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### Seeing in Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Graduate Writing Instructor's Socialization through Multimodality

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### Cover Page Footnote

#### End Notes

1. To accurately reflect the non-binary gendered identity of the student portrayed in the comic, I have chosen the third person plural pronoun "themselves" acknowledging its grammatical inconsistency with the preceding verb "positions".
2. Agatha's words have been transcribed verbatim. (L) indicates a laugh by the interviewee.

#### About the Author:

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# Seeing in Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Graduate Writing Instructor's Socialization through Multimodality

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With growing numbers of multilinguals becoming writing instructors and scholars in the U.S. composition context, it is urgent to understand how multilingual graduate instructors of writing socialization processes are mediated by multimodal elements rather than just textual forms of language. This article reports on an ethnographically-oriented case study to respond to the following questions: (1) Does multimodality contribute to a multilingual graduate instructor's socialization into writing and the teaching of writing? If yes, in what ways does multimodality interact with the writer's language repertoire? (2) How does the multilingual graduate instructor's multimodal writing and teaching of writing impact other academic practices? Through systematic thematic coding and multimodal textual analysis of questionnaires, a classroom observation, writing materials, and a semi-structured interview, the study reveals that the participant, a graduate teacher of writing, transitioned from isolation to socialization through multimodality while developing a gendered consciousness. In addition, her identity shifted in power hierarchies as socialization enabled researching and teaching through multimodal and multisensorial identity.

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**Keywords:** academic socialization, identity, multilingualism, multimodality

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In the past few years, the number of international multilingual graduate instructors of writing in U.S. composition programs has been increasing (Kitalong, 2017). However, the contexts where these multilingual instructors work are deemed monolingual (Matsuda, 2006) since most students taking courses like first-year composition grew up speaking various Englishes. This unique situation enhanced by migration, digital connectivity, and new trends in college student demographics (Martins, 2015) poses some questions regarding the agency of multilingual instructors of writing in these monolingual environments (Anderson, 2017). Understanding how they become socialized into their classroom communities and writing programs is particularly important in order to develop teacher education programs and mentoring initiatives that support them and account for their rich knowledge of languages and

writing across borders. It is particularly important to investigate how multilingual graduate instructors of writing develop their teaching identities through socialization as they build on their previous lived experiences of writing and language while gradually become exposed to unknown composing and teaching practices in the new contexts where they participate.

Some scholarship in second language writing, applied linguistics, and composition studies has paid substantial attention to the types of pedagogies that reflect the needs, expectations, and backgrounds of students whose lives involve moving across geographical and institutional settings, languages and modalities, and identities (including those institutionally ascribed). However, little attention has been paid to how multilingual instructors of writing, particularly those who are also gaining access into their academic communities as graduate instructors learn to teach writing. In other words, we know about their pedagogies, the teaching resources they use, the activities they develop (Flores & Aneja, 2017; Motha et al., 2012; Sánchez-Martín et al., 2019; Zheng, 2017) but not about how they engage through socialization with the new expectations and requirements of settings unfamiliar to them in order to develop expertise as instructors of writing. To zoom into this transitional stage, the notion of socialization provides a space to investigate how newcomers, be it students or instructors, learn to interact and become recognized members of a group of experts and how a variety of factors and agents mediate their learning while shaping their identities, through negotiated and co-constructed practice and contestation of norms (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015).

Broadly, research on language socialization studies “the semiotically mediated affordances of novices’ engagement with culture - building webs of meaning and repertoires of social practice academic socialization” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011, p. 17), and more concretely, academic socialization provides a framework to understand how individuals learn to navigate the various and diverse academic communities they are situated in. Kobayashi, Zappa-Hollman, and Duff (2017) explain academic socialization as an “innovative, transformative, and sometimes contested process” (p. 293).

By drawing on this understanding of academic socialization (Kobayashi et al., 2017), this study addresses how a multilingual graduate instructor of writing in a “monolingual” setting learns to account for her own identities and knowledge as a newcomer to both the teaching of writing and her disciplinary communities. In fact, as Duff (2007) has pointed out, gaining access into a new community takes place “through linguistic and social interaction into relevant local communicative practices or ways of using language”, which have “their own values, ideologies, and activities” (p. 310). More specifically, this study calls for an understanding of academic socialization with a broader consideration of semiotic resources beyond text-based language and the documentation of such processes in specific artifacts (Kobayashi et al., 2017).

To contribute to the existing literature, this ethnographically-oriented (Paltridge et al., 2016) case study pursued to two research questions:

- Does multimodality contribute to a multilingual graduate instructor’s socialization into writing and the teaching of writing? If yes, in what ways does multimodality interact with the writer’s language repertoire?

- How does the multilingual graduate instructor's multimodal writing and teaching of writing impact other academic practices?

Before offering information about the methodological choices for this study and the findings, a review of the literature will describe recent work related to the notions of academic socialization, multilingualism, and multimodality.

### **Academic Socialization, Multilingualism, and Multimodality**

During the past two decades, the notion of academic socialization has been utilized to approach how individuals gain access to their academic communities through linguistic and social interaction (Duff, 2007). More generally, within an activity theory perspective (Prior et al. 2007), socialization points at how people partake in systems of activity with other human and non-human agents in their environments in order to accomplish their goals in society; in doing so they are shaped and shape the very same nature of the activities they engage in. However, as Ochs and Schieffelin (2011), point out, "(a) central tenet of language socialization research is that novices' participation in communicative practices is promoted but not determined by a legacy of socially and culturally informed persons, artifacts, and features of the built environment" (p. 4). Therefore, individual agency and creativity are possible as humans become socialized into their communities (pp. 4-5) while they learn from more experienced and knowledgeable members of the community.

In relation to studies on the academic socialization in English of second language or multilingual students, scholars have demonstrated that students develop membership and expertise in their communities and areas through individual networks of practice - INoP (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). While acknowledging the impact of other agents and factors in the socialization processes, INoPs are centered on the individual as possessing and developing agency in their unique and idiosyncratic trajectories by choosing to interact with specific nodes of individuals who mediate their learning.

Other studies have investigated multilingual graduate students' socialization in English programs. For example, Seloni's 2012 "micro-ethnographic" study of ten doctoral students showed that collaboration and interactions outside formal classrooms settings contributed to enhancing their sense of belonging and legitimacy of their evolving academic identities and knowledge. This socialization took place through different spaces including initial contact frames by which individual become cognizant of writing and academic expectations, institutional academic spaces such as the writing program and required graduation courses where interactions among participants shaped their socialization, and a "safe house" (Canagarajah, 1997) culture of peer collaboration that allowed them to discuss, resist, and co-construct aspects of their socialization into their academic communities. Distinguishing between external and internal socialization factors and processes, Anderson's multiple case study (2017) investigated how seven Chinese students became socialized into their PhD programs in Arts and Education at a Canadian university, demonstrating that, in general, community-based and external socialization was positive. This researcher observed that while some critical incidents of doctoral "gaze" led them to perceive themselves as

deficient; these instances ultimately created opportunities for self-reflection and long-term positive academic socialization.

Similarly, Morita (2004) studied how graduate students from Japan negotiated their identities in a Canadian university context, which revealed the students' "challenges" in developing and enacting their changing perception of competence and identities in their specific communities of practices. Ultimately, Morita's 2004 study sheds light on how the ongoing negotiation of identities, in particular, constructed linguistic identities, is central to academic socialization and shapes the degree of agency that newcomers deploy as they grow.

As for specific academic communities, some studies delve into multilingual graduate students' disciplinary identities. Dressen-Hammouda's 2008 study traced the trajectory of Patrick, a doctoral student in geology, as he became more knowledgeable with the genres most frequently used in his field along with the interpretative frameworks of "doing" the work of a geologist and gaining disciplinary expertise. Along the same lines, Sánchez-Martín and Seloni (2019) investigated in a collaborative autoethnographic project how a PhD candidate developed transdisciplinary expertise while writing the first stages of her dissertation and during her mentoring relationship with her advisor. This study demonstrated that gaining expert knowledge also involved gendered knowledge construction and navigating responses to intersectional and transnational identities through a feminist consciousness.

The role of language in the development of disciplinary and writing knowledge of graduate students has also received substantial attention. For example, Seloni's 2014 case study described the writing activities and choices of a Colombian master's student. His choices involved Spanish and English as well as in multiple modalities as he was engaging in thesis writing, where his previous transnational and disciplinary identities and knowledges were deployed to construct new meaning. Framed from a translanguaging lens, Alvarez, Canagarajah et al. (2017) exposed the types of identity conflicts that linguistically diverse graduate instructors (both multilingual U.S. born and international instructors) experience when they teach first-year composition in a U.S. context and how they utilize their translanguaging and contested identities to inform their pedagogical practices and promote accurate and complex understandings of language diversity. Despite the importance of these studies in portraying a more accurate picture of the types of activities and processes of graduate students and instructors, the relationship between multimodality (the combination of multiple modalities in communication including text, sound, visuals, gestures, and spatial elements both in digital and print platforms, Belcher 2017) and the academic socialization of multilingual graduate instructors remains unexplored.

In this regard, it is important to clarify that substantial attention has been paid to the role of diverse language repertoires in developing multilingual student writers' rhetorical consciousness (Canagarajah, 2011; Seloni, 2014), including more recent studies about the potential of investigating the relationship between multimodal and multilingual composing (Belcher, 2017; Jiang, 2018; Smith et al., 2017); yet, these studies have tended to pay attention to language as textual and/or phonocentric in identity construction and thus, in the socialization processes of these groups of



newcomers, leaving aside other forms of meaning-making. The fact that this specific modality of human communication (textual language) has been overemphasized is a concern that scholars like Li Wei (2018) and Lee (2017) have recently pointed out. In his discussion of translanguaging as a practical theory of language, Li Wei (2018) contends that “(h)uman beings think beyond language, and thinking requires the use of a variety of cognitive, semiotic, and modal resources of which language in its conventional sense of speech and writing is only one” (p. 18). In other words, a theory of language must be conceptualized as the activity of transcending not just named languages, but the separation between “linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive and semiotic systems” (p. 20). Block (2014) refers to the “lingua bias” of language theories, which to him is a tendency to conceive of communicative practices exclusively in terms of “morphology, syntax, phonology, (and) lexis” and overlooking multimodality, the senses, and embodiment “as a broadened semiotically based way of looking at what people do when they interact” (p. 56).

With this in mind, it can be stated that little is known about how multilingual graduate instructors gain access into their communities and disciplinary expertise through multiple modalities. In fact, as Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) explain, “a central goal (of research in socialization) has been to discern the role of language and other semiotic systems in the quotidian reproduction and innovation of social order and cultural knowledge, beliefs, values, ideologies, symbols, and indexes” (p. 11); however, a specific focus on language as text or speech has predominated in the scholarship. In this sense, Kobayashi, Zappa-Hollman, and Duff (2017) have pointed out that future directions in studies about socialization should investigate the impact and mediation of diverse semiotic resources in these processes by which newcomers become members of a community.

Finally, within an activity theory perspective, socialization is important to learning in that it helps to construct ecologies (biological, material, and physical forces in the environment) that are favorable to the learning itself. As Gutiérrez et al. (2007) state:

If we want to promote the development of learning ecologies organized around expansive learning in which people’s repertoires are extended and power relations are transformed, we shouldn’t assume that the curriculum alone can serve as the quick fix. Instead, we need to think about what it takes to create environments (...) with ongoing and wide-ranging forms of support or mediation (p. 73).

This study extends on previous research on socialization by illuminating the learning processes of a multilingual graduate instructor of writing in the U.S. first-year composition context. As such, it offers information about the types of material support and resources necessary to enhance the socialization of this particular population as they move into the communities of first-year writing teachers.

### **An Ethnographically-Oriented Case Study**

This case study is part of my dissertation project, in which I investigated how seven multilingual graduate instructors implemented translanguaging pedagogies in their first-year composition courses. Translanguaging pedagogies involved more than attending

to explicit forms of language difference, what scholars call “code-meshing” (Schreiber & Watson, 2018). In fact, these multilingual instructors of writing were moving beyond the boundaries of named-languages and single modalities with their translanguaging practices, but at the same time, they were also bringing their lived experiences of languaging to the classroom, which required continuously wrestling with marginalizing language ideologies (Sánchez-Martín, 2020).

In addition, one participant (Agatha, whose experiences I report on this study) seemed to rely more explicitly on modalities rather than on the alphabetic dimension of her languaging practices. During the data collection process for this study, it became noticeable that the participant’s identity as a multilingual graduate instructor was not centered on linguistic difference (as frequently discussed in the literature), but on multiple modalities. The uniqueness of this case instigated a deeper look at the role of multimodality in her socialization as a writing teacher. For Hyland (2016), case studies provide “a rich description of events with interpretive analysis that draws on participants’ own perspectives” enabling the researcher to put forth “a thorough portrayal of local writing behaviours” (p. 121). Similarly, Merriam (1998) refers to a case study as “a bounded system” that is investigated “as an instance of some concern, issue or hypothesis” (p. 28).

In addition, I have adopted ethnographic perspectives (Paltridge et al., 2016), by conducting observations and interviews, which allow me to keep an emic perspective when understanding the participant’s activities rather than bringing in pre-existing views on her practices; I maintained a sustained, yet brief involvement with her, immersing myself in the participant’s life collecting and analyzing the data for this study (the data collection took four months, but I had known Agatha for two years). During the observations I conducted, I became a participant observer in Agatha’s classroom setting. As the researcher, I had the chance to collect class materials and additional artifacts from the participant, trying to fill in the gap between text and context (Lillis, 2008).

Most importantly, the sections below aim to provide a thick description of the context and activities of the participant “in an attempt to recreate as closely as possible the field setting, so that, instead of mere description, the researcher moves to interpretation and the reader is provided with a greater depth of understanding” (Paltridge et al., 2016, Chapter 1, Section 6, para. 6). However, as a case study informed by ethnographic perspectives, the findings from this qualitative study provide a detailed account of the participant’s experiences, but might not be applicable to other multilingual instructors, who might not saliently and purposefully put multimodality at the center of their (disciplinary) identities.

### **The Research Participant: Agatha**

Agatha (self-selected pseudonym) was a second year PhD student in an interdisciplinary English program at a public university in the U.S. Midwest when I invited her to participate in this study. Her area of expertise was children’s literature. Before entering the PhD in the United States, Agatha lived in the south of France. Agatha started learning English at the age of ten, and by watching TV and movies or reading



books on her own when she was a teenager, she developed more knowledge of English. As far as writing is concerned, Agatha learned to write in English in school through basic grammar exercises and through essays in college, but she never took a writing class. Her writing in the English PhD program at the time of the study consisted mostly of writing for her degree and her teaching position in English; in social media she engaged in both French and English writing. As second year PhD student, Agatha had had the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant teaching first-year writing and a children's literature class, an introductory course "centered around written material, multimedia texts, literary analysis, and criticism" (Interview, May 17, 2017). However, these past two years as a PhD student constitute her writing teaching experience. Prior to her education in the PhD program and becoming a writing instructor, she had not learned about writing pedagogies. As Agatha explained, "writing/composition isn't a subject of its own in France," so she had to learn "on the go" while teaching and taking a graduate course on composition pedagogies during her first year as a PhD student. Her socialization process into becoming a writing teacher was therefore a site for developing her own teacher identity, practices, and pedagogies.

Besides her graduate school responsibilities and teaching, Agatha devotes herself to art, which began as a hobby and quickly turned into a lifestyle. At first sight, Agatha appears to be a shy and soft-spoken person who does not often speak her mind, but her collection of watercolors, pastels, drawings, collages, portraits and self-portraits, and photographs reflect, through vivid colors and shapes, a unique, rich, an open personality. Agatha expresses herself and her view of the world and those around her through her art. Her voice isn't soft but loud, confident, and audacious in her artistic expressions. This part of her personality became slowly but surely present in her activities as a multilingual teacher of writing, facilitated through her socialization with other agents in the writing program.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

IRB approval for this study was obtained in the Spring 2017 semester, as part of my dissertation. The data corpus consisted of an initial online questionnaire about Agatha's background, a classroom observation and field notes, artifacts shared by the participant (including teaching artifacts and other materials discussed during the interview), and a semi-structured interview. The data collection process began with an online questionnaire about the participant's personal, linguistic, and education backgrounds as well as her teaching experiences as a multilingual writer. Next, a classroom observation was conducted. For the observation, I worked around Agatha's schedule and preferences to set it up when it was more convenient for her. The class lasted 50 minutes. Agatha shared with me her syllabus and lesson plan prior to the observation. Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted and audio-recorded. The interview went on for approximately 30 minutes and it was soon transcribed. In her interview, Agatha discussed some artifacts which were later shared as well for data analysis.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was recursive, and it continued for a year approximately (from May 2017 to June 2018). It consisted of a thematic analysis

(Saldaña, 2015) in order to detect the most salient points emerging from the entire set (initial questionnaire, course materials and learning artifacts, and interview). In addition, the thematic analysis was also complemented by a rhetorical and multimodal discourse analysis (Paltridge & Wang, 2015, p. 212) of a short graphic novel that the participant shared with the researcher after the interview took place. This additional analysis contributed to investigating “the social and cultural settings of language use to help us understand how it is that people come to make particular choices” (p. 203). In addition, this analysis was conducted in response to Kobayashi, Zappa-Hollman, and Duff’s (2017) claim that the “absence of direct observational data or artifacts makes it difficult to assess learners’ development or socialization processes” (p. 249). In other words, the analysis of the graphic novel in which the participant describes her learning of “becoming a teacher of writing” provides first-hand observational data, which framed from an ethnographically-oriented analysis offers a rich picture of her process of socialization.

In what follows, I provide details about the findings of this study: (a) the multilingual graduate instructor described a transition from isolation linked to traditional genres to socialization through multimodal writing and a consciousness of gender in academia; (b) her socialization across academic environments involved identity shifts in unequal power hierarchies; (c) the multilingual graduate instructor’s socialization enabled researching and teaching through multimodal and multisensorial identity.

## Findings

### From Isolation and Traditional Genres to Socialization Through Multimodal Writing and a Consciousness of Gender in Academia

As a final reflection for the writing teacher education course that Agatha was required to complete on her first semester as a graduate instructor of first year composition, Agatha chose to depict how she was increasingly becoming a member of the community of graduate writing instructors by creating a short graphic novel (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) entitled the “The Grad Dilemma”. The visual fictional narrative tells the story of a graduate student who positions themselves<sup>1</sup> as not knowledgeable and suffering from impostor syndrome. (“I know nothing” is explicitly stated in a small piece of paper at the center of the page). The student in the graphic novel is lonely, only mentally accompanied by intertextual references to three male figures: (1) a Greek male figure, possible a rhetorician, whose impact on composition studies and rhetoric is still present; (2) a popular culture reference to Jon Snow from the show “Game of Thrones” and a version of the quote “you know nothing, Jon Snow”; and (3) an artistic reference to the painting “The Scream” by Edvard Munch, an expressionist artist from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This painting symbolizes agony and anxiety, a state of being implied also by the text in the essay through expressions like “questions have been haunting me like crows in the dark”, and other elements in Figure 1, like the torn newspaper article with the picture of Jon Snow and the cigarettes. These pictorial elements in the graphic novel also contribute to creating an image of isolation, anxiety, and being lost in academia.

On the other hand, Figure 2 displays Agatha's rich interdisciplinary knowledge in the figurative and popular arts, popular modern visual culture, classic rhetoric, and graphic story and narrative writing. Perhaps the graphic novel is a result of Agatha's exposure to television shows and fiction books when she was growing up in France since, she had not taken writing courses per se where these types of writing were formally taught (Interview, May 17, 2017).

Continuing with the description of the narrative, socialization is absent from the student's life until the sudden appearance of "Aka Demia", an attractive woman who the student does not know or even whose intentions are understood by the student, but who captures the student's attention and seduces them (Figure 2). "Aka Demia" is represented as a female that breaks with previous notions and the references made to the past; she is intriguing, interesting, and extraordinary. Her name, "Aka Demia", is a creative "misspelling" of the proper noun with a Greek etymological origin "academia". The female figure "Aka Demia" is breaking with tradition; in fact, she slams the door as she only commands "write and read now" and finally asks the student to follow her, to which they agree.

In the first page (Figure 1), the author (Agatha) is telling us that this new version of school practices "Aka Demia" helps the student to transcend masculinist and traditional practices that produce anxiety and are isolating. When we turn the page to the next part of the story (Figure 2), we realize that following a renewed "Aka Demia" is not without obstacles, but with determination and effort (evidenced by the expressions "I walked briskly" and "moving on tirelessly"), the student is capable of understanding their own place. The strategic location on the page of the words "but then I understood" surrounding the eyes of the student (again emphasizing the visual) is a defining moment and breaking point in the student's academic life, facilitated by "Aka Demia".

**Figure 1.**

*First page of "The Grad Dilemma"*





While previous experiences and expressions of academia were dark, full of anxiety, and isolation, “Aka Demia” has shown a much more humane and collaborative way to become a member of one’s communities. To begin with, “Aka Demia” and the student are at the center, close to one another, and “Aka Demia” tells the student “I love you for who you are”. At the same time, the student has learned other valuable lessons by following “Aka Demia” and observing, a practice emphasized by the central role of the student’s eyes on the page. For example, they have realized that teaching (of writing in her case) and learning take place simultaneously in the classroom and that there is a network of people who can assist to facilitate the student’s teaching and research activities. In this brief graphic novel, Agatha is describing explicit socialization via visual and spatial elements as an essential component to successfully and healthily become members of the communities we are gaining access to. While implicit socialization already exists in all human activity (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011, pp. 13-14), Agatha is making a call to interact with others’ in our communities for assistance. At the same time, she is describing this relationship between the self and other members of the community as involving reciprocity by saying “I have a voice and it matters to others”.

For Agatha, her relationship with other graduate instructors was in fact essential to “learn” how to teach writing. In fact, the following segment from the interview expands on her understanding of socialization:

I: How about as a writing instructor? Did you have to learn something that you didn’t know how to write before?

A: When I started with 101, well first of all, you go through the whole orientation and the course and how to teach different genres and *just knowing that everyone else was also on the same boat (L), sort of struggling with that, it made it easier.* (Interview, May 17, 2017. Emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

Agatha’s response echoes the story told in “The Grad Dilemma”, but this time, she refers to the collectivity of instructors as experiencing academic life together to

Figure 2.

Second page of “The Grad Dilemma”



overcome difficulties and gaining knowledge as a group. The support of other members of the community of instructors and writing program faculty and administration, implied by the references to the new instructor orientation and the course for new instructors, facilitated the transition into becoming teachers. The tone of Agatha's words is that this time is less serious and dark than in the graphic story when she refers to the difficulties as "being on the same boat sort of struggling" because while saying it, Agatha momentarily laughed (L). It is important to notice that the interview took place in May, three semesters after her first experiences teaching writing and creating the story. This small detail gives us insights into how newcomers in academia might first encounter unfamiliar practices (as dark, anxiety-driven, and lonely) and how, with time and a support network, their academic lives might become much more fulfilling as in Agatha's case.

### **Socialization Across Academic Environments Where Identity Shifts in Unequal Power Hierarchies**

Another layer of Agatha's socialization involves negotiating participation and agency in different environments. The story creates a space for Agatha to reflect on what learning is like through socialization in line with Seloni's (2012) notion of "collaborative culture of collaboration" among peer instructors and in other institutionalized ways of socializing (the required course for instructors and orientation for new teachers). The practice of writing a "non-traditional" genre (Paltridge et al., 2012) with creative language practices ("Aka Demia", abbreviations like "BFF" or comic-inspired language like the onomatopoeia "slam") and most importantly, in which visual and spatial modalities are prioritized for meaning-making enabled the representation of academic socialization as Agatha experienced it. Her preferred modalities for creating the project were seen as legitimate in the context of the writing program. However, Agatha pointed out in the interview that there are other environments in academia where her choices are more restricted due to more hierarchical roles between graduate students and professors. The following excerpt from the interview provides additional context about Agatha's choice to write the graphic story:

I: And what was it like? What was the scene like? What did you have to do?

A: Well, she was pretty open to a lot of different projects, so she wanted either a research-based essay, like a traditional one, or a more creative hybrid project if you wanted to try. So, I thought it could be a good opportunity to try? **I don't know that I would try that sort of stuff in other classes yet**, and I am not taking classes anymore, so it doesn't matter (L).

I: Why do you think you couldn't try that in other classes?

A: Well, it depends on who is teaching and how open they are to different explorations of that kind, and *I am trying to encourage it but I also know I am a just a student and I can't push things too hard yet and I need to figure out what I want to do with it and not just be obnoxious and be like hey! I wanna use pictures!* (Interview, May 17, 2017. Emphasis added).

As Ochs and Schieffelin (2011) point out, “(c)ommon to all socializing interactions is an asymmetry of knowledge and power” and “(t)he exercise of power over novices’ communicative practices is ubiquitous” (p. 6). Therefore, for Agatha, her socialization process also involves understanding her positionality within the hierarchies she is part of and explicitly negotiating her identities and positionalities (like being a student as opposed to the teacher in this case) as she interacts with specific agents and in different environments. Interestingly, Agatha’s words imply that her focus on visual modalities is not common and still requires insistence and even resistance that she doesn’t always want to pursue (“I need to figure out what I want to do with it and not just be obnoxious and be like hey! I wanna use pictures!”). However, it is her awareness of the possibilities available to her that foster her successful participation in diverse academic communities with different expectations.

Similarly, Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) found that “(n)ot all nodes (interlocutors) necessarily contribute to both types of return (social and academic), nor do they do so at equivalent levels or homogeneously and consistently over time” (p. 7). While Agatha is clearly contributing to pushing the boundaries of academic expectations in writing by “trying to encourage” more multimodal work, she is well-aware of how her interests and practices might not produce the same type of responses across individuals and disciplinary communities at different times (notice the use of the adverb “yet” in the sentence “I can’t push things too hard yet”). In this regard, as scholars in applied linguistics have pointed out, socialization among peers and most importantly through mentoring relationships with advisors, can contribute to encourage students aiming for innovative writing processes and activities to perform them (Casanave, 2010; Paltridge et al., 2012; Tardy, 2016; among others). As Casanave (2010) claimed “(i)t does not make sense for potentially innovative and creative novice scholars to cling to formulaic traditions as though these traditions were engraved in stone” (p.12). In Agatha’s case, her socialization teaches her about audience (her teachers) preferences on her writing and thus, the prominent role of teachers, mentors, and advisors in fostering alternative spaces for innovative writing approaches.

The idea of “making space” for non-traditional academic language and writing practices beyond ideal standard and monomodal ones has extensively been discussed in the context of translingual and transnational writing (Canagarajah, 2012; Donahue, 2018; Kaufhold, 2018). This case also demonstrates that when those kinds of “alternative” linguistic and composing spaces are made, writers have the potential to become more rhetorically informed in relation to how their own identities and practices are situated in, constructed by and constitutive of networks with shifting power dynamics. Through socialization into alternative language and writing, these dynamics can be better identified and potentially transformed. As the next theme will present, Agatha repurposes her learning of the affordances of “alternative linguistic and writing spaces” into her own research and teaching of writing, also pushing boundaries of traditional writing and language practices.



## Researching and Teaching Through Multimodal and Multisensorial Identity

Agatha, born in France, grew up speaking French and started learning English at the age of 10. As mentioned earlier, the institutional context where she was a graduate instructor was perceived as “monolingual”, since the vast majority of students grew up speaking Englishes. Therefore, Agatha’s linguistic identity was considered marginal. As a researcher, I approached the data collection process for this project through an interest in Agatha’s multilingual identity, centering my questions around the “textual” modality and not fully considering the significance of other modalities in the socialization processes. In part, this was due to my own socialization as a researcher into applied linguistics, a field that has produced large amounts of studies about socialization and language from a monolingual and monomodal lens (Kobayashi et al., 2017). Across the landscape of applied linguistic areas of study, researchers have acknowledged the “monolingual bias” of the field (May, 2014; Ortega, 2014); yet, less attention has been paid to the multimodal and multisensorial nature of human language in areas of applied linguistics, including language socialization. I, too, was biased in how my interview questions were formulated, assuming the “lingua” component of language (Lee, 2017) was the most significant in Agatha’s practices. The following excerpt offers Agatha’s own views of her writing as a multilingual graduate student and instructor, despite the framing of the question:

I: Now we are going to talk about writing as a multilingual graduate student. What genres do you do as a graduate student? In what languages?

A: Only in English now. And it is even like hard to think about those things in French, because I read about my research in English and I write it in English and I discuss it in English, so it is hard to translate. So that’s my main language for thinking. And mostly essays and articles. Uhm I am trying to find different ways/cause part of my personal research is to find different ways to express yourself in academia through visual texts especially, so I am not quite there yet, but I try to introduce some elements of that in my writing, which then becomes not just writing but also visual, so yeah... (Interview, May 17, 2017).

While recent scholarship has attended to the importance of creating space for multilingual writers to reflect their linguistic backgrounds in discursive practices (Canagarajah, 2011), scholars have also pointed out that an overemphasis on textual elements in writing does not account for the complexities of language practices (Lee, 2017; Li Wei, 2018). In this case, as the researcher, my question to Agatha was framed as if speech and textual components of communication played a more significant role in Agatha’s academic life; yet, her response demonstrates that other modalities are a priority in her writing practices. In fact, not only did she create the graphic story to describe her socialization into becoming a writing teacher, she also focused on working across modalities in other courses and disciplinary communities like rhetoric and art. Having realized my own bias of priming textual language over other modalities in academic practices, I followed up with another question during the interview to trigger Agatha’s reflections on her multimodal writing:

I: Do you incorporate visual components into writing in academia to represent yourself?

A: Yeah. Sort of. Like uhm (.) I have only done it in some assignments so far, so I am hoping to introduce that into my dissertation. But uhm, like for one of the 402 assignments I did a comic, sort of like a two-page comic. I remember for a rhetoric article/essay I included a lot of multimedia sources, I took a class in the arts department this semester, so I made a scene instead of an actual research essay. So, *I am trying to combine different genres of writing and seeing in writing*, yeah. (Interview, May 17, 2017, Emphasis added).

As Agatha's words indicate, her writing identity is centered on multimodality and multimedia rather than language difference. It is not uncommon to find in the scholarship studies that link multimodality to multimedia and digital design (Belcher, 2017; Miller-Cochran, 2017) and multimodality is often times defined as the use of "images, sounds, movement, video, spoken words, or hypertext" (Miller-Cochran, 2017, p. 88) both in digital and print platforms. As expressed by some scholars, the almost ubiquity of digital spaces and new technologies and media of distribution in relation to writing have prompted a conversation about the affordances of these spaces and tools for meaning-making in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hafner, 2014) (along with their limitations, specifically in relation to issues of access and effective pedagogies). However, it is important to note that while multimodality and multimedia writing are overlapping concepts, they are not the same. For example, Agatha's graphic story was hand-drawn rather than designed with new technologies or on digital spaces; therefore, it is multimodal but not multimedia. In addition to this activity, Agatha also created multimedia article about rhetoric by inserting digital sources, and a recreated a scene instead of writing a traditional research paper for a class in the arts department. As a second-year graduate student and teacher of writing, Agatha is carving our space for non-traditional writing that goes beyond text across disciplines and audiences. Her research identity is thus intrinsically related to enacting multimodal and multimedia writing and, at the time of the study, her goals were to compose a dissertation that foregrounds the use of multimodality. An overemphasis on the linguistic (as in textual) component of her identity as a multilingual writer could have obscured Agatha's motivations and meaning and sense-making practices as a researcher. In this case, while she is cautious about crossing the boundaries of disciplinary expectations through multimodal composing, Agatha strategically positions herself in academic spaces (rhetoric and arts courses) that facilitate her meaning-making as "seeing in writing."

Aside from her research goals, Agatha's teaching is also deeply shaped by her practices of, in her words, "seeing in writing" (Interview, May 17, 2017). In general, Agatha's short graphic novel "The Grad Dilemma" shows her emerging identities as juxtaposed and emerging, suggested by the sentence in the present continuous "I can teach even though I am still learning." This realization through collaborative socializing spaces works as a steppingstone moment, since the narrative leads to this central idea. In fact, her negotiations of how to balance these two apparent sides of her persona (being a teacher and a student) are integral in her socialization. Agatha repurposes this disposition into her own teaching as it will be further explained below. However, her linguistic background does not seem to have a direct impact on her teaching, yet multimodality does.

Moreover, the participant reclaims her writing identities in the composition classroom through multimodality rather than mere “linguistic” resources. During the interview, the idea that Agatha sees linguistic diversity in the classroom as anecdotal became evident. In fact, when asked about how she integrates it in her teaching, she claims: “it sort of adds tiny little things to it, but it is not essential to my teaching” (Interview, May 17, 2017).

When I asked her to elaborate on what kinds of “tiny things” her multilingual identity facilitates in the classroom, Agatha reiterated that if her linguistic identity became relevant to her teaching, her pedagogies would consist of how she could be educated by students on language and cultural aspects that she wasn’t familiar with. The following excerpt speaks to this idea:

It enables me to sometimes adopt a more “external” point of view - by which I mean that I can ask “innocent” questions, and let my students educate me on aspects of the American culture that I’m not familiar with, but that they may sometimes take for granted as universal. On the other hand, I’m sometimes afraid that I’m missing a certain cultural reference or that I’m not able to express my thoughts like I want to. (Interview, May 17, 2017).

Language as a textual or spoken modality is thus a vehicle for larger conversations about culture rather than mere forms. From Agatha’s words, the view of language that transpires is about language indexing cultural values and traditions. This view also resonates with the notion of dialogic pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2012) and co-learning (Li Wei, 2014) by which both teacher and students “need to constantly monitor and adapt their actions and learn from each other” (Li Wei, 2014, p. 169). Rather than understanding pedagogies as the teacher’s deployment of knowledge, these kinds of pedagogies require teachers and students to shift their roles and construct meaning together while problematizing standard language ideologies in the classroom. By letting students teach her, the instructor, Agatha is modelling co-learning and dialogic strategies that create spaces for the co-construction of meaning. However, it is also worth noting that Agatha is positioning herself as “deficient” in the context of the class where all students are monolingual. A move away from the “lingual” modality of meaning-making to a more encompassing view of meaning-making as multimodal could prevent the negative self-perception that Agatha holds of herself.

Nonetheless, Agatha’s personal interests in drawing and design became significantly more evident in her teaching materials. For Agatha, pictorial and graphic language are intrinsically tied to her teaching persona. For example, one of the units in Agatha’s syllabus is entitled “A Writer’s Self-Portrait.” The only description on the syllabus of that unit reads as follows: “an exploration of your own writing through a self-portrait. But what is a self-portrait, really? We’ll talk about that. And writing. A bit” (Agatha’s syllabus).

During the interview, I asked Agatha to explain to me what this unit and the final project, a self-portrait, entails. She asks students to depict their perceptions of themselves and their writing identities. Agatha doesn’t provide detailed instructions to students on purpose, to not limit their own take on the guidelines. Students can therefore produce any kind of portrait, however they understand it, by using modalities

and media they find appropriate to convey their ideas. When we conducted the interview, I once again asked Agatha if textual language played a significant part in how students understood their writing identities and their production of the portrait to which Agatha answered:

Some people use language as a connection and say “well I use writing and I use speaking in those different ways” and others just pick like an author or a book they like, so it doesn’t always have to do with language, but some do. (Interview, May 17, 2017).

As discussed earlier in relation to Agatha’s own identity, language becomes secondary for student writers to represent themselves. However, if it does, it is broadly conceived as more than “academic” or “standard” forms, but as shifting practices emerging from different situations, in line with a translingual approach to writing. Agatha’s own graphic novel brings the language most commonly used in this genre such as the use of colloquial language, rather than formal Standard American English. Through abbreviations like “BFF”, interjections like “slam”, or the play on words for a proper name “Aka Demia” Agatha’s language practices resemble those of the genre of the graphic novel, and they reflect her expert understanding of effective rhetorical and semiotic means for the genre. Most importantly, these linguistic practices emanate from the possibilities that multimodal writing creates for meaning-making.

Another key feature of Agatha’s approach to the teaching of writing has to do with a multisensorial understanding of language already hinted at through Agatha’s expression “seeing in writing.” When I observed her class, Agatha had written on the board the following question for students to respond to: “If you had to choose one of your 5 senses which one would you choose and why?” In this sense, it is also worth reminding here of Agatha’s graphic novel where the student is portrayed as standing on top of negative emotions (fear, anxiety, self-doubt) and is surrounded by the voices of other socialization agents that productively respond to those emotions to contribute to the student’s self-growth. Agatha’s graphic novel represents what emotion studies scholar Micciche (2007) explains as follows: “bodies and emotions are not only enacted in writing but also imbued in how we come to writing” (p. 52). As demonstrated in Anderson’s study, even negative affective stances enable the socialization of emerging teacher-scholars into their communities (2017, p. 6). For Agatha, composing the graphic novel allows her to enact specific emotional responses (overcoming an initial lack of confidence), but most importantly, it allows her to describe her writing research and teaching identity as notions that require reflecting on the sensorial and emotional responses faced in new situations.

In general, because Agatha does not center her identity around linguistic difference, but on “seeing” across modalities, Agatha does not feel singled-out in the first-year composition classroom space. Contrary to my assumptions when I came to this research project, as mentioned earlier, Agatha never spoke about her role as a multilingual teacher in a context deemed “monolingual” (Matsuda, 2006). Her identity, just like those of her “monolingual” students, does not revolve around linguistic proficiency in English but on making meaning through other kinds of communicative resources. With this in mind, it can thus be inferred that adopting a multimodal

approach to writing transcends linguistic boundaries often imposed by institutional labels (multilingual versus monolingual, for example) and presents opportunities for all writers to draw on whatever semiotic means they are more attuned to without disregarding or flattening difference. If students desire to do so, they can choose to describe their writing identities through a focus on their linguistic practices as related to other modalities and depicted in a portrait. Similarly, if necessary, linguistic difference becomes part of the classroom conversations, but always in response to the demands of specific genres that require attention to diverse linguistic practices. Most importantly, linguistic difference is conceptualized as more than standard forms and within a view of composing as multimodal and multisensorial practice.

### Discussion

The findings from this study provide further insights about the socialization process of a multilingual graduate instructor into the teaching of first-year writing courses. They also shed light on the significance of identity construction and socialization into academic communities. More specifically, the findings of this case study demonstrate that socialization is a key area of development in the education of new teachers of writing, specifically, multilinguals who come from abroad to U.S. composition contexts. As seen in the first theme, the participant moved from feeling isolated and lonely as she interacted with traditional texts which centered on masculine figures to a complex process of socialization with a female figure as a guide and at the core of a collaborative and experimental process of socialization. This shift in how to enter academic communities was represented, by the participant, as causing positive and effective results. Through socialization that facilitated the integration of non-traditional genres and collaborative, non-hierarchical roles between teaching and learning, the participant was able to carve out space for the development of her identities, teaching, and research practices. In turn, the participant, through her constant negotiation of identities as she socialized into various discursive communities (writing, rhetoric, art, children's literature), she enacted her agency and creatively contributed to "pushing the legacy" of previous forms of socialization (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011, p. 4) by innovating through her research and teaching practices. The participant's socialization was mediated by the environments she inhabited, and these were, at the same time, transformed by the participant's creativity.

One of the most revealing findings from this study involves the significance of multimodality in the socialization process of the participant. Agatha views of textual language difference as not having a central role in composition in favor of multimodal elements might be an extension of her interests in the arts; however, it is worth attending to the programmatic practices that cultivated this view and offered opportunities for Agatha to develop it, and even repurpose it into her own teaching. While studies on academic socialization had been focused on the role that diverse linguistic identities play in adapting or resisting to mainstream academic practices (Seloni, 2012), this case study suggested that an overemphasis on language (textual or oral) can risk the multimodal repertoires that multilinguals may want to draw on as they become socialized into various groups. These non-traditional practices may also be key in the research and teaching development of graduate students. It is important to



acknowledge that Agatha's background and interests in the arts informed her process of socialization; however, she was able to mobilize her identities and background knowledge because of the material conditions of the writing program where she learned and taught. In other words, without offering these opportunities to graduate student-instructors, we risk limiting their growth as writers and teacher-scholars.

In addition, attention to the multimodal and multisensorial aspects of human languaging practices (be it writing, learning, or teaching) brings to the table alternative spaces for identity-construction and meaning making in teaching and researching. In this study, Agatha's identities (as a multilingual female artist) were being valued and used as a learning and teaching resource through a multimodal and multisensorial lens to language and writing.

Perhaps most importantly, drawing attention to multimodality instead of text-based linguistic diversity can help to avoid the essentialization and tokenization of multilingual writers as individuals who resort to unorthodox text-based practices. In other words, the most widespread narrative about multilingual writers and teachers portrays them as subjects who do not ascribe to "normative" writing practices through the use of non-standard expressions or deviations to "the norm". Instead, this case study illustrates that a multilingual graduate instructor of writing carved out space through socialization and multimodality to find rhetorically-attuned venues based on her own identities to negotiate and navigate new unknown and unfamiliar terrain. This notion goes in line with other studies in academic socialization of doctoral students (and instructors) that emphasize the urgency of opportunities for the enactment of agency (Anderson, 2017; Morita, 2004). For multilingual writers and multilingual graduate instructors, moving beyond the "lingual" component of meaning-making enhances their opportunities for identity development (as students, instructors, and emergent researchers). The strategic agency of multilingual graduate instructors of writing goes hand in hand with the existence and recognition of academic social spaces where negotiation is at the core of the socialization process. In this sense, the writing program where Agatha worked resembled academic social spaces where "newcomers in their academic spaces master the norms, ideologies, expectations of the academic (conceived) space by strategically negotiating their current space norms with their former ones" (Soltani, 2018, p. 22). Drawing on Lefebvre's triad, Soltani's notion of academic social spaces consists of three dimensions: conceived space (representations, mental, and imagined space), spatial practice (physical or perceived space), and spaces of representation (lived space). The notion of space relates to Gutiérrez, Larson, Enciso, and Ryan (2007)'s call for the creation of ecologies (material and physical environments or spaces -what Soltani refers to as spatial practice and physical or perceived space) where power relations are transformed and individuals' repertoires are expanded.

Finally, Agatha described her socialization as a collaborative process guided by experimentation through which mistakes are seen as valuable, alternative non-traditional genres with non-standard language, and reflections on embodied, affective, and sensorial experiences. Agatha found in collaborative social groups a place for solidarity and the development of her teaching and research interests, all of which included resisting traditional print-based practices. These aspects of Agatha's



socialization also resonate with feminist-informed paradigms to mentoring graduate students, which posit attention to lived experiences and embodied knowledge, reflexivity and active participation in one's communities through praxis (Sánchez-Martín & Seloni, 2019).

Therefore, the socialization processes of multilingual graduate instructors of writing would benefit from opportunities to find paths for personal growth through multimodal, multisensorial, and embodied meaning-making. Graduate student-instructors like Agatha, entering new professional and academic spaces, must be guided to document their socialization by attending to all forms of meaning-making practices as negotiated.

### Final Thoughts

In general, the socialization of the participant as a new multilingual graduate instructor in a writing program, involved learning about her role, participation, identities in the physical environment and academic social spaces of the program. Through this process, multimodality functioned as a tool for Agatha to reflect on her socialization into becoming a member of her community, where other writing instructors and administrators in the program were collaboratively developing expertise in the teaching of writing to a majority of monolingual students. The participant's socialization mediated her practices across contexts of shifting asymmetrical power relationships, and simultaneously, enabled the transformation of the context by the participant's creative agentive moves beyond traditional print-based genres and her constant negotiation of identity. The rich and deep analysis of the findings could allow the case study to be replicated in that it describes how paying attention to multimodality, embodied, and sensorial meaning-making is necessary in socialization processes to avoid narrowing down spaces for self-realization and growth that can potentially transform classrooms and programs.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> To accurately reflect the non-binary gendered identity of the student portrayed in the comic, I have chosen the third person plural pronoun "themselves" acknowledging its grammatical inconsistency with the preceding verb "positions".

<sup>2</sup> Agatha's words have been transcribed verbatim. (L) indicates a laugh by the interviewee.