two major activities that he engaged in, and there was not many things for me to explore at all. He almost never updated his status to tell people about his feelings, *etc.*, although he did change his profile photos from time to time and text message with some friends about the photos. On very rare occasions he would provide extremely short answers to a couple of questions, such as "Class 2011" to the question "Which class is the best?" and "Oaxaca" to the question "Best state in Mexico". Although Edward built a personal profile by selecting "favorites", such as the music, movies, comic websites, television programs, and personal interests, he did not write anything about himself on his Facebook page.

I noticed that he listed music, sports, and procrastination as his "hobbies". When I asked him what it meant during a break after my observation, he told me that he always procrastinated with homework, especially when it came to academic essays.

I started to wonder whether I should continue to include him in my study. His self identification as a reluctant reader was alarming to me. After all, during the early stages of data collection I had not been able to create a full profile of his literacy engagement as I did for other participants. Besides, toward the end of our first interview I made it very clear to him about my expectations for the literacy activity sheet, and made sure that he understood every item listed. To my great disappointment, the literacy activity sheet that Edward submitted remained blank for most items; and the pattern continued. Just as I was hesitant whether I should drop this case, I ran into Edward on my way to the school library. When asked whether he was heading for a class, he replied to me that he worked as a teacher's assistant in the Freshmen English class, helping the teacher grade papers. Surprised, I suddenly remembered that Edward was not an at-risk student at all, even though he seemed to deny the "good student" identity and labeled himself a "book-hater". Mr. D. recommended him to me as a "good writer", not an at-risk, struggling reader or writer in the mainstream English class.

Although Edward identified himself as a reluctant reader and claimed that he "never study", I finally realized it was not really the case. Had he not worked hard, it won't be possible for him to keep a good academic record, as several of his teachers told me. Besides English, biotech, and physics, he even took an I.B. Class in history (an I.B. Class, or International Baccalaureate class is similar to an Advanced Placement class, but it is also internationally accepted) . In other words, Edward was actually boasting, if not lying, about the little time that he spent on studying and reading. The image that he presented to me in this first interview and the image that I learned from his teachers and through my observation seemed to be very contradictory.

With confusion and amazement, I borrowed his in-class notebook and read it again, more carefully this time. I noticed that he seldom mentioned about his reading or writing activities,

unless directly asked about by the prompts. Among the few times he wrote about literacy, his I.B. History class seemed to be a recurrent theme. One entry caught my eyes, as he considered the quick writing-up of homework a "waste of his break time":

> "Ohh I didn't do my homework for IB history last night, Damn that's going to suck because that's what I got next period. I could do it at break real quick but then again do I want to waste my break doing that. Nope, don't think I will." (Notebook 08/19, 2010)

I would have been a little more judgmental had I not read a more recent entry first:

> "So this week I want to have all my work done because I'm worried my grades are slipping, especially in History. The IB paper is worrying me. I want to spend more time doing work and less time doing non school related activities." (Notebook 3/12/2011)

It seemed that he had mixed feelings about the IB history assignment. He was apparently stressed out on both occasions. It was interesting to note that he handled the two situations in different manners. In the first case he was thinking loudly, as if having a conversation or even "bargain" with himself. He then used the tactic of a complete denial of the value of the assignment to justify his own procrastination. He made it look so meaningless or valueless that it was not even worth a brief 10-minute break. While in the second case he seemed to take the task more seriously, making a resolution but at the same time feeding on a guilty conscience for the "non school related activities" to beat himself up for harder work. There was an undertone of negative feelings associated with both cases, as he suffered from a conflict between what he wanted to do and what he had to do. This might partially explain the contradictory images that he presented in relation to study and literacy, since my first interview with him was conducted around the time he wrote the second entry. He presented to me an "ideal image" of himself who could breeze through this tough senior year: "never study...chill on the couch...cool out of

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it"; while in reality he was very frustrated and challenged, especially with the academic essays. This could also been seen from his assessment about his own essay writing (underline added by me):

"I need to work on my Introduction because I feel like I write too much in the intro. My conclusion seems weak to me too. I can never really summarize my essay without repeating myself too much. I don't know what is good about my writing honestly. I don't feel like I'm a very good writer." (Notebook 02/11/2011)

I did a "validity check" with him during my second interview on this issue. He admitted that he was lacking the type of support for academic writings. With compassion, I expressed a concern whether an advanced class like an I.B. history Class was difficult. And here's his response:

"Yeah, I'm stressing like crazy

If I don't pass it, I don't graduate

You have to write a lot

You have to write lots of essays

You have to outline about some history

They give you like document, and then

You have to write an essay based on the document and the crap

It's like next Thursday

3 hours of testing

And then another 3 hours Friday" (Edward interview #2)

He was very honest with his feelings this time, although for some reason he used the second person when he talked about the writing assignments. On the one hand, he was proud of himself that he was smart enough to take the I.B. Class; while on the other hand he was overwhelmed by the heavy load of homework. As we compared the writing tasks of the I.B. History class

to those of the English class, we found that the former was much more demanding and not "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings,1995) for him, since there was usually no connections between these writings and his real life at all. He then gave a very long narrative venting about the history class, telling me that it was always so packed and full that there was only lectures and no small group discussions or any help from the teacher. He seemed to feel much better after our conversations, as he commented "This is cool!" Edward promised to bring his binder for that class for me to have a look at, which he did later. He refused to use his written work from this class as a representative written sample though, since he admitted that he was just "getting by".

### 4.3.2   A Poet Eager to Share his Writings

There was a subtle change in our relationship after the second interview. He ceased to put on the mask of a reluctant reader and became more open to share with me about his literate lives. He even expressed his eagerness to read the book "The Catcher in the Rye" in his warm-up writing (which he knew that I would read and make a copy). Later, he also shared the writings with his classmates in the English class:

> "I am looking forward to reading the book. I've heard so much about it, so it makes it interesting for me."

He also shared his opinions on the theme, the main conflict, the protagonist, the tone, the mood, and the motif of the book as well in the small group and whole class discussions. It was the first time that he ever took down a lot of notes on his notebook.

It was around this time that he shared with me one of his poems as a writing sample for this study representative of his writings (Figure 4.1). I was pleasantly surprised, since this was the first time that I ever had access to his "real" self-sponsored writings. It was actually a love poem to his girlfriend, which he wrote when he was required to attend Saturday school and sit in the school cafeteria doing his homework for four hours. When I was reading the poem, he

Crazy how we started off as friends
I don't know from where to begin
Been a while since I felt like this
Ever since that first kiss
Glad I took that shot and didn't miss
Although were not together it feels as if we are
I would feel empty if we were ever to depart
With you it's different
Im not quite sure how to explain
All I know is that I'm here to stay
Good and bad I'll make sure to never go away
I'm hoping you feel how I feel
Because my feelings for you are just real
I know it may be hard to believe
Especially coming from someone like me
But trust in what we have...

Figure 4.1: To Rizz.

looked both proud and anxious, reminding me that this poem had been written in a hurry and there were lots of typos.

Despite the fact that this poem was "briskly wrote it in about 30 minutes", I found that he used a rhyme scheme (*e.g.*, kiss (Line 5), miss(Line 6); stay (Line 10), away (Line 11); feel (Line 12), real (Line 13)) and some rhetoric devices, which showed his sensitivity and familiarity to the genre of poetry. There also seemed to be some influence from popular music as well. Apparently, this was a type of recreational writing that he enjoyed doing, and yet it was not solely for the purpose of fun. He crossed out some of the lines toward the end of the poem, which showed that he went through a process of revising for this short poem. He not only showed an interest in the exploration of language and self-expression, but also created a space of his own from the "Saturday school". It was a way that he was making sense of his life as an adolescent and taking power(Camitta, 1993; Knobel, 1999). His voluntary sharing of this poem with me indicated that he was taking pride in his own writings and hence became more open up both his literate and personal world to an adult reader who showed interest in and compassion for his experience.

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His interest or abilities were not valued or supported in his school practices, however, as in the case of many urban youth who tried to construct their independent identities in adolescence (Moje, 2000). When asked whether Mr. D. or any of his classmates knew about his poetry writings, he shook his head. He told me that he had written "lots of" poems here and there, but he didn't keep them, so he ended up losing most of them.

### 4.3.3 Money and Finance: Another Central Issue of Edward's Writings

As I periodically made copies of his warm-up notebook and read the entries intensively, I also gradually found out that his worry about money and finance seemed to be another dominant, or even central theme of his writings. He constantly mentioned the issue of money on a variety of topics. For example, when asked whether he believed in the "American dream", he wrote, "If you want to be successful you have to go to college and right now it is a lot. Loans can help you go through it but you still have to pay it back and it derails your success. "(Notebook 9/8/2010). In response to the prompt "what is the key to success?" His answer was, " I think that wealth is a great key to being successful. With wealth comes great benefits like going to prestige schools and knowing the rest of your life is guaranteed. Wealthy kids can buy their way into any university and could afford the best of tutors if they need help. They also likely to inherit money from their parents from a business or something like that." (Notebook 9/15/2010) Around the same time, he recorded an experience of being tricked by a letter which informed him that he had won a million dollar fortune. Although deep in his heart he knew this must be a spam, he still made the phone call "just in case", paid 20 bucks over the phone and was pissed off to find out that "it was a mistake". He even shared his personal financial information in detail in one of his in-class writing entries, as if he was doing some bookkeeping:

> "I guess when I was working from May to September of last year my goal was
>
> to save all my money. I planned it all out n guessed that I would make at least
>
> $2,000. But then I would have to pay my phone bill, I would go out each weekend,

I bought shoes and clothes. I had at least $1,000 in my bank n then I was down to almost $700. Now I have $400. It sucks that I didn't save up." (Edward 01/06/2011)

I noticed that he was using the simplified "n" for the word "and", as if he were writing online or text messaging. I also felt his desperation of earning and saving money. After reading this, it suddenly occurred to me that he was the only student that made the issue of money upfront in our first interview. He told me that he only applied to a local community college since they would provide him with financial aid. "The counselors said I should go state(The state college), but the State (college) won't help me financially... parents make too much, supposedly. I'm gonna go to the community one." (Edward interview #1) I did not get a chance to talk with him on the issue of money during or after our second interview, since it was somewhat personal and sensitive, and I felt inadequate and under-prepared for this topic. I also considered this a tough ethical decision that I had to make, since I wanted to keep my non-obtrusive stance. Instead, I scheduled an appointment with one of his counselors. It actually took me a long time to do so, since there were four different types of counseling programs offered at his school, among which one of them have worked with all of the four informants of this study on academic issues only. The one that provided help with college application advices was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and worked with the seniors only. Students who are eligible should submit an application to participate in this program. Edward was the only one among my informants and also the very few among all the senior students that submitted an application. When I finally got the chance to talk to Cindy, the school counselor for this program, she told me that Edward had actually seen her for several times on the issue of scholarship and college application at the beginning of the senior year. Based on his academic records Edward deserved for a better college, and yet despite her best efforts, he was not convinced at all. He declined her suggestion to apply for a state university due to financial reasons. He even told Cindy that his elder brother went to a community college first, and then successfully transferred to a 4-year university 2 years later., saving a lot of tuition by going this route.

After my visit to the counseling center, I now understood why Edward mentioned money in almost every warm-up entry in September 2010, which marked the beginning of the fall semester in his senior year, when he met with the school counselor. The issue of money had not only become a burden on his mind, but also led him to question the cost and benefit of college education in general, since he believed that the paying back of college loan "derails" one's success. As observed by Barton (1991) and Street (1984), "Certain socially situated beliefs, values, and purposes could shape how and why people use literacy". It may also partially explained why he was so calculating about the reading and writing tasks that he chose to engage in. In the case of Edward, such beliefs and values even affected his school and career choices. About one year later, as I was writing up my dissertation chapters, Edward dropped out from the community college and joined the U.S. Navy. It seemed that he did not find value in a college degree, at least in this stage of his life.

### 4.3.4   Summary

The case of Edward was that of the identity negotiation of a second language reader and writer. Many factors, such as class, race, gender, culture, age, and their relationships could all contribute to the shaping of one's identity (Heath, 1998) as well as the way they engage with literacy. Edward presented to me an image of a reluctant reader and a procrastinating writer at first; and later gradually revealed to me a different image as an eager reader and even a poet. These seemingly contradictory images were actually a sign that he had been struggling with and reconciling between some inner conflicts. There were deep reasons for his procrastination with academic writings. As a student with good grades, he wished to go to college and achieve success; and yet his determinations were impeded by his constant worry about the financial burden of the college loan and his doubt in the real value of the college degree. Although he was considered "a good writer" by his mainstream English teacher, he actually felt very challenged and helpless with the academic essay writings, especially those in his A.P. History

class, and considered "nothing good" about his own writing.

# CHAPTER 5

## STORIES OF THE 2 FEMALE ELL WRITERS

## 5.1 Marissa: Story of a Social Network Writer Who Used Writing as a Live Broadcast

Marissa was a 17-year old Latino girl with big eyes and curly long black hair. She was of medium height, and was very slim. She looked fashionable with light makeup, trendy clothes, and delicate milky white nail polish. She was a cheerful girl who liked to smile, which made her appear very friendly. She was a migrant student, which meant that her parents or guardians were migrant workers who had moved for the purpose of finding temporary or seasonal employment during the past three years.

She started as a LP (limited English proficiency) student as a freshman, but later made rapid progress in English skills and moved to the category of RP (reclassified English proficiency). As I discussed with Mr. D. whom I should choose for this study among the group of students who agreed to participate, he recommended her as a hard-working student who always turned in her homework and who "wrote well". I noticed that she was very determined to graduate with good grades as she set her goals at the beginning of the school year: "This year I hope to pass all my classes with a B or better. I plan to do all my homework and all the work the teachers assign me. I also wanna be involved in all the school activities such as March madness, Prom, home coming *etc.*" (Notebook 08-17-2010) She was also very active in class, always raising hands to answer questions or share her in-class writings.

I was very impressed with the initial literacy activity sheet that she turned in. She selected every single writing activity on the checklist except calendar/planner writing. She spent most time on the internet (mainly on social network websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube), watching movies, and talking with friends over the phone or through text message. Besides her

engagement in online chatting, text messaging, blogging, and twittering, she also spent one hour emailing every day, which was very unusual among her peers. She wrote to-do lists and kept hand-written sticky notes and scribbling all the time, and always made a shopping list before she headed toward the market or the mall.

Marissa's initial literacy activity sheet served as good tools of icebreakers as I had the first interview with her. We were not familiar at that time, and it was basically a question-answer mode at the beginning. She became relaxed and started to open up when we talked about her family members. Her mother and step father were both migrant workers in industry, who did not know or speak English at home. She had an elder sister, a younger sister (freshman in the same high school), and a younger brother who was in elementary school. According to her, she spoke English only with her sisters. My impression was that she seemed not very comfortable about the topic of herself as a second language learner, as she showed some hesitation and uneasiness as she talked about her first language:

> **Jiang**: What is your first language?
>
> **Marissa:** My first language...um...(pause)well, Spanish I think.
>
> **Marissa:** Because I was
>
> I speak Spanish at home
>
> But only because my mom and dad
>
> Because they don't speak English so
>
> And with my sisters now we ONLY speak English
>
> **Jiang**: Do you write in Spanish from time to time?
>
> **Marissa:** Not really
>
> Just a little bit I guess
>
> **Jiang**: Do you listen to songs in Spanish? And what about movies?
>
> **Marissa:** Mainly English.

Her uneasiness with the topic of Spanish was not equal to the refusal of her home language,

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however. After all, most of the students at Java City High School speak Spanish at home, and it was considered a dominant language on campus besides English. Mr. Moreno, the ELL coordinator at Java City High School, once explained to me about some students' mixed feelings about their home language: "I would say that 90% of the Spanish-speaking students treasure their cultural heritage. And yet a small percent of students tend to deny their ability of (speaking) Spanish. They would say, I don't know that, although we know that they do know. They feel insecure as teenagers....and they associate some negative images with speaking Spanish. They feel that if you speak Spanish, you are poor. " I was not sure whether this was the case for Marissa, though, since it was also likely that she considered her English proficiency a source of pride. She has gained much respect from her peers as a good student; and had the privilege to serve as a literacy "agent" between her family and relatives in Mexico, translating documents, and writing mails as she transcribed her parents' words. She explained that although she liked to email some of her friends, she didn't like to email her family, since "they don't have (emails)." Instead, she used Skype and chatted online with her extended family members back in Mexico.

I learned more about her literacy practices during our first interview. Besides her role as the "literacy agent" for her family members, Marissa was heavily engaged in literacies practices out of school through social network, such as Facebook, Youtube, Tumblr, and Twitter. It was rare for her to read a book or newspapers, since she did most of her readings online. Citing her own words, she "lived online from 7:00a.m. To 1:00a.m.", and was "heavily addicted" to these social networks. Just like my experience with Keres and Phoenix, I got a welcoming ticket into Marissa's personal and social world via the internet. This has been one of the most important means for data collection in this qualitative research that I have conducted with these adolescent students. It was through our online communication that I further explained about my study, asked her follow-up questions, got access to her public and personal writings, maintained our relationship, and provided support and suggestions for her future career choice as an elementary

teacher. She had always wanted to become a teacher but found herself unsure about that. As the babysitter for her younger brother, who was always in trouble, she couldn't imagine "teaching twenty something kids who are all crazy at that age." She also shared with me the story of her cousin who never knew what she wanted to be and wasted a lot of money changing her majors. Thanks to these online chatting and email exchanges, I became a legitimate "member" in her social world.

Marissa was a very active and proliferate writer on her social network. With her permissions, I had accumulated over 100 pages of her Facebook writings and Tumblr posts, and about 120 pages of her twitter writings, not to mention the numerous videos that she had uploaded and shared with her friends on Youtube. As I browsed through pages and pages of writings, I kept thinking about Mr. D.'s comments "They don't write by themselves" and wondered how much their English teacher had missed about their literacy lives. I would never even imagine how rich the data could be had I not been invited to her social network. I got to know more about her family, her literacy life, and her social and cultural activities through email exchanges, online chatting, and browsing her social network pages.

### 5.1.1 Facebook: A Place to Share her Life Stories

Marissa was a very sociable and popular girl, who had more than 420 friends on her Facebook. Every time she updated her status on Facebook (See Appendix F), no matter how trivial or short, there would always be lots of comments and "likes" from her friends. She was constantly updating her status to keep her friends informed about what she was doing or planning to do (*e.g.*, "Work was pretty interesting today x) hella tired thoughh. gona eat tacos from los 3 eyes!!! best tacos in town :)"). She even set up her GPA goals on her status: "Finals baby! GPA goal: 3.8! I'll get this! i hope-_____- Dang i have to start doing all my work!" She was cheered by lots of her classmates on the goal. Her sharing of this academic goal showed her confidence and pride in her identity as a good student.

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One of the major genres of her Facebook writings was short narratives about her life stories both in and out of school. Most of these narratives were written in spoken language or with internet slangs in good humors. She wrote many anecdotes about her on-campus experience, such as "haha hella crazy!!! u should of seen me at school. One of my admin saw me and i said i picked up some balloons. then i left and cindee called me so i can get my money so i go all the way to the other side of skoo (school)and then the teachers thought i wanted to ditch! lmao." Some of these life stories were about her family members, such as "My punk brother just told me and my sister to leave his school because we didnt tie his shoe right! "leave,ur annoying me! ima call the guards¡' wat a punk!" She then responded to the comments from her friends in a cheerful and witty manner, frequently code switching between English and Spanish.

Sometimes she even wrote half of the sentence in English, and another half in Spanish. A typical example would be, "A bit sentimental today...Perdon si te busco y lloro en tu cara[1]." Although in my initial interview with her she seemed to downplay the role of Spanish in her life, she showed much comfort in using both languages among her peers in her unofficial social world, who were mostly Hispanic or Latinos.

Besides life stories, Marissa was very open to share with her friends about her feelings and emotions. She was once again found to code switch frequently between English and Spanish as she composed. One of the most beautiful writings that she has produced on her Facebook page was in memory of her father:

> I love dreaming about the past, 'cause apparently its better than my present. I miss having you around, going to your soccer games in the summer time. I got to say me haces mucha falta papi[2];( but like kassandra said:"A good-bye is never painful unless you're never going to say hello again" I just pretend your still alive but your simply taking a life time vacation. I love you daddy♡& i miss you with all my heart..

[1]Sorry if I look at your face and cry.
[2]Dad I really need you.

She received numerous comments from her friends, who showered her with comfort and consolation. Her social network had become a venue where her friends could witness her growth and struggle, and share with her moments of joy and sorrow. In contrast, she did not feel that her life stories as valued in the school-sponsored writing tasks. Although Mr. D. worked hard to assign socially and culturally relevant topics in his English class, she felt those writings did not satisfy her needs for social connection and participation. Even if she did share some stories, she usually got evaluations rather than "real feedback" from the readers (*i.e.* the teachers). She found herself more motivated in writing on Facebook rather than on her in-school notebooks.

### 5.1.2   Web Log (Tumbler): An Ongoing Personal Ad Project

The internet urban dictionary defines Tumbler, a micro-blogging website, "a place to fantasize where you want to be and what you want to be doing". Unlike Phoenix, who wrote a lot of her personal stories and journals on Tumblr, Marissa mainly treated it as a public pin board. She almost never wrote anything by herself there. Instead, she posted pictures or shared songs, videos, or repost. She typically posted once or twice daily.

Her Tumblr reminded me of her in-school Personal Advertisement Writing project, which was an optional assignment for her English class based on the literature text A Doll House, in which Henrik Ibsen portrays the charater Nora as having a dual personality. Mr. D. asked his students to use four images and three adjectives to describe their public and private personality on a double-sided poster and write a 1-page response comparing their public and personal identities (See Appendix E for the handout of assignment). Marissa was one of the few students who chose to do this assignment and turned it in (Figures 5.1, 5.2,5.3). Although she spent a significant amount of time looking for, clipping and pasting images from magazines, she spent much less time writing up the response and only wrote less than half of the required length. She used very informal spoken language (*e.g.* "And I am a boss!?") and internet slangs in her written response, such as "Lmao" (the acronym for the internet slang "laughing my ass off")

and "Dickhead"(missing a letter "D" on her poster). It seemed that she was either confused about the genre of this writing assignment, or chose to write this way as a subconscious act of resistance against the academic linguistic norm.
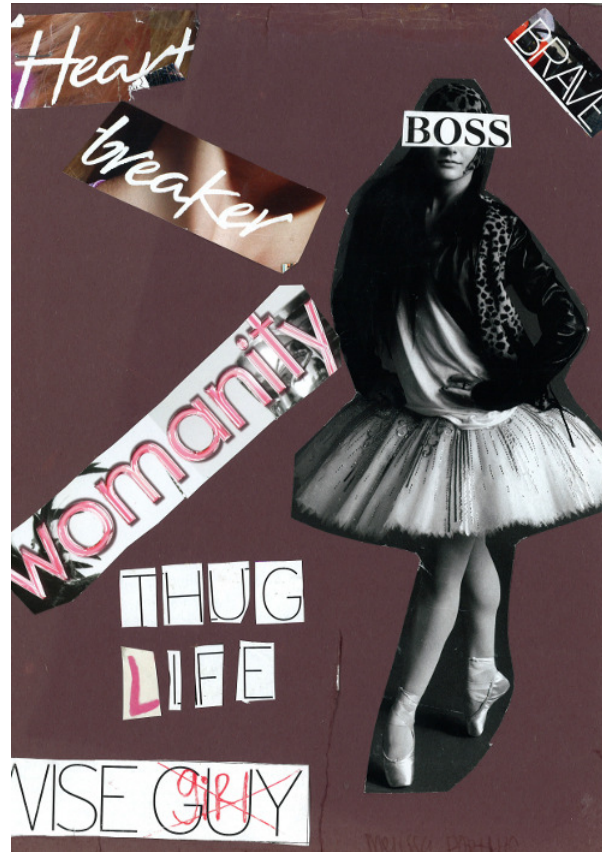


Figure 5.1: Marissa's personal Ad project and writing (I). (For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation).

Later, in our second interview, she explained to me in detail about her personal Ad., how she drew the social and cultural resources from the youth popular culture, and what these meant for her. She considered her public personality as outgoing ("Never hide"), trendy (wearing jeans, sunglasses and bright colors) and sometimes silly ("Dickhead"). Pointing at the slogan "Listen to the heart", she said that "On the magazine it actually says 'don't listen to the heart, listen to the mind', but I adapted it." She also elaborated on the phrase "Thug life", which was both the name of a group of hiphop singers and the name of their first musical album. She

Figure 5.2: Marissa's personal Ad project and writing (II).

chose this phrase because she admired the effort of people who lived in poverty but managed to keep optimistic and courageous. She didn't even explain what "Thug life" means in her written response. Her deliberate choice of the internet slangs showed her identification with the social group who favored such language usages. She found it extremely hard to express her real identities in academically accepted linguistic norms.

Compared to her oral elaborations, her written response was to some extent superficial and tokenistic. Her Tumblr was to some extent similar to her in-school Personal Ad. Writing project, in which she used lots of pictures and images to create and exhibit to others the "public"side of her personality, which included her interests, her fashion style, and the things that made her "cool" and fun. Although she did not consider this a type of 'writing', since she put a lot more images on it than words, she took this website very seriously, and constantly changed the back-

**Transcription:** Use the space below to describe your ad. Be sure to include personal examples, details and support for your project.

"The black side is all the characterics that not many people know about. I really hate when they talk bad about women. How I live the Thug life. Am I a boss!?? Lmao. The colorful side is what everyone knows I am an outgoing person. & I love clothes and [chiliax...] with my dickheads. Always show who you like. "

Figure 5.3: Marissa's personal Ad project and writing (III).

ground, the title, and her self-introductions, *etc.* For her, the Tumblr was like a "significant

social laboratory for experimenting with the construction and reconstruction of self that char-

acterize postmodern life" in which she "self-fashion and self-create" (Turkle 1997, p.178). The songs, videos, slangs, or the pictures of certain hairstyles, trendy clothes and cool gestures were all signs and symbols for her own identity formation. Since the majority of Tumblr users are young females, especially teenage girls, Marissa's readers were mainly her girlfriends and other girls who she has never met before. Through re-posting, she was actually reading, "borrowing" from, and co-authoring with others to experiment and create a shared experience of growing up.

### 5.1.3   Twitter: A Live Broadcast about her Life

Marissa was constantly twittering to her friends in which she revealed more of her "private" side of her personality. Her definition of "Twitter" was a place "where you show what you do". Per her suggestion, I signed up a Twitter account, and she instantly invited me to have access to her twitter. I was shocked at how much and how frequently she tweeted. She had 213 followers and was following 183 people. The people that she followed and who followed her were mainly her classmates, friends, and online friends of her age. She also followed some local blogs, movie stars, popular singers and song writers, and rapper and recording poets who have not earned their public fame but have been considered popular in her social circles. In addition, she followed one feminist blogger whom she considered "inspiring", and a parody writer who played Steve Jobs by making up stories, thoughts, and actions of the famous figure. From time to time she would re-post the twitters from these people that she follows as she found their tweets "cool". These has become one major source of literacy exposure in her daily life besides the literature texts assigned by her English teacher.

Marissa had produced 14221 tweets by the time I visited her page within a 1-year time frame. She wrote about 39-40 tweets per day on average, not to mention the number of tweets that she read. Most of the tweets were short, since there is a 140 character maximum allowed for each tweet. However, considering the fact that she was a full time student, I still found it hard to imagine how she even managed to twitter like this. She expressed her attachment to her twitter

in one post to her friend: "Oh I missed you twitter." It was interesting that she was talking to a friend but used second person for "twitter". As described by a tweet which was she reposted: "Wake up. Tweet. Stand up. Tweet. In class. Tweet. Break and Lunchtime. Tweet. At home. Tweet. Music. Tweet. Faded. Tweet. " What on earth did she twitter about? After a glimpse of her twitter pages, I had an initial impression that her twitter was like a constant broadcasting live show about herself. She told others what she was doing (*e.g.*, morning: getting ready for church); what she was dressing and how she looked ("Feelin like a tomboy today. Hoodie & adiddas"; "just recoat my nail" ); what she was eating (Had cereal for breakfast and lunch); and how's she's feeling ("drunk and depressed"; "why do I feel so alone"). There were also dirty talks with her girlfriends which she thought that made her look cool ("Good night good time spent with good bitches"). Many times it was just gossip, or some random thought that crossed her mind. School was also a big topic in her twitter, which blurred the boundary between in-school and out-of-school interactions. It was not uncommon to see her moan on her low test score ("80 on my quiz (:" ); or complain about how much homework that she got (*e.g.*, "bye ! im loaded with homework & havent started. Mr. S. throws hella work at us."). It seemed that Twitter became a way for her to vent or release her stress, when she was constantly negotiating between her own identities as a "good student" and as that "popular, cool girl" who refused to be nerdy.

When Marissa was out of school, she usually read tweets all the time and wrote a new tweet on every 10-minute intervals, even when she was doing her homework. In other words, she was always multi-tasking as if opening parallel windows. It became a major way for her to communicate with others. She found it exciting to type or text message with her friends online, but awkward to "chat" with them on Skype. I had to admit that I did not really enjoy reading her twitter pages the way that I read her longer writings. When I was browsing through pages and pages of her tweets, I couldn't help but notice a critical voice arise from my inner educator and researcher: Why did she spend so much time reading and writing down those random thoughts,

or fragmented information? Did she feel overwhelmed and distracted sometimes? I found most of the tweets written by her and her friends superficial in general, lacking deep interactions or careful reflections. I had to constantly remind myself that instead of making quick judgments, I need to hear her side of story first. This has become the central topics in our follow-up interview: why was she so attracted, or even addicted to twitter? And how has this part of her literacy life impacted her in-school writings?

Our second interview went so much more fluently than the first one. Marissa raved about her twitter with shining eyes and I ended up not using much of my prompt questions at all. According to her, there were many reasons why she loved twitter. First, it was very simple to use and easy to write:

> "With Twitter everything is just easy...easy writing, easy connection...you just text message or type whatever you want to say. Or you simply post cool links or re-tweet the cool stuff that you see. Some of my friends are like, what the hell are you guys doing there ALL the time? For me it's just natural. I'm a Gemini, and talking is a Gemini's favorite hobby. I can send updates to all my friends without giving out too much of my personal information. It was not blocked at my school, so I am always on(line)." (Marissa, interview #2)

For her, writing (*i.e.*, typing on computer or text messaging on her cell phone) was equivalent to talking or chatting. Just like her writing on the Facebook, she also did lots of code-switching between English and Spanish on her Twitter. She did not pay much attention to grammar or spellings as she wrote tweets, and used lots of abbreviations and acronyms. Many sentences were broken or incomplete, but this did not seem to affect communication. Second, she found it enticing to be able to follow anyone that she wanted, and to be always up-to-date with the "cool stuff" among her friends, locally in the real world, and with what those popular idols do. "I can always see what music my friends are listening to, what show they are watching. It's also useful (for) following some singers, rappers, and other celebrities, 'cause I like to keep up with

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what they are doing, what they are wearing, their new hair styles, makeups, or where they are touring. Twitter is the first place they post their updates nowadays, you know? You can't even find these information on their official websites sometimes."

Since her friends and her followed some common popular Tweeters and shared links to certain blogs, songs, photos, and videos, these online resources have become a shared "adolescent cultural literacy" among them in their unofficial social world. Twitter, like other social networks, was a type of "cheap or free entertainment" for these adolescents. They were listening to the same songs, laughing at the same joke or comic lines, and talking about the same show on the movie channel. There was certain peer pressure involved here, since these were the topics among their peers both in and outside of school, and her knowledge of these topics assured her with the "membership", or a sense of belongingness in her social circles. On the contrary, those who did not have knowledge of these were considered not "in", or even outcasts from their social circles. In other words, her participation with such online literacy activities actually impacted her opportunities to interact with her peers in both the unofficial virtual world online and the official, real world on campus.

She was also excited that so many people were following her, as she considered this an important sign that she was popular and had influence over people. "It was satisfying that you know you're followed by so many people. You might think that I'm attention starved, but the truth is, you are a nobody in the online world if you don't twitter." She did admit that it could get tiring sometimes, but "It's hard to stop...once you are in, you are always in. If you can't keep coming up with new things to say, your account will be considered dead. People will get bored (if you don't update) and turn their back to move on to someone else." All these kept her motivated as a social network reader and writer.

Her heavy involvement with Twitter has impacted the ways that she read, write, and communicate in general. Although the tweets are usually short, reading these tweets did provide her with lots of literacy exposure. She probably would never have read so much local news or

events had she not used these social networks. She was constantly reading and writing: during her school breaks, when she was waiting in line, in the bathroom, and even when she was waiting for red lights. Since there was always so much information to read, she had developed skills to scan past the topics that she was not interested in and only spotted the ones that she wanted to read. This definitely had helped her with her English reading skills. She also had a larger vocabulary thanks to her daily diligent readings of her social network pages. At the same time, she found it more pleasurable to read short posts rather than long stories, which made her an impatient reader for some literature texts assigned by her English and history teachers. As it came to writing, she transferred some of these resources to her in-class writings, especially the warm-up writings, and the personal Ad project mentioned previously, which made her a connected reader and writer. Many topics that she wrote in her in-class notebooks were similar to those on her Facebook or Twitter pages, especially when it came to the topics of family, weekend, friends, *etc.* When I re-read her in-class writings, I often found myself very excited as I recognized those phrases or examples cited from her Twitter or Facebook page. For instance, when she was asked to write on the topic of election, she not only quoted one of her Tweeter friend's opinion on voting, but also used the exact internet slang that her friends used describe a political candidate. When Mr. D. assigned a prompt on "fate" one day in the Lady Macbeth unit, she referred to her readings from her daily Horoscope delivery on Facebook:

> "I believe in astrology because you don't know where it's from. I read Gemini horoscope every day. The Horoscopes talk about your personality. It sometimes describe what (is) going on in your life. Even though you think it's not real at the time maybe in the future it's real." (Notebook 11-9-2010).

The way that she wrote on her social networks also impacted the way that she composed for academic writings. I was shocked to find that a heavy computer user like her could only handwrite her academic essays instead of typing it on the computer. "I simply couldn't write this kind of long essays on the computer. " Marissa said. Once she was in front the computer,

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she would never resist the attempt of opening other windows such as the Youtube website, her social networks, *etc.* And could easily got distracted. Even when she was using pen and paper, she still could not turn off her cell phone. It seemed that she often composed her essays at the same time when she tweeted. What caught my eyes when I read her tweets were how frequently she mentioned her in-school writing tasks on her twitter, such as "Working on the literature unit project"; "Should I write my essay or watch a movie? Errrrrrr"; "I really need to start this essay. I haven't done a S***!"; "I have to finish this essay tonight! screaming"; "I am shitting bricks over my English final, weeping". There was often an undertone of guilty or anxiety attached to her in-school writing tasks, especially when it came to formal essays. As an addicted twitter user, she got too used to the genre of conversational/oral writing, and had struggles with her academic essays. When she was asked to reflect upon her writings in Mr. D.'s English class, she wrote, "My writing sock(sucks)[3]. I am not a good writer, 'Cause I'm not good with essays. I write like I talk. I don't think there's nothing good about my writing. I simply need to practice. How I write. Better." (Notebook 2/1/2011) This paragraph was handwritten on her notebook, but the last two sentences read a lot more like her tweets. Apparently she was not valuing her self-sponsored writings, as she found "nothing good" about her own writings. She was also unsatisfied with her academic essay writings, even though Mr. D. Considered her a "good writer". Just like most of her warm-up writings on her notebook, she did not get any feedback from her teacher, except that at the bottom of the page Mr. D. gave a red stamp of a lion along with the word "Excellent".

### 5.1.4 Summary

Reading and writing on the social network was a dominant theme in Marissa's literacy lives. Writing played multiple roles for her, as she used the social network to share her life stories, to create and promote her public personalities, and to constantly keep people updated about her

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[3]Should either be a spelling mistake or a slip of pen.

life. Through these practices she was not only exposed to, but was herself participating, creating and co-authoring a youth cultural literacy and a shared experience of learning and growing up. Since most of her friends online were also her classmates or schoolmates, the boundary between the online virtual world and the real world was blurred. There was an overlapping in her official and unofficial social world; therefore her social network living style was more an extension rather than escape from the real world.

As observed by Ibrahim (2006), "To learn is to invest in something that has a personal or a particular significance to who one is or what one has become...One invests where one sees oneself mirrored. Such an investment includes linguistic as well as cultural behavioral patterns." Marissa's investment of her time on social network reading and writings was also a type of learning. Her deliberate choice of languages, code switching, and frequent use of internet and urban slangs showed her eagerness to belong to an adolescent social circle which values her ethnicity, gender, linguistic heritage, and popular cultural literacies. Besides language skills, she was also learning to make connections, communications, gather and scan information, *etc.* At the same time, as a "good student", she also had some inner struggles between the certain linguistic patterns that she chose and identified with, and the expectations of the academic institutions. This negotiation of her identities was an intrinsic part of her language learning. She showed mixed feelings toward her own writings: both pride and self-denial. On the one hand, she took pride in and obtained psychological satisfaction and pleasure from her social network writings, which not only served as a means of communication, but more importantly a way for her to share about her lives and to remain popular among her peers. As a social network reader and writer, she had amble exposures to the type of popular youth literacies that she identified with. She had lots of opportunities to interact with a community of learners that consisted of both first and second language learners, and was able to connect her in and out-of school readings and writings, especially when the topics were culturally relevant for her. On the other hand, she felt inadequate about her academic essay writings and found "nothing

good" about her writings. She neither had enough exposure to this genre of writings in her daily literacy practices nor much support from her own social world.

Researchers and educators in the second language education have called for the closure of the gap between minority students' "identities and the school curriculum and between those identities and classroom pedagogies, subjects, and materials" (Ibrahim, 2006, p. 146). One possible way is the application of the students' sociocultural practices outside of the schools as "fund of knowledge"(Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). When used properly, social network has potential to be a learning tool. While social network provided students with instant access to valuable information which was related to their personal interests, students could use more help from their teachers to engage in meaningful and thoughtful conversations rather than superficial information sharing.

## 5.2   Phoenix: Blogging about the Story of my Life

Phoenix was a 17 year old Vietnamese girl. She had straight black long hair. She always wore makeups, black thick eyeliners, foundation, and rosy lip gloss. She loved to wear vest, and she complained that the school refused to use her picture since"I have to wear this ugly green shirt from the office b/c I didnt know you cant wear shirts w/o sleeves" (Phoenix, blog entry, 8/18/2010).

Phoenix was born in Vietnam, and moved to U.S. when she was almost 10 years old. Right after they arrived in U.S., her parents divorced. She lived with her younger sister, her mother, and her mother's boyfriend in downtown Java city. Her elder sister and other extended family members stayed in Vietnam, but she kept close contact with them via chatting on the AOL or Yahoo messenger. Her father was in another Southern state far away from Java City, who came to visit her for the first time in 5 years before the spring semester started in 2010.

Phoenix didn't know much English at all at the time of immigration, and was placed in the ESL program. She was considered a "Generation 1.5 student", which refers to the particular

group of English language learners who were born in foreign countries or territories but came to U.S. in elementary or secondary school and received education here in the U.S (Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau 2009). They got the title of "Generation 1.5" since they share characteristics of both first and second generation immigrants, and yet they have unique characteristics as compared to the more traditional categories of English as a Second Language students, such as that they usually speak two or more languages fluently; they usually have limited knowledge of academic English, and are considered to have lower English proficiency than native speakers; they have either never acquired literacy in their home languages or have gained basic proficiency but are losing it due to various reasons. There is a connotation of a sense of in-betweenness as these students were considered neither first generation of immigrants (such as their parents) nor the second generation of immigrants (such as their U.S. born peers or their future offspring). They have to fit themselves in the different cultures, languages, and literacies as they need to learn both English and the subject matter. In the case of Phoenix, she also needed to experience the calculation and manipulation "just how far they want to go in pushing a particular identities" (Leki, 2000, p.105) as an Asian or Asian American as she grew up as an American teenager in a broken family. Despite all these difficulties, however, these generation 1.5 students may also have stronger desire to become more fluent and competent in both English and their native languages. Phoenix expressed to me her strong will to learn English and preserve her native tongue. Although she seldom wrote in Vietnamese now, she proudly told me that she still spoke the language pretty well.

Phoenix spent hours every day reading other people's blogs on the social networks such as Tumblr [4], Twitter, and Facebook webpages, and writing responses in a very timely manner. She was a very prolific and passionate writer out-of-school, as she wrote blog entries almost every

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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumblr. Tumblr is a microblogging platform and social networking website that allows users to post text, images, videos, links, quotes and audio to their tumblelog, a short-form blog. Users can follow other users, and "reblog" their posts, or choose to make their tumblelog private. As of January 2012, Tumblr has over 39.5 million blogs.

day. She used emails from time to time, mainly using it to submit homework and connect with the university programs that she applied for. She also spent lots of time chatting online via MSN or Skype with family members back at Vietnam. On the contrast, she was a reluctant and procrastinating writer for school-sponsored academic writings.

I learned about her family and social life through her warm-up writing notebook, before our first interview. She wrote a lot about her family, friends, and boyfriend under those "weekend" prompts in her warm-up writings; but seldom, if not never, wrote about other things (esp. homework). I noticed that like Keres, she was also a transfer student, as the first entry of her warm-up writing was a brief sentence: "I was not enrolled in school yet." (08/18/2010)

I used her literacy activity sheet as a conversation prompt for our first interview. According to her first literacy activity sheet, she spent most of time browsing internet, watching T.V., and talking with friends. We had a few question-answer sessions at first, with me asking questions and she providing very brief answers. When I asked her whether she wrote blog, she merely said "Yeah"; and when asked whether her page was public, she replied that "Yes, it's public" without saying anything else. What finally opened her up was when I asked her about her experience transferring from another school:

> **Jiang**: What happened? Did your family move?
>
> **Phoenix**: No, because they didn't want me to go there any more.
>
> **Jiang**: They, they as your parents?
>
> **Phoenix**: Yeah
>
> They think I'm doing bad there, so I transferred here.
>
> I'm glad I'm here.
>
> **Jiang**: Could you say more? Because I think it would be difficult to say goodbye to your old classmates
>
> **Phoenix**: YEAH! I DON'T KNOW ANYONE HERE.
>
> AND THIS IS MY SENIOR YEAR TOO!

She was literally shouting now rather than talking, and from here she seemed to reveal more of herself to me as I stepped from her official world into her unofficial world and showed compassion for her experience as a transfer student. She told me that she was very upset about her mother's decision to transfer her "only because this school has better test results". As some researchers have noted, many Vietnamese parents hold the traditional cultural values to emphasize the importance of education and hard work, and relate the child's achievement to family pride (Zhou and Bankston, 1998). They usually try their best to provide support for their children's education, as they often hold high expectations for their children, and consider their high academic performance essential for their future success in America (Li, 2008; Zhou and Bankston, 1998). The second generation, however, sometimes feel that their parents impose their values and wills on them, and feel the pain of an inner struggle due to the clash and conflict of values. Although Phoenix finally gave in to her mother, she remained bitter inside. She felt like an "outcast" at Java City High since there were not a lot of Asian peers. And although there were some Asian students, they seemed to have already formed a small circle which she found hard to fit in. Although Keres and her were in the same English class, she had never spoken to Keres and didn't even know that he could speak Vietnamese. She admitted, with a little embarrassment, "I had no friends (here), so I wrote a lot on my blog." She then talked passionately about her blog. She was very aware of her audience, and was very eager for me to read her blog as well:

> "There are many friends from my old school that follow me on Tumblr Here
> in this school I don't know anyone that follows me on Tumblr You don't have to
> be my friend in order to read my Tumblr, it's like a PUBLIC thing! Even my old
> entries were still there, you just have to go all the way, all the way back." (Phoenix,
> interview #1)

She seemed to forget that I already asked her whether her blog was public or not; and earnestly invited me to become a reader. As if afraid that I would not visit her blog, she pointed

to me the address of her blog that I requested her to write down on her literacy activity log. She also double-checked the spelling, and found that she missed a letter, which she instantly corrected. Both of us laughed heartily as we considered ourselves lucky, which made the conversation more friendly and relaxed.

She also talked passionately about how the counselors at Java City High really changed her mind. She didn't really care about college in her old school, and didn't have any plan attending one. She just wanted to graduate from high school. However, the counselors here called her in and talked her into continuing school.

### 5.2.1   Blogging about Life and Blogging as a Way of Life

I learned about her self-sponsored writing and gradually entered her world through her blogs on Tumblr (See Appendix G). Phoenix chose to write her blogs on Tumblr because it was one of the most popular choices among her girlfriends from her former high school. As mentioned earlier, Tumblr is a micro-blogging platform and social networking website which is constantly growing in popularity. In addition to immediacy of posting and reader response, it also allowed the users a versatile of formats since the users could conveniently post text, images, videos, audios and hyperlinks to their blogs. The emergence of research on blogging, a relatively new form of web-based writing, has revealed a variety of factors that contribute to its increasing popularity:

> "Bloggers are driven to document their lives, provide commentary and opin-
> ions, express deeply felt emotions, articulate ideas through writing, and form and
> maintain community forums...Blogs combine the immediacy of up-to-the-minute
> posts, latest first, with a strong sense of the author's personality, passions, and point
> of view." (Nardi et al, 2004)

Phoenix did use the blog as a medium to document her life, as she entitled her blog "Stories of My Life." She started to write blog since April 2010, and she wrote an average of 49 blog

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posts every month since then. Up till June 2011, she has written a total of 689 blog entries; among which 421 were her original posts in the written form, and only 268 were her own photos, other type of pictures, music, video clips, and reblogs from other users. Although blogs on Tumblr are usually considered as micro or short-formed blogs, the blog entries that Phoenix produced were usually not that short, with an average word count of 130. In other words, between April 2010 and June 2011, she had written 54,730 words (or about 195 pages) on her blog.

Phoenix spent at least 3 hours every day reading other people's blogs and twitters and writing responses in a very timely manner. She was "addicted" to her blogs, as she wrote whenever she had access to the computer and internet: on her own laptop, on the computer when she worked in the counseling center, or computers in the school or public library, and on her cell phone. She even wrote her blog when she was doing something else, such as in the middle of writing an academic essay. She spent lots of time changing the background picture and layout of her Tumblr page, and expressed a sense of dissatisfaction toward her efforts as she commented on her own Tumblr in an entry with the title of "I hate my Tumblr":

> I look at other people's Tumblr &it looks so nice. They're so creative like they
> got background music on their page & pictures..im so jealous i wish i know how
> to customize my tumblr -___-' My tumblr is so fuccen plain&ugly... (Phoenix,
> 04/28/10)

Phoenix faithfully "followed" 49 bloggers, who were mainly her American-born Asian friends from her old schools. She did not read books or newspaper beside those assigned by her teachers, so this type of web-based reading was her major reading practice outside of school, and the most important way that she obtained information besides watching TV. By subscribing to these blogs, she kept herself in the fashion and caught up with the most popular songs and videos that her peers were listening to or watching. She sometimes cited the lyric of the popular songs in her blogs to describe her own emotions, such as "Can we pretend that airplanes in the

night sky are like shooting stars? i can really use a wish right now..."[5]. She explained to me that she thought these lyrics were as good as, if not better, than some of the poetry that she read at school. Besides, she got the chance to read and share some of the most popular blog entries on tumblr. The ones that she chose to share were usually about friendship, relationship, and school-related topics. Some of these reblogs were actually about the blogging experience itself. For example, she shared on her page a post which had been reblogged by 12,743 bloggers:

> "I always wanted to vent on Tumblr. Like really vent, like blog about how I really feel. So I always click the text box and I just stare. Then I write a few words then I backspace it. Then I stare at the blank box. Then I just go back to my dashboard. It's not that I don't know what to say, it's just that I don't know how to say it. So that's why all my posts are all reblogs of other people because I'd rather have someone else explain what I'm feeling than try to explain mines." (Phoenix, 7/8/2010)

Although she did not re-blog as often as most of her peers did, she found this post resonating with her own writing process sometimes. Backspacing and editing was very common when she was writing online, which also applied to her original posts as well. She was constantly thinking about the possible feedback of her readers when she wrote her blogs. She even apologized when she considered herself not "writing much". These all showed a sense of ownership of her own writings. The above example showed the importance of blog in the development of the writer identity despite the fact that she thought there was nothing good about her writing in her school notebook.

### 5.2.2 Blogging vs. School-sponsored Writings

Phoenix often wrote about the same topics on Tumblr and on her school notebook under the "weekend" category, which were drawn from similar social and cultural resources. The

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[5]It's from the lyric of a song by B.o.b. , entitled "Airplanes".

recurrent themes were family, school, relationship, and popular culture.

Party and police were a recurrent theme on her entries on "weekend". Among the 14 entries that she wrote on her warm-up writing notebook about weekend, 3 involved party and police. One of her longest entry was on this topic:

"I enjoyed my weekends because on Friday I went to a party. It was cool at first, everybody was socializing and having fun. However, as it got late there was some uninvited guests that came and started drama with my friends. They were being too loud and I didn't want to get involved. I wanted to go home but my ride wanted to stay. Then cops came and crashed the party because it was past our curfew and we were disturbing the peace. We all got citations while two went to juvie." (Phoenix notebook 08/30/2010)

She wrote more specifically and expressed her emotions in her blogs. One typical example would be on her elder sister's visit to U.S. She wrote about this very briefly in a matter-of-fact manner in her warm-up writings:

"Over the weekend I spent time with my sister and my family. My sister just came over from Vietnam on a business trip. We went to eat and went shopping." (Phoenix notebook 02/07/2011)

This same experience was also recorded more specifically in her blog under the title of "Imma miss you );<3", with more emotions and feelings revealed:

"My sister's leaving tomorrow, at first I was half excited/half sad cos honestly I could care less... I'd rather go out &kicc it than stay home to chill w/ my family but these past three weeks went by so quicc )': Im finally staying home &spending quality time with family, going out to family's parties, dinners, shopping together. She taught me the meaning of a real family. My mom, my little sister, &mom's

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boyfriend are never home. We're always incomplete but because of my older sister's business trip here we finally get to spend sometimes together as a family. I'll miss you when you leave, these past few weeks were great hopefully we'll reunite during summer." <3 (Phoenix blog 02/27/2011)

Here she was more open about her feelings. Although her elder sister did not read her blog, she switched from the third person "her" to the second person "you" in the last few sentences. This was just one example that while she did not feel comfortable sharing about her feelings in her warm-up writings, she used her blog as a medium to express her emotions. In fact, the word "mood" was one of the most frequently appeared words in her blog. She often wrote directly and specifically about her mood in the blog, such as "Wow the fuccen rain is just adding on to my mood..." and "Mood: feeling better. " Other words that appear most frequently are "love" and "hate".

Phoenix was very aware of the difference between the audience and genres in warm-up writings and her blogs. As Mr. D. remained her only reader for her in-class writings, she seemed to be comfortable sharing with him about her family and social life, but at the same time reserved from expressing her feelings. She was writing for her teacher in the warm-up writings for the aim of class credit. When it comes to blog writing on Tumblr, she had a group of "authentic audience" whom she both wrote for and wrote with, as they not only provided her with instant feedbacks and comments, but also sometimes reblogged her entries on their own blog pages. In our first interview, Phoenix exhibited to me her knowledge about her audience, as she knew clearly who her readers were, and knew there was a gap between those from her official world (current schoolmates) and unofficial world (schoolmates from old school) and encouraged me to read her blog. Later, I found out that she was actually very eager to reach out to a larger audience. On the top of her weblog, she included the following into her self-introduction: "Get to know me, hit that follow button! I follow back <3 I'm a real sweetheart if you get to know me!" It is noteworthy that she share her writings not only to maintain

friendship with her former classmates, but also to actively create and involve in a community of adolescents of similar age, interests, and sociocultural background.

### 5.2.3    Blogging to Tackle Difficulties and Release Stress

Phoenix also used her blog as a venue to tackle difficult situations and release her stress, a characteristic which was never seen in her warm up writings. This was also observed by Schultz (2002) as the students used their private writing to explore difficult issues and make sense of their lives in the moment. As a teenager she was stressed out in many areas of her life: surviving the divorce between her parents, transferred to a new school and broke up with her boyfriend, homework and tests, college application and the upcoming graduation, financial stress, and peer pressure. As a second language student, she was also learning English and the subject matter at the same time. All these resulted in lots of stress and anxiety. Party and occasional use of drug was her way to combat stress; while blog seemed to be an ideal, and healthy way for venting.

Procrastination and anxiety was another major theme, shown as in the following example:

> "10/15/2010 I hate homework I have to write 3 essays for Government &another essay for English &its due tomorrow. I had like 5 days to do alla the essays but I hadda lagg until the last day....)"

This also impacted the language that she chose to communicate with her readers and express herself. She used lots of curse words in her blog entries to express strong emotions and release stress and anxiety. "So much emotions are bottling up inside me, i feel like im gonna explode one of these days fucc.-_-" (5/19/2010) She also wrote in a type of vernacular language similar to AAVE. In her self-introduction, she wrote, "Aint got no trust for no bitch." Later she revised and changed this to "Give respect to get respect." She was also a very proficient user of "web literacy". She loved to use expression icons, and acronyms like "LOL" ("laughing out loud"), "IDK" ("I don't know"), *etc.*, as if to show off her knowledge of the web literacy. In fact, she used so much internet slangs in her blog entries that I had to look up the urban dictionary from

time to time in order to understand her writings. She learned these slangs from her peers or the internet, and considered it very "cool" to write them. For instance, she used the word "hella" and "helluh" instead of "very" or "really" in most of her blog entries. She wrote "I fnk love my team, they are hella funny." and "My mom hella cried." She used these language to vent, to build a "cool" identity, and to show off her knowledge about popular culture. More importantly, she wrote this way to participate in a web community where her peers talk in a similar manner.

It seemed that she did not care about her spelling, since many words were mis-spelled. For example, she spelled "phone" as "fone" in lots of places. She loved to repeat the last letter of a word to show some emphasis, such as spelling "hardd" and "sadd" instead of "hard" and "sad". She deliberately used "c" to replace the letter "k" in many cases. Below was an example of her writing:

> "Seems like everyones getting locced up nowdays..)'= Anyways the testing was helluh hardd &boring... I only knew like 2 math questions &guessed on the rest lol. the weather is making things look sadd.=/.." (Phoenix, blog entry, 4/21/2011)

It was interesting to note that she transferred some of these linguistic characteristics in her handwritten in-class writings as well. For example, in her warm-up writings, she wrote: "I went to a kicc bacc which was a good thing." (Phoenix notebook 1/10/2011) Here she spelled "kick" and "back" in the way that she would in her online writing. I noticed that she even mis-spelled the word "back" in her original draft of "Death of a Salesman Commentary Essay", which she wrote on the computer:

> "In the first scene Willy came bacc after a failed business trip, his salary was taken away and he has to live off of commissions."

Fortunately, she used the automatic spelling check and got this corrected in her draft that she submitted to Mr. D. This was not an issue with knowledge of spelling, since these are relatively easy words. Rather, this was a habit of spelling that she transferred from her online writing to

her offline writings, either handwritten or typed. Phoenix never noticed this issue until I pointed it out.

I had to point out that there were not only overlapping in the topics and linguistic characteristics in her blogging and in-school warm-up writings, she actually sometimes composed her academic essays and her blogs simultaneously. Phoenix often multi-tasked when she was writing. She would switch back and forth between chatting online, twittering, and blogging; while at the same time also writing her academic essays. In the following example, when she was engaged in essay writing and online chatting at the same time, she even got help from her boyfriend by asking him to edit her essay. She recorded her experience of writing two last-minute school-sponsored academic essays in the following blog entry:

> "**Im so exhausted.**
>
> Dammn yesterday i stayed up til 1 something trynna finish my two last min. essays. Boyf called to keep me company but i couldnt tlk so i told him to go on AIM &talk to me there. He helped me edit a paragraph in my essay, he told me that before i used to write good essays &now my essays are so simple& wack. Lol that asshole but at least he stayed up to edit it for me<3...(omission)...Now im home & about to do more essays. omg im so drained...." (Phoenix blog 5/27/10)

The above was also another example how she used her blogging to tackle a difficult situation (*i.e.* writing last minute essays). She was very aware of the anxiety level as she engaged in academic writing. She even got some comments from her boyfriend how her essays have changed; and she also commented on her own writing task.

Although there were some overlapping in the topics that she wrote in the two contexts of in-class and out-of-school writings, these writings differ significantly in many ways as it comes to the language style, rhetorical features, details, *etc.* She drew from a wider and richer resources as she composed on blogs such as audio files, video clips, *etc.*

### 5.2.4 Summary

Phoenix was an avid reader and writer on social networks, such as Twitter and Tumblr. She spent many hours reading other people's blogs every day as a passionate, curious reader. She also used the tool of microblogging to document her lives, tackle difficulties, and de-stress by writing diaries and personal memoirs. Although there was an overlap in the topics between her blogs and her in-school warm-up writings, she tended to be more open as she wrote her blogs. As Sumara (2003) observed, "unlike face-to-face conversation, blogging facilitates conversation without the usual commitments of in-person conversation."(p.94) Unlike her teacher, the young adolescent readers of Phoenix's blogs are never critical of the spelling and grammatical errors and are always eager to comment and interact. In Phoenix's case, she was always anticipating and constantly refreshing her pages to check for new comments and feedback from her readers. This to some extent helped second language learners like Phoenix to be more motivated to write on a weblog in a more confident, relaxed manner. In other words, Blog as a genre has benefited Phoenix on terms of language and identity development due to the following factors: authentic audience; a new venue to release her emotion and to reach out for support; and a medium for her to participate in group collaboration and obtain a sense of community.

As a Generation 1.5 student, Phoenix has always struggled between different languages, values and expectations. As a result, the choices that she made and her identities sometimes seem contradictory. On the one hand, she was eager to learn English, to maintain the "good student" status, and to meet her mother's high expectation for her academic achievement. On the other hand, she felt very anxious about the academic writing assignments and was a procrastinating writer. She used curse words and vernacular language as a way to rebel against the "standard language" and "model minority" image and to seek for a sense of belonging in her adolescent circle. Some educational scholars have observed that adolescent English language learners can often hold "seemingly opposing identities simultaneously" as they are "simultaneously young and old, learning and learned, working and in school" (Lesko, 2001, p. 197).

## CHAPTER 6

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this concluding chapter, I first summarize the findings of my study. I link my findings to the literature in the field of L1 and L2 literacy studies, and discuss about how the findings from this research echo with, clarify or contradict previous findings. Next, I consider the findings in relation to the larger theoretical discussions in the sociocultural stances of the literacy learning and teaching, with a particular focus on the sociocultural notion of "participation"(Lave and Wenger, 1991) and the three-folded notion of"literacy" which includes functional literacy, cultural literacy, and critical literacy (Williams and Snipper 1990). In the final section, I discuss the limitation of this study, explore pedagogical implications and suggest avenues for future research.

This multiple case study aimed to understand how 4 adolescent ESL students learned to write as they were situated within and beyond the sociocultural contexts of their Western urban high school in the digital age. This study further examines the following questions:

- First, what do their school-sponsored writing practices look like?

- Second, what do their voluntary, self-sponsored practices look like?

- Third, what is the possible relationship between their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writings, and what serves as their home-school link?

Besides examining the kinds of school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices they engage in, I also investigate the outstanding characteristics of the school-sponsored and self-sponsored writings, especially in relation to language; the factors that motivate them to write or discourage them from writing; whether they share their writings with others; what opens up or closes such sharing; and the potential links and gaps between their self-sponsored and school-

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sponsored writings. I also question how these participants construct or negotiate their identities in the writing practices, and how their participation in and sharing of these writing practices create opportunities for their engagement in literacy learning.

## 6.1 Summary of Findings

The case studies in previous chapters depicted each participant as a unique writer, as they engaged in their literacy practices in and out of their schools in many ways for various reasons. As I acknowledge their individuality, I also explore the common patterns that emerged from these ELL adolescent writers. In the following section, I summarize the findings based on their school-sponsored writings and self-sponsored writings, and discuss the possible relationships between the two.

### 6.1.1 School-sponsored Writings

In this research, I mainly focused on the participants' school-sponsored writings in their mainstream English classes. The participants engaged in a variety of writing tasks, such as the daily warm-up writings in their in-class notebooks, 8 reading logs for book club, and 2 academic essays (Henrik Ibsen's A Doll House Personal Advertisement Project response essay in March and the Explication final essay due in May).[1] The in-class warm-up writings invited the students to share their life experiences and sociocultural world with the teacher, since the topics covered school, weekend, family, friendship, language and literacy, the literature texts, and broader social issues such as voting. Some of the writing tasks were multi-modal and encouraged the use of media and popular culture, such as the personal advertisement project discussed in Marissa's case. While most of these writing assignments were individually based, the students had oppor-

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[1]The warm-up writings dated between August 2010 and May 2011, while their academic essays were written between Jan 2011 and May 2011.

tunities to collaborate, such as in the book cover design and book club presentations depicted in the case of Edward, which motivated him to read and write the assigned novel.

The participants each had different preference for the medium of their writings. They all wrote their warm-up writings, the reading pacing guide (See Appendix E), and the reading logs in a notebook at the beginning of each class, which were placed in a bookshelf after each class. Most of the participants wrote their essays on the computer and sent to teacher via email. Marissa, however, chose to handwrite all of her essays. Since all of the participants had easy access to computers, it seemed to be more of an issue of habit and personal preference.

The chances for sharing usually encouraged the participants' writing, but sometimes may also discourage their writings, depending on the nature and the interactional dynamics of the sharing. The sharing of their writings were usually teacher-initiated during the period of my in-class observations. The participants generally showed more interest and were more motivated to work on their book club-related writings as they were required to have a group presentation on a novel that they picked. Most of them also thought highly of the Personal Advertisement project, where they used images and words to share the public and private identity of themselves. Edward, however, refused to participate in and failed to turn in the writing assignment since he did not feel comfortable to "reveal himself to others". Marissa and Phoenix spent much more time choosing and clipping the pictures from magazines than writing up the short reflection essay, as they considered the former much more "fun" to share than the latter. They also enjoyed the warm-up writings on their notebooks, since it served as a channel for them to communicate with their teacher in a more personal way. On some occasions, their quick writings also served as prompts for discussions that were related to the literature texts that they were reading, as I observed Marissa and Edward shared thoughts on the issue of "American dream" in class. In most cases, however, it was only a one-way communication channel between the students and the teacher. Since it was hard for the teacher to give detailed feedback, they usually only got a stamp of "very good" or "excellent" without any written comments. The participants treated the

warm-up writings in different manners. For example, Keres took it less seriously than the way he treated the academic essays. For Edward, however, it served as a great way to safely vent his anxiety and his financial insecurity, and he was usually very open and frank when he wrote on his notebook. Marissa and Phoenix shared some of their personal lives on the notebook, but chose to write in more details and depth in their web logs instead, since they usually got the instant, "real" feedback from their peers. Nonetheless, the warm-up writings allowed their teacher to have a peek into their personal lives.

The participants found some of the school-sponsored writing assignments more meaningful than others. They all valued the book club-related writings and the warm-up writings to different extent. The participants had mixed feelings about their academic essay writings. On the one hand, they all considered the academic essays as "most important", since their grades mostly depended on these writings. It was also notable that in the interviews, they often used the term "writing" in reference to "essay writing" only. On the other hand, most of them had a negative feeling associated with this literacy genre. Keres was the only one who volunteered to use an academic essay as a representative form of his writings. This showed that he took pride in his essay writings. He was also the only one who included both strength and weakness in his essay writings when Mr. D. asked the class to reflect upon their own writings. The other participants all focused on their weaknesses only, and believed that there was nothing good about their writings at all.

All the participants referred to their academic essay writings as "difficult" at some point of their interviews. For most participants, the composition of the academic essays was a painful process. Edward explicitly explained how stressful his IB history writing assignment was in his interview and his notebook. Although Phoenix and Marissa did not complain about the essay writings in their interviews, they both used strong terms such as "hate" and "anxious" when they mentioned the essays to their peers in their social network spaces. Procrastination was a shared pattern among these adolescent writers when they tried to write and finish their essays,

and there was also a negative feeling of guilt associated. It was a common practice for them to burn the midnight oil right before the date that their essays were due.

There were a couple of reasons that contributed to the participants' negative feelings associated with academic writings. Firstly, they were ill prepared for the genre of academic essay. The units of their English classes were based on the canonical literature texts, such as the Great Gatsby, and the Catcher in the Rye. There was a lack of readings that could model the essay writings. They did not have enough exposure to the academic essay writings through their self-sponsored readings either, which were popular youth literacies such as songs, media, comics, *etc.* Secondly, as English language learners, many of them either did not have access to the support; or did not know about the resources available in and out of their school. They could not obtain any support from their working class parents who did not speak any English. The school counseling center discussed with them about their academic performance without providing specific aid on their academic essay writings. It was also unlikely for them to obtain support from the peers in their own social world, although Phoenix sometimes asked her boyfriend from another school to help her with editing. I had to point out that resources and support did exist for these students, however. For example, there was a free tutoring service provided by their school, and yet Keres was the only one who took advantage of it. Keres also tried to practice and improve academic English in the web forum when he was using computer at the school or city library. There were also resources in the local libraries and churches that targeted at teenager writers, which the participants were not aware of. Therefore, a gap seemed to between the available resources and the perceived resources by the participants.

### 6.1.2   Self-sponsored Out-of-school Writings

The four participants in this study engaged in a wide range of out-of-school literacy practices. Due to their unique sociocultural background, different understandings of the notion of "writing" and various purposes for their writing practices, every participant was unique in their

| | Keres | Edward | Marissa | Phoenix |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Online or mobile phone Web forum (E) | Web forum (E) Email (E) Facebook comments (E/S/M) Youtube video upload & comments (E) | text message (S/E) Email (E) Facebook (E/S/M) Youtube video upload | Twitter (E/S/M) (14221) Tumblr (E) Email (E) Facebook (E/S/M) Text Message (E/S) Online chatting (E/S) Youtube video upload | Tumblr (E/V) (689) Twitter (E/V/M) Online chatting (E/V) Email (E) Youtube video upload |
| Offline | College Application forms (E) Handwritten letter (E) Love letter (E) Handwritten diaries (E) | College Application forms (E) Poem (E) Budgeting (S) | Application forms (E) Scheduling (E) Handwritten notes (E/S) Letters (S) Post cards (S) Shopping list (E/S) | College Application forms (E) Handwritten notes (E) Scribbling |

Table 6.1: Summary of literacy activity logs (E: English; S: Spanish; V: Vietnamese; M: Mixed).

choice of the types of literacy practices, their preferences for the medium of composing, the sharing of their writings, and the language choices for their writings. This study uncovered some common patterns among these adolescent, ELL writers along with their distinctive characteristics. I summarize the findings based on their literacy activity logs in relation to the set of research questions.

1. *What did they write?* They all wrote a significant amount on their own on a wide variety of topics for various purposes. The girls were more proliferate, as Marissa wrote 14221 tweets within one year and Phoenix produced 689 blog entries between April 2010 and June 2011, aside from their other self-sponsored writings. Despite the pressure and time constraints for graduation and college preparation, all of the four participants wrote on a regular basis. The topics of their writings covered both personal lives and larger sociocultural issues; and the genres of their writings included poetry, web logs/diaries,

emails/letters, tweets, text messages, *etc.*

2. *In what languages did they write?* Although their home languages were different and they made individual language choices as they wrote, they all sometimes mixed and switched languages. English was the primary language for their writings, although they did use their heritage languages in different ways. Keres and Phoenix used their home language in a tokenistic way, such as the name of food, or the name of a song. For Marissa and Edward, they often did codes-switching between Spanish and English, and sometimes even mixed the two languages. They all used lots of vernacular language and urban slangs in their self-sponsored writings.

3. *In what environment and through what medium did they write?* Their self-sponsored writings occurred in both the offline (*e.g.* memo, diary, letter, poetry) and online environment (*e.g.* email, web forums, social network, weblogs), although they had different preferences for the offline/online literacies. It is important to note that much of their out-school-writings occur on some type of web-based social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Youtube, *etc.*, which are all socially constructed spaces. As observed by some scholars, "adolescent literacy practices out-of-school are so vibrant because of their access to technology and affinity for social networking" (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009).

There was individual difference among these writers as they chose the medium for their self-sponsored composing, however. For example, although all of them used Facebook and Youtube, only the girls used Twitter and Tumblr for chatting and sharing pictures with their friends. The boys (Keres and Edward) seemed to value the paper and print-based literacy more than the girls, as they both chose to write love letters, diaries or poems on paper, and wrote less frequently on their Facebook pages or public forums. They attached a special meaning to paper-based writings and actively engaged in them. It was a surprising finding despite the easy access to computer and the powerful influence of computer-based technology, and suggested that print-based literacy and computer-based

literacy could co-exist and be mutually complementary rather than being mutually exclusive. The two girls (Marissa and Phoenix), on the other hand, wrote solely online or via their cell phones, except the rare cases when they had to write down memos, shopping lists, or English letters to their relatives for their parents.

4. *What motivates them to write or discourages them from writing?* Some common reasons that prompted them to write was to communicate with friends and family members, to have fun, and to record their lives. They were also motivated to write for unique reasons. For example, Keres loved to participate in web forums to criticize and express his opinions on schooling, social and political issues; Edward wrote poems as a way of escaping from homework and stress; Marissa used her twitters not only to record, but also to broadcast about her lives, maintain her status of popularity, and solidify friendship; while Phoenix used her web logs to express the emotions and tackle the difficulties in her lives. These participants attached significance to their own writings in their own ways.

5. *Did they share their writings with others, and if so, how did they share?* They all chose to share some of their writings, as each participant maintained a different degree of privacy. There seemed to be a spectrum for their level of comfort as it comes to the sharing of writing. The two boys were very careful, and even calculated in choosing what to share and what not to share. Keres only shared school-related issues with his friends; and for public, he only wanted to share his thoughts and opinions on social and political issues, and intentionally removed the emotions from those writings. He handwrote the letters and diaries so that no one would have access to his private life. Similarly, Edward only shared his handwritten poems with his girlfriend, and never shared his true feelings or emotions on his social media pages. Phoenix was on the other end of the spectrum. She was very willing, or even eager, to share her feelings and emotions with others, strangers included. She considered her web log a channel to tell her private life stories, and posted on it her school and family life, her fight with friends, her bitter-sweet love stories, and how

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she cried as she broken up with her boyfriend. The boundary between public and private writing was blurred and crossed in her case. Marissa tended to share more personal stories only with her social circle of friends, and only posted pictures and multimedia files on the public Weblogs to maintain a public image that she wanted to reveal. Both girls expressed in their interviews that they got excited when they had more "followers"(*i.e.* readers).

### 6.1.3   School-sponsored and Out-of-School, Self-sponsored Writings: Links and Gaps

This study uncovered some interconnections between the participants' in-and-out of school writings. The participants' in-and-out of school writing products were connected in various ways, such as topics, genres, recurrent themes, language uses, and aspects of their sociocultural experiences presented in their writings. Besides, the writing processes, especially the writing processes of academic essays and online writings were impacted by each other in some cases.

The participants' social-cultural and life experiences in and outside of school fed both their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writings. There was an overlapping in the topics of their warm-up writings in the mainstream classroom and those that appeared in their blogs, twitters, and Facebook pages, as they wrote about their family, friends, their school experience, their hobbies, the songs that they listened to, the movies or TV programs that they watched, and other weekend events that they attended. Their life experiences were also often transformed into writing materials for those non-personal topics.

Their school-sponsored writings were often mentioned in their out-of-school, self-sponsored writings. It was also not unusual to see a school-related life experience talked about and transformed into their self-sponsored writings. For example, Keres discussed about homework and test scores and his participation in some academic support groups with his friends. Phoenix and Marissa recorded anecdotes that happened in school and complained about their homework, especially their academic essay assignments in their web logs, twitters, and Facebook pages. The participants learned about academic literacies as they engaged in their out-of-school

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literacy practices, either consciously or unconsciously. For example, a highly motivated English language learner Keres participated in web-forum discussions utilizing the elements of argumentative writings, aiming at improving his academic essay writing skills. Edward used a rhyme scheme and rhetorical devices in his poem writing. Marissa quoted a Tweeter friend's opinion when she was asked to write on the issue of voting in class. Phoenix borrowed from and transformed the song lyrics in her blog writings. Besides writing skills, they all learned other important literacy-related skills such as vocabulary, the awareness of the audience, scanning information and make citations, *etc.*

The language of their in-school writings were impacted by their self-sponsored writings. Most participants transferred some of the linguistic characteristics of their online writings to the in-class writings, especially when it came to diction and spelling. Edward, Marissa and Phoenix often used vernacular, internet slangs, and the simplified spelling of certain words in their school-sponsored writings. For example, Phoenix spelled the word "back" as "bacc" in her blog deliberately as a personal stamp. She then unconsciously mis-spelled the word in the same manner in her warm-up writings and even academic essay. Marissa also used some curse words and expression icons in her academic essay on the personal advertisement project. This showed that the students were either confused about the distinction between academic writing and online writings, or habitually mixed the two different types of genres.

In addition to the interconnection on the content and language of their writing products, an equally significant finding is that the writing processes were also influenced by each other. Some of them did their school assignments and self-sponsored writings simultaneously in a "parallel" manner. For example, Edward wrote his academic essay while text messaging his friends during the process. Keres usually had other windows (*e.g.*, discussion forum, news, *etc.*) open on his screen when he was working on his academic essays, although he usually wrote in quiet places such as library and turned his cell phones silent or off. Marissa used to work on her homework and academic essays while checking her tweets constantly and writing a new tweet on every

10-minute intervals. It was not unusual for her to update on the process of her essay writings through tweets (*e.g.*, "2 more pages left"). Phoenix was the most multi-tasking one among all, as she often switched back and forth between essay writing, online chatting, twittering, and blogging, and even let her boyfriend help with editing of her paragraph as she simultaneously chatted and wrote at the same time. They all expressed in their interviews that their engagement with online chatting and text messaging had become distractions for their writings, but it also served as boredom busters. They also used such communication as a way to break their "lonely writer" identity, as if they were writing with their classmates and friends, since most of their peers were doing the same homework assignment at the same time.

There also existed gaps between the practices. One major difference between their school-sponsored and self-sponsored writings was that the latter were not only more informal, but also fragmentary writings in many cases, especially when it came to their online chatting (*e.g.*, tweets, text message). For example, among the 40 tweets that Marissa wrote per day, most of them were incomplete sentences or phrases. It was the same for their text messages and most entries on their Facebook pages. In addition, the participants had more chances to share their self-sponsored writings than the school-sponsored onces. Although they did have opportunities to share their warm-up writings, such sharings were usually very brief and non-spontaneous. In most cases, Mr. D. was the only reader for their writings, especially when it came to their academic essay. In contrast, most of their self-sponsored writings were meant to be shared, and even the handwritten love letters and love poems had more authentic audience.

## 6.2   Discussions

This study uncovered several significant characteristics of the participants' school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices that broaden our understandings of the complexities of literacy and learning. First, these ELL adolescent writers crossed the boundaries between school-sponsored academic writings and self-sponsored, personal writings. Second, as they partici-

pated in the literacy practices in and out of school, they learned about and participated in a culture of sharing and collaboration, while the level of their participation could either encourage or discourage the writings. Third, the participants were constantly constructing and negotiating their own identities as they engaged in their literacy practices and learning.

The interconnections and a blurred boundary between school-sponsored and self-sponsored writing practices was one noteworthy aspect of my study. Previous literature on L1 and L2 adolescent students seemed to suggest a dichotomy between school and personal writings, and a difference attitude toward literacy for school and for personal purposes (*e.g.* Myer 1992; O'Brien 1998). For example, the participants in O'Brien's study viewed self-based literacy as useful and enjoyable and school-based literacy as boring and irrelevant. Other studies (*e.g.*, Emig, 1971; Knobel, 1999; Mihari & Sablo, 1996;and Schultz, 2002) seemed to imply that the adolescent writers were more interested and motivated in personal writings but not school-based writings. My study seemed to contradict with such dichotomy since there existed interconnections between the participants' school and self-sponsored writings in relation to both the writing products and processes. The participants' attitude toward their own writings were more individual-based and complex rather than reaching a unanimous consent. All the participants in my study valued certain aspects of the school-sponsored writing practices, such as the warm-up writings and book-club related writings, which were more related to their own sociocultural experiences and encouraged collaboration and sharings with their peers. They each had different attitudes towards other types of school-sponsored writings. Although Phoenix and Marissa warmly embraced the personal advertisement project, Edward shuddered at the idea of sharing his personal identity with others and refused to work on this project. When Edward suffered from the essay writings in his IB history class and refused to use any of those as a representative piece, Keres took great pride in his academic essays and voluntarily engaged in a web forum discussion utilizing academic English. Similarly, some participants had mixed feelings toward their self-sponsored writings as well. Marissa, for example, felt both proud and guilty for her

heavy use of twitters. She used the word "addiction" to describe her engagement in Twittering.

There might be several possible reasons that contributed to the difference between my findings and those in the previous literature. One might be the literacy practices, especially the writing practices, in Mr. D.'s English classes were more socioculturally related and meaningful for these adolescent writers as compared to those classes one or two decades ago. Another was that since my participants were all ELL writers, they were generally more motivated to improve their English through writings. Any activities that involved English could be potential opportunities of learning for them. In addition, due to the advancement of technology and social network, the writings that were produced by this generation of adolescents writers were different from those produced earlier. The adolescent ELL writers in my study had more chances to produce more instant, fragmented writings as they text messaged or chatted on social media websites. The boundaries among speaking/chatting, reading and writing were also blurred in many cases, since they considered their text message, twitter, and other social media-sponsored conversations as "chatting" instead of writing. These all contributed to a more sophisticated attitude toward these writings. As Lincoln and Guba (2000) observed, "There is good news and bad news with the most contemporary of formulations. The good news is that the multiple selves-ourselves and our respondents-of postmodern inquiries may give rise to more dynamic, problematic, open-ended, and complex forms of writing and representation. The bad news is that the multiple selves we create and encounter give rise to more dynamic, problematic, open-ended, and complex forms of writing and representation." (p. 183) Due to the complex nature of the participants' literacy practices, it would be very challenging to completely distinguish their academic literacies from the personal ones. I argue that it would make more sense if we focus on the meaningful connections and possible gaps between the school-sponsored and self-sponsored literacies rather than attempting to draw a boundary between the two or to find out their preferences of one over the other.

As complex as their school and self-sponsored literacy practices were, the participants all

learned about and participated in a culture of sharing and collaboration as they were provided the opportunities for participation to different extents and in various ways both in and outside of school. Lave and Wenger (1991) considered the opportunities for participation in a community of learners an integral part of language learning, which provided apprentices access to resources and opportunities for interactions as they gradually acquired the skills through practices with more experienced, or expert members. Besides learning from their English teacher, the participants were granted some opportunities to interact with and learn from their L1 peers in such collaborative projects as the book club in their mainstream English classes. They also had chances to participate in the sharing of their personal advertisement project using the tool of both oral and written languages. They did not have as much opportunities to have interactional dialogues with their English teachers, however, since there was mainly grading but little feedback on their writings. There was even less opportunities for such interactions and participations in other classes, such as in the IB history class in Edward's case.

The participants' engagement in the out-of-school, self-sponsored writings also provided some opportunities for learning and interactions. Their online literacy activities, especially their engagement with social network (*e.g.* Facebook, Twitter, blogs, *etc.*) represented a significant portion of the participants' out-of-school literacy practices. As boyd (2008) observed, one reason that social networks have gained popularity among adolescents is that these teenager students can hang out in the virtual space without being watched by their parents or teachers. They were all friends on the social network such as Facebook, although there was little interactions among these four participants. In other words, there was some overlapping between their offline, school-related, official community and the online/virtual community, and yet each participant had their own circle of friends. In the case of Marissa and Edward, the members of their social circles were mostly Spanish-speaking students from their high school. For Phoenix, most of her friends were old schoolmates from the former high school that she attended, and there was little interactions between her and the students at Java city high school. Keres was

rather picky in choosing friends, since he only wanted to hang out with those students who were strong in academics. He was also the only one who voluntarily seek for opportunities to interact with the "experts" in the larger virtual community which was beyond his own social circle in real life, such as the newspaper editors, or native English speakers on web forums. All of the participants chose to share at least some of their writings to their social circle in order to participate in their peer group and solidify friendships with each other. Writings on the social network, and the constant reading of and responding to their peer's writings, had become a way of life for all of them. Thanks to the technological devices such as internet and cell phones, their writing practices all evolved from personal to public in different degrees, despite their individual comfort level with sharing.

It was worthy to note that the participants had never, or seldom reflected on their voluntary participation in the web-based social spaces. Most of them often did not consider their self-sponsored writings as "real" writings, and failed to see any cultural or educational value of these literacy practices. When some literacy researchers and teachers believe in the value of multiple literacies (*e.g.*, Barton, 2001; Dyson, 2003; Gee, 2000; Street, 2001), the students themselves seemed to have a relatively narrow definition of "literacy" and "writing". They seemed to view literacy from the functional level but not from the cultural and critical level (Williams and Snipper 1990). It is therefore necessary to discuss with the students directly about these important concepts so that they could also see their own literacy practices and their participations in and out of schools in a more critical but affirmative manner.

The participants also engaged in ELL-specific and adolescent-specific writings as they constantly constructed and negotiated their identities through their literacy lives and their participation in various sociocultural practices. In the light of sociocultural theories, literacy could be viewed as a social dialogue with other community members (Bakhtim, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978), while languages are cultural and symbolic tools that are important for meaning-making and social interactions (Street, 2001). For these adolescent second language learners, language(s)

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served as both medium for such social dialogues and cultural and symbolic tools. It was also an identity marker (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). They may not be able to choose their other identity markers such as their individual race, gender, family background, ethnicity, cultural heritage and immigrant experience, and yet they could choose what languages to speak and write in. In other words, as they made the choices for certain languages and dialogues, they were also choosing and negotiating who they were and what kind of people they wanted to be.

As mentioned earlier, English was the primary language for both their school-sponsored and their voluntary writings. This was not a surprising finding considering the fact that the participants in this study were either U.S. born or had immigrated to U.S. for over 5 years, and they all proudly embraced their identities as being "American". They all considered English, and Standard English in particular, "extremely important" for their academic and future career success, and were eager to improve their English skills (*i.e.*, listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

When the participants had a strong desire for "the knowledge of the rules and conventions of English" (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 936), they all valued their heritage languages. Some of the participants, however, were forced to make a tough choice to focus on English only despite their belief in an equal status between their heritage languages and the dominant language (*i.e.* English). There were various factors that led them away from the learning of their heritage languages, which included time and energy constraints, a lack of resources, and peer pressure. Keres' case was the most complicated. As part Vietnamese, Japanese, and Chinese, he spoke Vietnamese at home and had taken courses on Chinese in order to better understand his cultural heritage. However, he decided to quit since Chinese was too difficult and time-consuming to learn, which simply could not fit into his busy schedule. He then chose to study Spanish out of peer pressure, since most of his classmates spoke Spanish. Although Spanish was not his heritage language, it also became part of his sociocultural identity since it allowed him a border-crossing venue for him to obtain membership into a peer culture in and outside of his school.

Due to his relatively low proficiency in both Chinese and Spanish, he used these two languages in a tokenistic manner in his self-sponsored writings, such as using some Chinese characters in his screen name, or citing a Spanish lyric on his Facebook page. Phoenix was in the same boat, as she usually wrote primarily in English and only wrote the name of food, restaurant, or cite song lyrics in Vietnamese. Although she was able to read and write some Vietnamese before she immigrated to U.S., she gradually lost her proficiency in it after immigration and her enrollment and immersion in the ELL program. Both Keres and Phoenix expressed regret in having low proficiency in their heritage languages. Phoenix, in particular, experienced a feeling of split in her cultural identities (Igoa, 1995), especially when she went back to Vietnam to visit her elder sister and other relatives. She actually updated her web logs daily and wrote explicitly about such feelings during her Vietnam trip as a way to vent and to seek for support from her readers who had similar experiences with her.

Despite the low proficiency, they still consider themselves "bilingual" or "trilingual". This seems to be in accordance with Chiang and Schmida's (1999) observation that English language learners' self-definition may not be "grounded in a clear or competent ability to speak the ethnic language; instead, it is informed by a sense of cultural identification" (p.93). While they use English as a major communicative tool to express their multilingual and ethnic selves, they still psychologically maintain a cultural affiliation with their heritage languages.

The participants who had higher proficiency in their heritage language chose to write in it in more meaningful ways. Marissa and Edward both took Spanish courses since the Freshman year and were very proud of their capability of talking and writing in Spanish. They considered themselves lucky since their heritage language was a dominant language at school besides English, and many faculty members and school staff spoke both English and Spanish as well. They used Spanish extensively in their self-sponsored writings as they communicated with their peers; and sometimes even wrote here and there in their in-school, warm-up writing notebooks since they knew that their English teacher was also able to read Spanish. Marissa often found

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Spanish to be a more effective tool to express her deep feelings and strong emotions, such as in her mourning of her dad. They also sometimes used Spanish as a "secret code" to communicate with their Spanish-speaking peers in their social media spaces. Spanish was a integral part of their identities and peer culture. According to Igoa, knowing two languages enables the students to "think differently" from two perspectives at the same time(Igoa, 1995, p. 81). Their use of Spanish was intentional, which made them different from those students at Java city high school who spoke Spanish at home but chose to avoid the learning of Spanish and denied their capability of speaking Spanish at school. Although they were aware of the potential socioeconomic benefits of remaining bilingual, they chose to maintain their heritage language mainly because they were proud of who they were. This echoed with previous studies in the field (*e.g.* Durgunoglu & Verhoeven, 1998), which found that bilingual or multi-lingual minority students chose to use their heritage language as a way to deepen their own ethnic roots.

It was also noted briefly earlier that besides their heritage languages, the research participants also chose to write in a type of internet slang and vernacular language, as they considered such usage "cool". They seemed to share the knowledge of a common pool of internet slangs, including the local-based internet slangs such as "hella". According to Lisa Delpit, people from different class, race, and social-cultural backgrounds use different "codes" in communication(Delpit, 1988). In Moje's study (2000) on gansta literacy, the adolescents used their own symbols and language as secret codes to signify "identification and membership" (p. 651). In addition, they also used lots of curse words in their online writings. It was interesting to note that the two girls used these curse words more heavily to express strong emotions and to vent their stress and anxiety. I argue that their choices of languages, code meshing and switching, and frequent use of internet and urban slangs showed their eagerness to belong to an adolescent social circle which valued their ethnicity, gender, linguistic heritage, and popular cultural literacies.

## 6.3    Limitations of the Study

This study examined only four cases of ELL students situated within and beyond their Western high school. Although I managed to include both genders, several racial groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds as I recruited my participants, I only included those participants whose English levels was between intermediate to more advanced. They were either U.S. born or Generation 1.5 immigrant students who came to U.S. years ago. Therefore, I did not include in my study more recent immigrant students or underperforming students with lower or limited English proficiency. I was also not able to attempt to generalize the results to apply to the entire ELL population.

In addition, the scope of the study only allowed me to look at the participants' writing practices in and outside of their school during their senior year but not in the college level. Longitudinal studies that connect the secondary and post-secondary education will provide more complete descriptions and useful informations of what kinds of challenges ELL students experience over time and how they could be better prepared for the college writing classes.

## 6.4    Pedagogical and Educational Implications

The findings of this study suggest several pedagogical and educational implications for literacy scholars and teachers, especially those who work with English language learners.

One of the major findings of this study was that the ELLs engaged in a rich array of literacy practices on their own as they actively participated in the interactions with the peers within and beyond their social circles. Unfortunately, the participants did not consider most of their writings as "real writings"; and their English teacher believed that these students were "not doing any writings on their own". This suggests that we should expand our understanding of "learning" and "writing" and take into consideration the sociocultural nature of second language education. Instead of seeing the ELLs from a deficit model, language educators, researchers,

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and parents should consider these learners as voluntary participants in socially organized practices. In addition, the students themselves should also be aware of their own participation in the learning process. Collaborations and interactions should also be encouraged.

Second, the participants made meaning of their lives through writings that involved various medium, languages, and genres, which helped to broaden our understandings of writing and literacy in general. It was crucial for the language educators to be aware of the co-existence of multiple literacies (New London Group, 1996), online literacies, vernacular literacies (Camitta, 1993), and everyday literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). We should also consider the connotation of literacy from the functional, cultural, and critical levels (Williams and Snipper 1990) rather than viewing literacy learning as the acquiring of a set of skills. It is important for educators to learn about the students' literacy experiences, to discuss with them directly about the educational and cultural value of their writing practices, and to empower the students to have a more positive attitude toward their literacy practices. At the same time, language educators should also explicitly teach about and discuss with the students about the differences between academic English and the vernacular English or other dialogues.

Third, the interconnections and gaps between school-sponsored and self-sponsored literacy practices suggest that we should view learning beyond the scope of school, but in a larger ecosystem of school, family and community. It was important to consider and understand the sociocultural and literacy practices that the students already engaged in. Teachers should take effort to link the students' sociocultural experiences and their knowledge of popular culture in the curriculum as "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Velez-Ibanez & Greeberg, 1989). Similarly, language teachers should not work in isolation either, but work with other language teachers, and universities so that they get support and gain access to more teaching resources and effective assessment tools which are informed by research.

Fourth, as the reading and writing on the internet and social networks is a dominant pattern for all of these participants, English teachers could make use of the potential of technology, dig-

ital media and social networks while at the same time educate the students on the distractions and pitfalls of them. For example, the students have learned to collaborate as they compose in online forums or social networks. English teachers could encourage this culture of collaboration in the classroom as well by having more group writing projects and peer conferences, as Mr. D. does in his class. While it is important to acknowledge the richness of students' self-sponsored writings and the potentials of technology and social networks, educators should not over-romanticize these writings or the role of technology, as they may also become distractions. As Warschauer (2007) has observed, it is impossible for English language learners to make academic improvement in a technological and digital environment without sufficient support and guidance from their teachers. In the case of this project, the two female students spent lots of time on Twitter, and share lots of links to videos, audios, blog posts, and articles. English teachers could educate them on the evaluation of these resources and the use of these resources as potential individualized learning tools. They could also provide instructional scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) by showing students how they themselves use it strategically as a learning and researching tool to sift through information, to access and exchange ideas, and to build interpersonal and professional relationships with those who share the same interests as they do. In so doing, they could teach students to think more critically about all the information that they get in order to help them move from relatively superficial and simplistic ways of communication to deep and critical thinking, and more meaningful interpersonal interactions. Teachers could also teach explicitly about the differences between the new genres and the academic writings in relation to spelling, grammar, *etc.* With such help and guidance from the teachers, English language learners will learn to improve their English as well as other essential 21st-century skills for their future success in the digital spaces.

**APPENDICES**

# APPENDIX A    Conventions Used in the Presentation of Transcripts

| Notation | Description |
|----------|-------------|
| () | Parentheses enclosing text contain notes, usually about contextual and non-verbal information, *e.g.* laughs and nods. Empty parentheses indicate talk too obscure to transcribe |
| [] | Brackets contain my explanatory information inserted into the quotations |
| NO | A capitalized word or phrase indicates increased volume |
| /n:/ | A colon inserted into word or sentence indicates that the sound of the previous letter was elongated |
| ... | Ellipsis points inserted in the middle of a blank line indicates omitted materials |

# APPENDIX B    Survey Questionnaire of ELL High School Experience

**I. Please choose the number that is most accurate in describing your feelings.**

1.  I feel support in my high school to achieve success.

    1) strongly agree 2) agree 3) not sure 4) disagree 5) strongly disagree

2.  I know where to get support if I need help in school, life, or at home.

    1) strongly agree 2) agree 3) not sure 4) disagree 5) strongly disagree

3.  I participate in lots of activities, such as sports, clubs, and after school programs.

    1) strongly agree 2) agree 3) not sure 4) disagree 5) strongly disagree

**II. Short questions:**

4.  When I came to the high school , I felt the following feelings (you may choose more than one items):

    Happiness    Pressure      Fear      Freedom
       Joy          Anger     Anxiety     Other

    And why?

5.  How many students (do you think) sitting by you right now have experienced similar struggles in this country, and in this school?

6.  What would have helped me the most when I first arrived in my high school to feel successful?

7.  What can schools do better to help students like me?

8.  I believe that at this stage of my life, the most important things are: (*e.g.*, learning English well, get good grades, become popular in school, *etc.*)

9.  If I had to choose between three jobs in my future, I'd like to be either:

    A,

    B,

    C,

10. In order to have one of the jobs above, I must set the following goals for myself:

    1).

    2).

    3).

# APPENDIX C   Literacy Log

Name _____
Today's Date _2/3?/11_

Out-of-class activities that you spend most time with today: (e.g. Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watch TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, etc.)

1. browsing internet
2. watch t.v/movies
3. talking with friends

Table 1   Out-of-class writing checklist

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium (e.g. Paper, computer, cell phone, etc.) | Note/ comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (e.g. writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, twitter, etc.) | | | | |
| Emailing | sometimes | Home/ School | computer | |
| Hand-written notes | class | school | paper | |
| Scribbling | school | | paper | |
| Website forum/BBS Zines | after | | | |
| Facebook | After school | | computer | |
| Text message | | | | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, etc.) | After school | Home | computer | |
| . | | | | |

Figure C.1: Phoenix' initial literacy log.

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Figure C.1 (cont'd)

**Transcription of Figure C.1**

Name:
Today's Date: 03/31/11
Out-of-class activities that you spend most time on today: (*e.g.* Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watching TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, *etc.*).

1. browsing internet websites
2. watching TV/movie, sports
3. talking with friends

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium: (*e.g.* Paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*) | Note / comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (*e.g.* writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Emailing | sometimes | home/school | computer | |
| Hand-written notes | class | school | paper | |
| Scribbling | school | | paper | |
| Website forum/BBS | after school | school | Twitter | Tumblr |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook/Twitter | after school | school | computer | |
| Text message | | | | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, *etc.*) | after school | home | computer | |
| Others | | | | |

Name_███████████

Today's Date  *3/3/11*

Out-of-class activities that you spend most time with today: (e.g. Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watch TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, etc.)

1. *exercise*
2. *texting*
3. *listening to music*

*work ( beach cruise)?*

Table 1    Out-of-class writing checklist

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium (e.g. Paper, computer, cell phone, etc.) | Note/ comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (e.g. writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, twitter, etc.) | | | | |
| Emailing | | | | |
| Hand-written notes | | | | |
| Scribbling | | | | |
| Website forum/BBS | | | | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook | *23 hrs* | *everywhere* | | |
| Text message | *24/7* | *everywhere* | | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, etc.) | | | | |
| . | | | | |

*sports?*
*videogames?*
*church?*
*family activities?*
*(involves reading & writing)*

Figure C.2: Edward's initial literacy log.

Figure C.2 (cont'd)

**Transcription of Figure C.2**

Name:
Today's Date: 03/31/11
Out-of-class activities that you spend most time on today: (*e.g.* Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watching TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, *etc.*).

1. exercise
2. texting
3. listening to music

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium: (*e.g.* Paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*) | Note / comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (*e.g.* writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Emailing | | | | |
| Hand-written notes | | | | |
| Scribbling | | | | |
| Website forum/BBS | | | | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook/Twitter | 23 hrs | everywhere | | |
| Text message | 24/7 | everywhere | | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Others | | | | |

Name [redacted]

Today's Date 2/24/11

Out-of-class activities that you spend most time with today: (e.g. Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watch TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, etc.)

1. internet
2. movies
3. talking with friends

Table 1    Out-of-class writing checklist

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium (e.g. Paper, computer, cell phone, etc.) | Note/ comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (e.g. writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | 12:00 4:00 | *mall* | *money* | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, twitter, etc.) | 4.00 – | *home* | *computer* | |
| Emailing | 1 hour | *home* | | |
| Hand-written notes | all day | School | *Paper Pencil* | |
| Scribbling | all day | *home school* | *paper ? Pencil* | |
| Website forum/BBS | | | | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook | all day am | *home* | *cell computer* | |
| Text message | 7:00-10am | *home* | *cell* | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, etc.) | 7:00 pm a. | *home* | *computer* | |
| . | | | | |

*(handwritten margin notes: "riends?", "email address?")*

Figure C.3: Marissa's initial literacy log.

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Figure C.3 (cont'd)

**Transcription of Figure C.3**

Name:
Today's Date: 03/31/11
Out-of-class activities that you spend most time on today: (*e.g.* Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watching TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, *etc.*).

1. internet
2. movies
3. talking with friends

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium: (*e.g.* Paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*) | Note / comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (*e.g.* writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | 12:00 4:00 | mall | money | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, *etc.*) | 4:00 | home | computer | |
| Emailing | 1 hour | home | | |
| Hand-written notes | all day | school | paper, pencil | |
| Scribbling | all day | home & school | paper & pencil | |
| Website forum/BBS | | | | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook/Twitter | all day am | home | all, computer | |
| Text message | 7:00-1 am | home | all | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, *etc.*) | 7:00 pm | home | computer | |
| Others | | | | |

Name: ~~Keres~~

Today's Date 03/31/11

Out-of-class activities that you spend most time with today: (e.g. Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watch TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, etc.)

1. Sports
2. Listening to music
3. Browsing internet websites.

Table 1    Out-of-class writing checklist

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium (e.g. Paper, computer, cell phone, etc.) | Note/ comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (e.g. writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, twitter, etc.) | | | | |
| Emailing | once in a while 30 min | Home school | computer/ cell | only to teachers. |
| Hand-written notes | | | | |
| Scribbling | | | | |
| Website forum/BBS | 10-15 min | home | computer | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook | hours | home | Computer laptop | |
| Text message | Everyday | Everywhere | Cell | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, etc.) | | | | |
| . | | | | |

Figure C.4: Keres' initial literacy log.

Figure C.4 (cont'd)

**Transcription of Figure C.4**

Name:
Today's Date: 03/31/11
Out-of-class activities that you spend most time on today: (*e.g.* Reading, Listening to/singing songs, video game, browsing internet websites, watching TV/movie, sports, emailing, talking with friends, *etc.*).
1. sports
2. listening to music
3. browsing internet websites

| Activities | Time start-finish | Place | Medium: (*e.g.* Paper, computer, cell phone, *etc.*) | Note / comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| calendar/planner writing | | | | |
| scheduling (*e.g.* writing to-do lists; memos; grocery shopping list ) | | | | |
| keeping a diary (paper journal, blogs, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Emailing | once in a while 30 min | Home / School | Computer / Cell | only to teachers |
| Hand-written notes | | | | |
| Scribbling | | | | |
| Website forum/BBS | 10-15 min | home | computer | |
| Zines | | | | |
| Facebook/Twitter | hours | home | computer / laptop | |
| Text message | Everyday | Everywhere | Cell | |
| Online chatting (MSN, Skype, *etc.*) | | | | |
| Others | | | | |

## APPENDIX D    Warm-up Writing Notebook
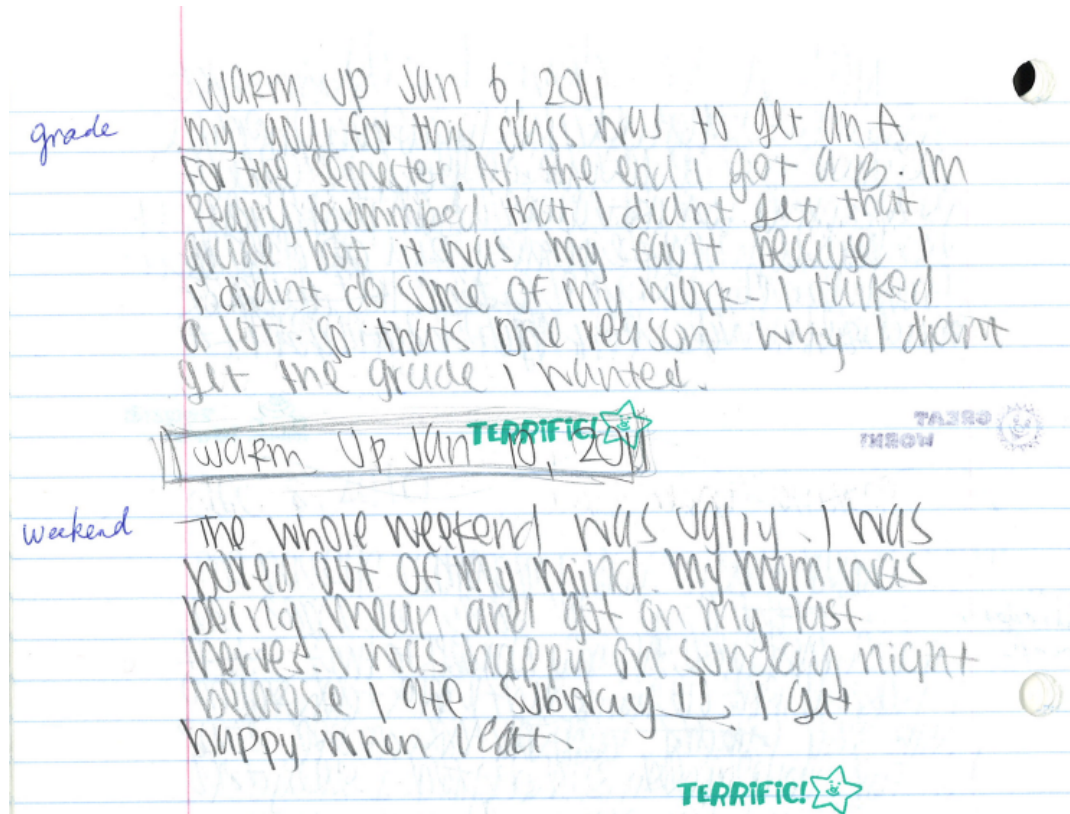


**Transcription:**

- **Warm Up Jan 6, 2011 grade.** My goal for this class was to get an A for the semester. At the end I got a B. I'm really bummed that I didn't get that grade but it was my fault because I didn't do some of my work. I talked a lot, so that's one reason why I didn't get the grade I wanted.

- **Warm Up Jan 10, 2011 weekend.** The whole weekend was ugly. I was bored out of my mind. My mom was mean and got on my last nerves. I was happy on Sunday night because I ate Subway! I got happy when I eat.

Figure D.1: Marissa's warm-up writing notebook (I).

- **Warm Up Jan 11, 2011. A person that I admire.** I admire my great grandma. She's a very giving person and cares for everyone. She loves having conversations with people even though she's pretty old. I love when she tells stories of when we're young. It shows that she remembers us. It seems like my uncles try to make their kids stand out & making them seem more important but my grandma loves everyone.
- **Warm Up Jan 14, 2011. 3 things that I learned this week.** 3 things that I learned this week are we shouldn't slack off. I learned new vocabulary and [...] read statistics show people who don't study fail.

Figure D.2: Marissa's warm-up writing notebook (II).
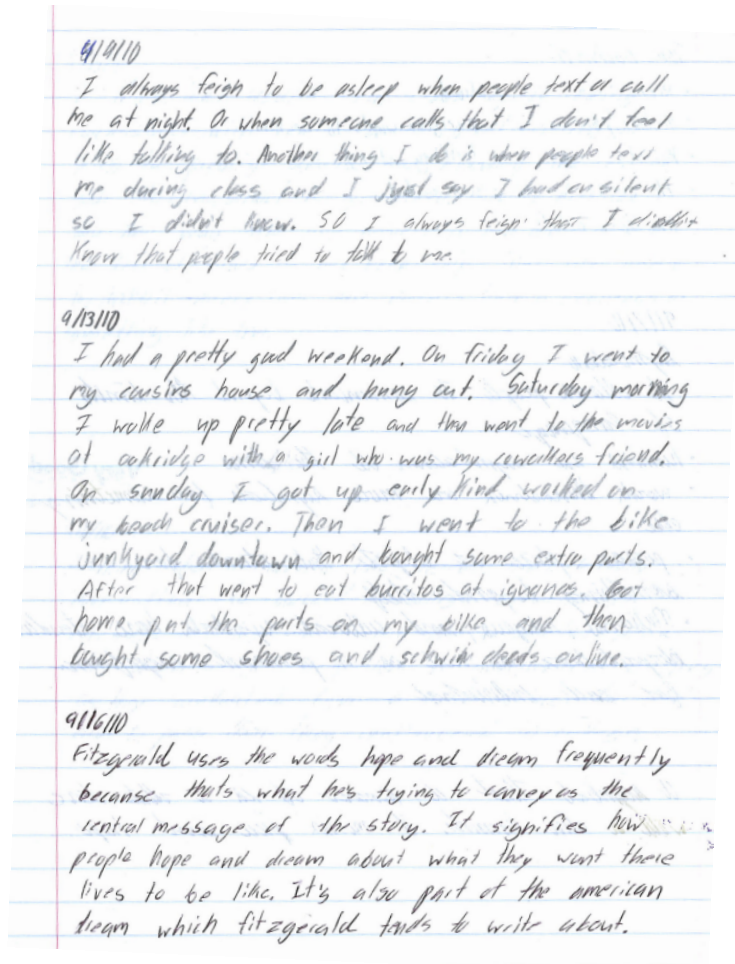
- **9/9/10.** I always feigh [fake]to be asleep when people text or call me at night. Or when someone calls when I don't feel like talking to. Another thing I do is when people text me during class and I just say I had on silent so I didn't know. So I always feigh [fake] that I didn't know that people tried to talk to me.
- **9/13/10.** I had a pretty good weekend. On Friday I went to my cousin's house and hung out. Saturday morning I woke up pretty late and then went to the movies at Oakridge with a girl who was my co-workers friend. On Sunday I got up early kind worked on my beach cruiser. Then I went to the bike junkyard downtown and bought some extra parts. After that went to eat burritos at Iguanas. Got home put the parts on my bike and then bought some shoes and sck[...] deads online.
- **9/16/10.** Fitzgerald uses the words hope and dream frequently because that's what he tries to convey as the central message of the story. It signifies how people hope and dream about what they want there lives to be like. It's also part of the American dream which Fitzgerald tends to write about.

Figure D.3: Edward's warm-up writing notebook.

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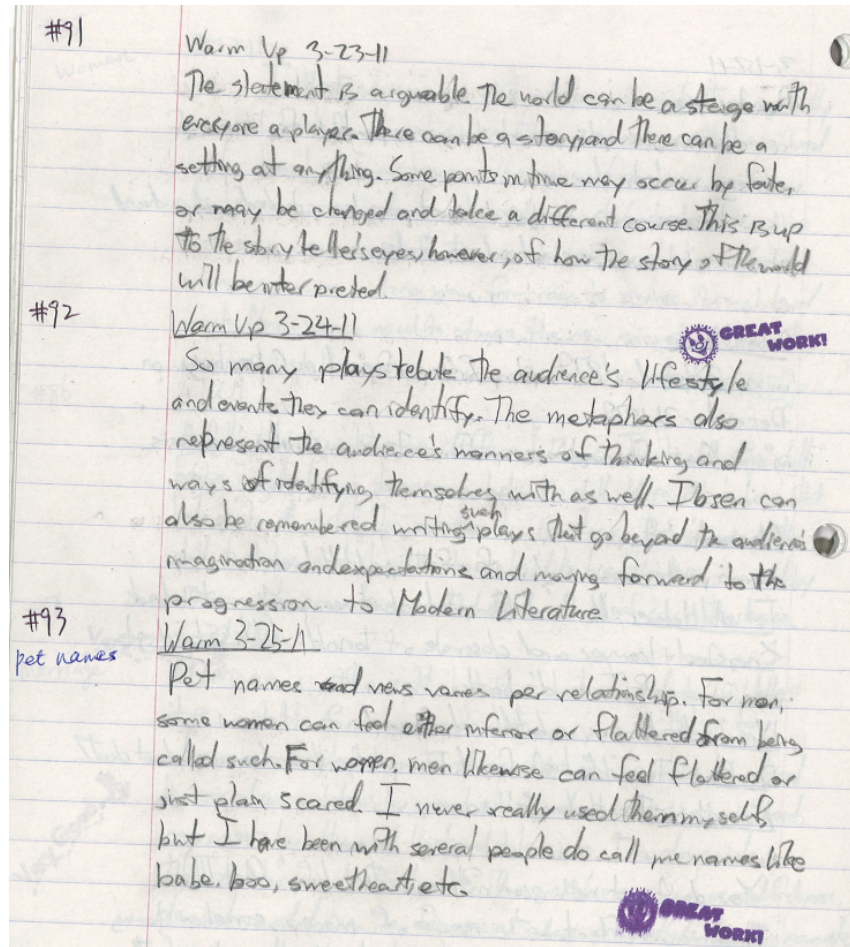
- **Warm up 3-23-11.** The statement is arguable. The world can be a stage with everyone a player. There can be a story and there can be a setting at anything. Some parts may occur by fate, or may be changed and take a different course. This is up to the story teller's eyes, however, of how the story of the world will be interpreted.
- **Warm up 3-24-11.** So many plays [...] the audiences' life styles and events they can identify. The metaphors also represent the audience's manners of thinking and ways of identifying themselves as well. Ibsen can also be remembered writing such plays that go beyond audience's imagination and expectations and moving forward to the progression to Modern Literature.
- **Warm 3-25-11.** Pet names and views varies per relationship. For men, some women can feel either inferior or flattered from being called such. For women, men likewise can feel flattered or just plain scared. I really used them myself, but I have been with several people do call me names like babe, boo, sweetheart, *etc.*.

Figure D.4: Keres's warm-up writing notebook (I).

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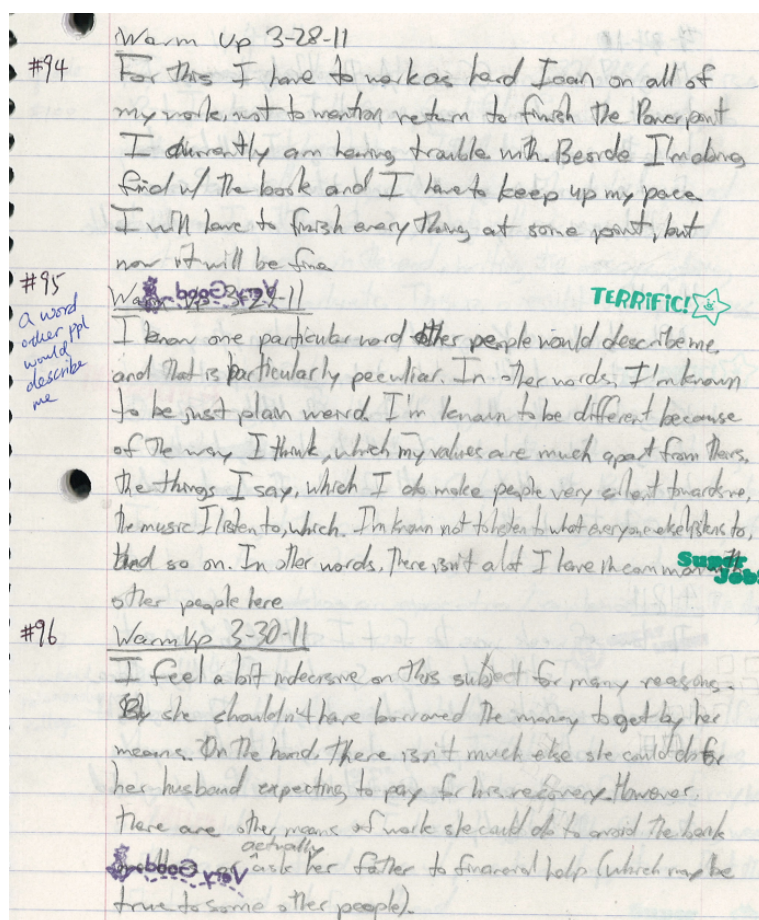
- **Warm up 3-28-11.** For this I have to work as hard [Ioa...] on all of my work, not to [...] return to finish PowerPoint I currently am having trouble with. Beside I'm doing fine w/ the book and I have to keep up my pace. I will have to finish everything at some point, but now it will be fine.

- **Warm up 3-29-11.** I know one word other people would describe me, and that is particularly peculiar. In other words, I'm just known to be just plain weird. I'm known to be different because of the way I think, which my values are much apart from others, the things I say, which I do make people very silent toward me, the music I listen to, which. I'm known not to listen to what everyone else listens to, and so on. In other words, there isn't a lot I have in common with other people here.

- **Warm up 3-30-11.** I feel a bit indecisive on this subject for many reasons. She shouldn't have borrowed the money to get by her means. On the hand, there isn't much else she can do for her husband expecting to pay for his recovery. However, there are other means of work she could do to avoid the bank [...] actually asked her father to financial help (which can be true to some other people).

Figure D.5: Keres's warm-up writing notebook (II).
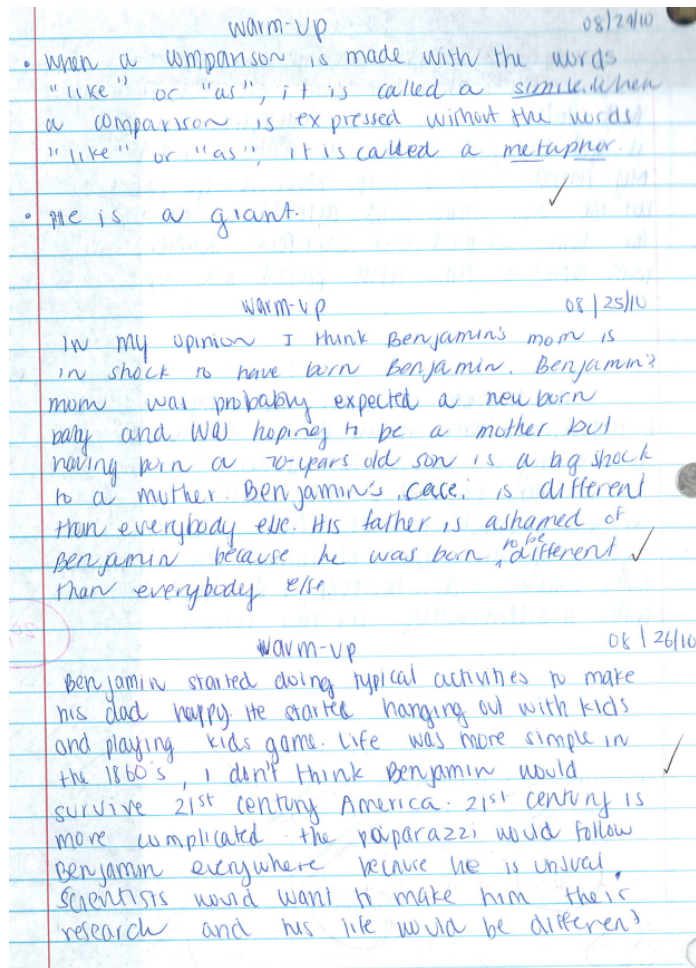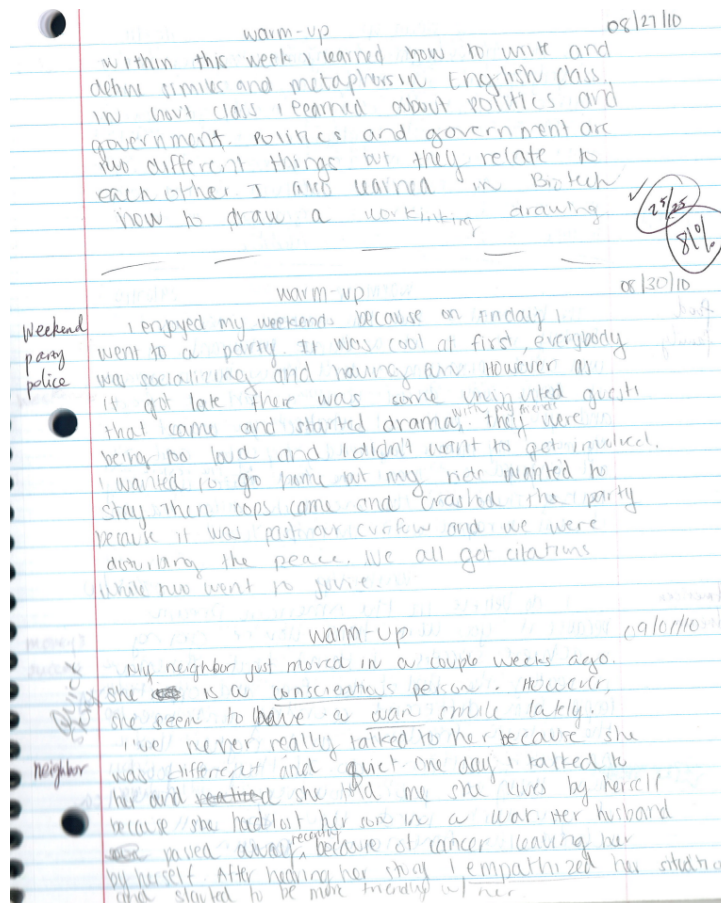
- **Warm up 08/24/10.**
    - When a comparison is made with the words "like" or "as", it is called a simile. When a comparison is expressed without the words "like" or "as", it is called a metaphor.
    - He is a giant.
- **Warm-up 08/25/10.** In my opinion I think Benjamin's mom is in shock to have born Benjamin. Benjamin's mom was probably expected a new born baby and was hoping to be a mother but having born a 70-years old son is a big shock to a mother. Benjamin's case is different than everybody else. His father is ashamed of Benjamin because he was born to be different than everyone else.
- **Warm-up 08/26/10.** Benjamin started doing typical activities to make his dad happy. He started hanging out with kids and playing kids game. Life was more simple in the 1860s, I don't think Benjamin would survive 21st century America. 21St century is more complicated, the paparazi would follow Benjamin everywhere because he is unusual. Scientists would want to make him their research and his life would be different.

Figure D.6: Phoenix's warm-up writing notebook (I).

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- **Warm-up 08/27/10.** Within this week I learned how to write and define similes and metaphors in English class. In Govt class I learned about politics and government. Politics and government are two different things but they relate to each other. I also learned in Biotech how to draw a workinking drawing.

- **Warm-up 08/30/10.** I enjoyed my weekends because on Friday I went to a party. It was cool at first, everyone was socializing and having fun. However, as it got late there was some uninvited guests that came and started drama with my friends. They were being too loud and I didn't want to get involved. I wanted to go home but my ride wanted to stay. Then cops came and crashed the party because it was past our curfew and we were disturbing the peace. We all got citations while two went to juvie.

- **Warm-up 09/01/10.** My neighbor just moved in a couple of weeks ago. She is a conscientious person. However, she seems to have a wan smile lately. I've never really talked to her because she was different and such. One day I talked to her and she told me she lives by herself because she had lost her son in a war. Her husband passed away recently because of cancer, leaving her by herself. After hearing her story, I empathized her situation and started to be more friendly w/ her.

Figure D.7: Phoenix's warm-up writing notebook (II).

# APPENDIX E   Writing Assignments

### Reading Pacing Guide

In your groups today, you will:

1. Create a Reading Pacing Guide. In your pacing guide include dates and the pages that should be read by the specific date.

   - You will be required to write 8 entries of a 3-sentence summary and a 1-sentence analysis.

2. You will come up with deadlines for the following 3 assignments associated with your book.

   - Book cover design + rationale for design
   - Open mind (characterization)
   - Reading Log – should be 8 entries total.
   - Date preference of novel presentation (**no guarantee of date**)
     – Novel presentation should be 5 minutes per person.
     – Date 1: Wed, May 11
     – Date 2: Thu, May 12
     – Date 3: Fri, May 13

3. Deadlines:

   - Monday, April 25, 2011: All readers should have read the first 25 pages.
   - Friday, April 29, 2011: At least one assignment should be turned in.
   - Friday, May 6, 2011: An outline of your presentation should be submitted.
     – Presentation should be roughly 30 minutes.
     – All readers have to present a minimum of 5 minute
     – Monday, May 9: 2 sample presentations will be given. Extra credit will be given to members who present. This will be an opportunity to receive critique and feedback as to what is expected from presentation.

Everything is due Friday, May 13, 2011 – No exceptions

**Personal Advertisement Project Assignment**

Henrik Ibsen's *A doll House* Personal Ad Project.

In *A doll House*, Ibsen portrays Nora as having a dual personality; she conceals a secret from her husband and the rest of society while maintaining a public façade. Similarly, we also have dual personalities; we often have a secret side – a part of our own identify which we choose to separate from the rest of the society – and one by which most know us. For this project you will be doing the following:

1. Create a two-sided ad portraying both sides of your personality – a public, and a private one. On your ad you must include the following on each side:
   - Four images/symbols
   - Three adjectives to describe your side
   - A color scheme to represent the mood of your identify/personality
   - Your entire page must be filled in.

2. A page response comparing your public vs your personal identify. Your personal side does not have to be a secret per say, it can be something a basic as a little known facts or details about you, but it must be contrasted with your public side.
   - You do not have to feel pressured to reveal a secret/secrets.
   - All images must be suitable for an educational environment and are subject to Mr. D's approval. Good luck!

# APPENDIX F   Marissa's Facebook Page

**LA ORIGINAL BANDA EL LIMON DI QUE REGRESARAS LETRA**
***** LA LETRA COMPLETA DE LA CANSION DI QUE REGRESARAS DE LA ORIGINAL BANDA EL LIMON*****
Like · ·September 19 at 9:23pm via mobile · *Privacy:*

○

5 peoplelike this.


Write a comment...

RECENT ACTIVITY
Your Daily Gemini Horoscope has been delivered.You could find yourself in the middle of a challenging dilemma in the workplace today. If you are asked to take sides, see if you can't find the middle...
See More: apps.facebook.com/getyourhoroscope
⊙Like ·     · View your Horoscope ·September 19 at 3:16pm via Horoscopes · *Privacy:*


La guti in problem solving mode(:
September 14 at 12:32pm · *Privacy:*

**Transcription:**
LA ORIGINAL BANDA EL LIMON DI QUE REGRESARAS LETRA
***** LA LETRA COMPLETA DE LA CANSION DI QUE REGRESARAS DE LA ORIGI-
NAL BANDA EL LIMON *****
Like · · September 19 at 9:23pm via mobile · *Privacy:*

5 people like this.
Write a comment...

RECENT ACTIVITY
Your Daily Gemini Horoscope has been delivered. You could find yourself in the middle of a challenging dilemma in the workplace today. If you are asked to take sides, see if you can't find the middle ...
See More: apps.facebok.com/getyourhoroscope
Like · · View your Horoscope · September 19 at 3:16pm via Horoscopes · *Privacy:*

La guti in problem solving mode(:
September 14 at 12:32pm · *Privacy:*

Figure F.1: Marissa's Facebook page.

# APPENDIX G    Phoenix's Tumblr Page

## Story of My Life

May 2010
54 posts
Text May 04, 2010

Goodnight tumblr,

Wow its been a while since ive finshed all of my homework in one night. i helluh lagged until like 9 or 9;30ish to do my homework &yet i still managed to finish them. Im proud of myself <3 Well goodnight im tired sweet dreams!
Text May 19, 2010

Yesterday i saw my dad for the first time after 6-7years? Dammn its helluh unexpected, i dont even know why he came back for. Im overwhelmed with everything thats happening & i dont know what to do. So after how many years now he decided to come back to take me&my sister away? Hells nno. Alot of questions are runnign thru my mind, like why did you leave us? Why are you suddenly coming back into my life? What do you want ? Whatever the reasons are it dont matter to me because im not gonna leave my mom, im content with what i have right now. So much emotions are bottling up inside me, i feel like im gonna explode one of these days fucc.-_-

Photo May 24, 2010 tumblrjunkie: (via heytherefiona, joycakes)
5,835 notes



Figure G.1: Phoenix's Tumblr Picture

Text May 31, 2010
1,191 notes

**I bet Viets can get more notes than Filipinos! Reblog if you're Viet!**

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