

**EXPLORING POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS' USE OF PROOFREADING SERVICES
AT A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY**

by

Nina Lee Conrad

B.A., The University of Arizona, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Teaching English as a Second Language)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

June 2018

© Nina Lee Conrad, 2018

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

Exploring Postsecondary Students' Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University

submitted by Nina Lee Conrad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

in Teaching English as a Second Language

Examining Committee:

Ryuko Kubota, Language and Literacy Education

Co-supervisor

Sandra Zappa-Hollman, Language and Literacy Education

Co-supervisor

Supervisory Committee Member

Anthony Paré, Language and Literacy Education

Additional Examiner

Abstract

Many postsecondary students engage the services of a proofreader at some stage in their academic career. Such third-party interventions in the production of student texts, classified as a form of literacy brokering (Lillis & Curry, 2010), have raised questions of ethics and academic integrity. In recent years, researchers have begun to examine students' use of proofreading services from multiple perspectives; however, much of the previous research has focused on graduate students' dissertations and writing for publication (e.g., Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Turner, 2012), whereas less attention has been paid to other genres of student writing or proofreading practices among undergraduates, and the North American context has rarely been considered. In addition, there is little empirical evidence to support the assumption that proofreading is practiced predominantly by non-native English speakers.

This mixed methods study was carried out based on the theoretical framework of academic literacies, a social practice approach to the study of literacy, particularly writing, in academic contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Lea & Street, 1998). The use of proofreading among students at a large Canadian research university was investigated through an online student survey and follow-up interviews. The aims of the study were to determine who uses proofreading services and to explore their reasons for doing so, the nature and extent of proofreading they receive, and how they perceive this practice to affect their development of language and writing skills as well as other outcomes. The findings suggest that students who use proofreading are diverse and do not conform to any binary categorization. Although there were some differences between self-identified native English speakers and non-native English speakers with respect to their learning outcomes and relationship with their proofreaders, most participants across both groups used proofreading to improve their writing skills and reported learning from the proofreader's corrections. In addition, use of proofreading has potential to affect writers' identity and relationships with others in their academic communities. The findings of this research study have implications for writing

instruction at every level of postsecondary education and reveal the need for clearer policies on proofreading of all genres of academic writing.

Lay Summary

Many postsecondary students receive corrections from a proofreader at some stage during their academic program. This practice raises ethical questions because some people argue that it allows students to receive higher grades or other benefits as a result of another person's work. Yet there has been little research considering students' perspectives on this issue. In this study, I employed an online student survey and follow-up interviews to explore who uses proofreading, why, what types of services they receive, and what outcomes they perceive. The results suggest that students who use proofreading are more diverse than has been previously assumed. Most student participants wanted to improve their writing and believed they learned from the proofreader's corrections. However, the corrections some students received may violate the university's rules on academic integrity. Based on the findings, I argue that policies on proofreading should be clarified for all students in higher education.

Preface

This thesis is the original work of the author, Nina Lee Conrad. The research method and all associated materials were approved by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board on October 26, 2017 (certificate #H17-02662). The design, data collection, and analysis described herein were carried out solely by the author in consultation with the co-supervisors.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Lay Summary	v
Preface	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Previous Research on Proofreading	5
2.1 Non-Native English Speakers and Proofreading	5
2.2 Expectations of Writtenness	9
2.3 Ethics of Proofreading	16
2.4 Researcher Positionality	19
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework of the Study	21
3.1 A Social Practice Approach.....	21
3.2 Academic Literacies in Relation to Other Approaches	23
Chapter 4: Methodology	27
4.1 Participants	28
4.2 Data Collection.....	31
4.3 Data Analysis.....	32
4.4 Limitations.....	33
Chapter 5: Quantitative Findings	36
5.1 Who Uses Proofreading Services	36
5.1.1 Demographics	36
5.1.2 Language and Educational Background.....	38
5.1.3 Between-Groups Differences	42
5.1.4 Learning Disabilities	45
5.2 Use of Proofreading Services	45
5.2.1 Reasons for Proofreading	45

5.2.2	Relationship With the Proofreader	47
5.2.3	Types of Documents Proofread.....	50
5.3	Nature and Extent of Proofreading.....	52
5.4	Outcomes of Proofreading.....	54
5.5	Other Resources.....	55
Chapter 6: Qualitative Findings		58
6.1	The Participants	58
6.2	Identity.....	62
6.2.1	Identity as an English User.....	63
6.2.2	Identity as a Student	64
6.2.3	Identity as a Writer	65
6.3	Reasons for Proofreading	67
6.3.1	A Supervisor’s Request.....	67
6.3.2	Making Sense	68
6.3.3	Importance of Writing.....	69
6.3.4	Importance of Writing Correctly.....	70
6.4	Proofreading as a Social Practice	71
6.4.1	Relationship With the Proofreader	71
6.4.2	Perceptions of the Proofreader’s Qualifications.....	72
6.4.3	On Familiarity	73
6.4.4	Proofreading as Reciprocal	73
6.4.5	On Payment.....	75
6.5	Nature and Extent of Proofreading.....	75
6.5.1	Types of Documents and Corrections	76
6.5.2	Extent of Corrections	79
6.5.3	Preferred Types of Feedback.....	80
6.5.4	On Automated Grammar Correction.....	82
6.6	Outcomes of Proofreading.....	83
6.6.1	Learning From Corrections	83
6.6.2	Relationships With Research Supervisors.....	85
6.6.3	Benefits of Proofreading	87
6.6.4	Negative Consequences of Proofreading	88
6.6.5	Openness About Proofreading	90

6.7	Summary.....	91
Chapter 7: Discussion		93
7.1	Who Uses Proofreading.....	93
7.2	Reasons for Proofreading	99
7.3	Nature and Extent of Proofreading.....	102
7.4	Outcomes of Proofreading.....	107
7.5	Summary.....	109
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....		111
8.1	Policy Implications	111
8.2	Suggestions for Future Research	112
8.3	Final Thoughts.....	114
References.....		116
Appendices.....		126
	Appendix A Invitation to Departments (Distributed to Program Administrators via Email).....	126
	Appendix B Invitation to Participate (Distributed to Program Administrators via Email)	127
	Appendix C Invitation to Follow-Up Interview (Sent Via Email to Students).....	128
	Appendix D Interview Scheduling Confirmation (Sent Via Email to Participants).....	129
	Appendix E Flyer Advertising Survey	130
	Appendix F Online Survey Instrument.....	131
	Appendix G Consent Form.....	135
	Appendix H Semistructured Follow-Up Interview Protocol	138
	Appendix I Transcription Conventions	139

List of Tables

Table 1. Interview participant profiles based on survey data and interview responses.	62
--	----

List of Figures

Figure 1. Survey participants' year in school ($n = 131$).....	37
Figure 2. Venn diagram of overlap between domestic students and self-identified NESs, showing that not all domestic students self-identify as NESs.....	38
Figure 3. Venn diagram of overlap between international students and self-identified NNEs, showing that almost half of international students do not identify as NNEs.....	39
Figure 4. Self-identified NES status, graduates of EMI high schools ($n = 105$).....	41
Figure 5. Self-identified NES status, graduates of non-EMI high schools ($n = 38$).	41
Figure 6. Flows of students from EMI high schools and non-EMI high schools into EMI or non-EMI institutions of higher education prior to enrolling at UBC.	42
Figure 7. Demographic variables in relation to students' year in school.....	44
Figure 8. Reasons for proofreading among unpaying students ($n = 123$) and paying students ($n = 22$). ...	46
Figure 9. How the proofreader was found by NES students ($n = 102$) and NNEs students ($n = 43$).....	48
Figure 10. How the proofreader was found by students who did not pay for such services ($n = 123$) and those who did ($n = 22$).....	48
Figure 11. Factors considered in choosing a proofreader among self-identified NES ($n = 101$) and NNEs ($n = 43$) students.	50
Figure 12. Responses to "What did you learn?" among self-identified NESs ($n = 87$) and NNEs ($n = 36$).	55
Figure 13. Other resources used by self-identified NESs ($n = 102$) and NNEs ($n = 43$) to improve their writing.....	56

List of Abbreviations

APA: American Psychological Association

EAP: English for academic purposes

EMI: English as the primary medium of instruction

ESL: English as a second language

L2: second language

NES: native English speaker

NNES: non-native English speaker

NNS: non-native speaker

NS: native speaker

UBC: University of British Columbia

Acknowledgements

Only with the support of so many others could this research project have been possible. First and foremost, I have been incredibly fortunate to have two extraordinary co-supervisors, Dr. Ryuko Kubota and Dr. Sandra Zappa-Hollman. I am so grateful to each of you for the incredible example you set, your generosity, your indispensable feedback, and your trust in me throughout this process. Thank you. Further thanks go to my third reader, Dr. Anthony Paré, for your encouragement from early on, and to Dr. Ling Shi for first prompting me to propose this study. Thanks in addition to my other instructors at UBC, especially Dr. Patricia Duff and Dr. Bonny Norton, whose courses were fundamental in framing my approach to this research. I have learned so much from each of you.

Thank you so much to all of the study participants, especially the eight interviewees who so generously shared about your experiences and practices. None of this would have been possible without you, and I wish you all the best as students and writers.

In a thesis about writing as a social practice, I would be remiss not to thank the people who have shaped my own literacy practices through inspiring me to pursue this program and this research. Thank you to my aunt Gay Summer Sadow Rick for first planting the seed that grew into a master's program application. Thanks to Danielle Watts, Dr. Shari Popen, and Dr. David Soren for believing in me and helping me get here in the first place. Thank you to Darren Shafae for introducing me to the industry and for working with my schedule. And thank you to every client. You have taught me so much through your writing and your feedback.

And to the flowers in my garden: Thank you to Julianna Chen and Ivan Beschastnikh, my first old friends in Vancouver. Thank you to my fellow peer advisors, Kaye Hare and Dmitri Detwyler; the best part of being a GPA was working with both of you. Additional thanks go to Dmitri for your listening ear and perceptive feedback throughout this research process. Thank you to my fellow students Natalia Balyasnikova, Zsuzsanna Cipak, Nami Imagawa, Ashley Moore, Pramod Sah, Bong-gi Sohn, Yuya Takeda, and so many others for sharing your friendship and valuable insights on this learning journey.

Thank you to the kind folks at UBC Farm for the good conversation, fresh air, and bounty of vegetables. Thank you to Krystina Simes and others at Semperviva for sharing movement and music. Thank you to everyone who crossed the border to visit: Julia Hollas and Ben Wright, Alysa Haas, Linda Regan Gosner, Katie Alford, George Peters and Jacky Graupner, and Amy, Liz, and Terry Denton. Thank you to my San Francisco community (even though many of you have left by now). Thank you to my dear lifelong friends Alysa Haas, Alisa Walker, Kay Lo, Anne Jorstad, Cat Kron, and Elisa Renouard; I'm so glad being here has allowed me to see you and your families more often. Thank you to my parents, Suzanne Sadow and Ken Conrad, for your good questions and encouragement (and for supplying me with snacks from home). And finally, thank you to Adam and Danielle for always being there. I'm so grateful for all of you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Many postsecondary students in North American universities may engage the services of an English-language proofreader at some stage in their academic career, yet little empirical research has been done to determine who participates in this practice or to consider its implications for the academic community and students themselves. Harwood, Austin, and Macaulay (2010) defined proofreading in the context of academia as “third-party interventions (that entail some level of written alteration) on assessed work in progress” (p. 54). This definition differs from the one used in the publishing industry, where proofreading is considered the final quality check before a work goes to print (Matarese, 2016; University of Chicago Press, 2010). It is important to note that academic proofreading may also constitute copy editing, or word- and sentence-level correction for accuracy and consistency; language editing, or editing for clarity, coherence, and conformity to the appropriate variety of English; or even substantive editing at the level of organization and content (Matarese, 2016). All of these activities—whether paid or unpaid—constitute forms of *literacy brokering* (Lillis & Curry, 2010), understood as the involvement of people other than named authors in the production of texts. Lillis and Curry (2010) described two main categories of literacy brokers in the academic text production of multilingual scholars writing for publication in international journals. Academic brokers are academics working for a university or research institute who are consulted because of their disciplinary expertise and/or their record of publishing successfully. Language brokers “are called on primarily because of their knowledge and expertise of the English language” (p. 93). Proofreaders fall within the latter category.

Much of the attention to proofreading in the scholarly literature and the media has focused on commercial proofreading services (Lines, 2016; Scurr, 2006; Shaw, 2014; Turner, 2015b). In the last two decades, such services have been made available via online portals, many of which proudly advertise that they employ U.S.-educated native English speakers to correct a manuscript within days or even hours (e.g., American Manuscript Editors, n.d.). Several researchers have emphasized that in the case of such commercial proofreading services, it is the proofreader’s distance from the academic environment—as

someone who is not affiliated with the student writer's university or discipline—that makes the practice problematic (e.g., Turner, 2015b). It makes many academics uncomfortable that students may purchase proofreading services to have their writing improved—and, by extension, improve their grades—without necessarily learning anything (e.g., Scurr, 2006). In addition, academic proofreading services are expensive, running about US\$0.03 to US\$0.07 per word,¹ and not every student can afford them.

In the past decade, resulting questions of ethics and integrity have led researchers to begin to describe the “ethical grey areas” (Harwood et al., 2010, p. 62) surrounding the use of proofreading services from the perspectives of students (Turner, 2015b), writing instructors and PhD supervisors (Turner, 2012, 2015b), and professional proofreaders themselves (Harwood, Austin, & Macaulay, 2009, 2010; Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010). Much of the research on proofreading has taken place in Australia (e.g., Lines, 2016) and the United Kingdom (e.g., Harwood et al., 2009, 2010; Turner 2012, 2015b); to my knowledge, however, no researcher has looked specifically at academic proofreading practices in Canada or the United States. Nor have other types of language brokering aside from commercial or institutionally embedded proofreading services been fully considered.

Given the value attributed to “standard written English” (e.g., Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014) in the context of increasing internationalization of higher education (e.g., Ferris, 2016), there is a pressing need to examine the extent to which students are drawing on support from language brokers to improve their writing. The existence of numerous proofreading services that cater to students coupled with the inconsistency across Canadian universities in policies regarding their use (Starke-Meyerring, Paré, Sun, & El-Bezre, 2014) indicates a need for further consideration of the implications of such services for students in higher education as well as their instructors and institutions. An investigation of students' use of proofreading services could shed light on the nature of such services, why students are using them, and what consequences this may have for students and their institutions. In addition, the findings could help

¹ Based on my review of the websites of the largest online editing firms as of 2015 (identified in Matarese, 2016).

institutions to clarify expectations and policies or adapt their writing support programs to better serve student writers.

The aim of this mixed methods study is to examine students' use of proofreading as a social practice based on the theoretical perspective of academic literacies (Lea & Street, 2006; Lillis & Scott, 2007). In the interest of describing how students draw on the various resources available to them, I define *proofreading services* following Harwood et al. (2010) as third-party interventions in student writing performed by an individual or corporation either on a voluntary basis or for payment. Self-revision and corrective feedback provided by an instructor or classmate as part of a course do not qualify as proofreading. As defined in this study, proofreading may include correction of writing mechanics, such as errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, as well as changes in word choice, sentence structure, and macro-level organization. Proofreading may thus extend beyond a final quality check to encompass copy editing, language editing, and/or substantive editing (Matarese, 2016). In the literature review, the term *editing* is occasionally used in reference to the same activities, and the terms *editor* and *proofreader* are likewise considered equivalents. The terms *native English speaker* (NES) and *non-native English speaker* (NNES)—and sometimes variations such as *native speaker*, *native student*, and *native writer* (e.g., Harwood et al., 2010)—also appear frequently in the literature on proofreading, although they tend not to be clearly defined. In this thesis I report previous findings using the terms employed by the original authors and then critique the NES/NNES dichotomy in light of my own findings in Chapter 7. The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Who uses English proofreading services?
2. Why do students use proofreading services?
3. What is the nature and extent of proofreading services that students receive?
4. How do students perceive the effects of proofreading services in terms of their academic outcomes, development of language and writing skills, and identity?

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature on students' proofreading practices and the value ascribed to standard written English in higher education in general. I then discuss the ways that my professional proofreading experience has informed this research. In Chapter 3, I introduce the theoretical framework of academic literacies and discuss some of its previous applications in research on students' writing practices. In Chapter 4, I describe the methods used for data collection and analysis. In Chapter 5, I summarize the quantitative survey data using descriptive statistics and highlight some key findings. In Chapter 6, I present and analyze the qualitative findings from the follow-up interviews. In Chapter 7, I discuss the findings and their implications in the light of previous research. Finally, the conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future work are presented in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2: Previous Research on Proofreading

The literature review begins with a summary of previous works that have focused on proofreading of student writing. This topic has sometimes arisen in broader discussions of student writing, particularly at the level of the graduate dissertation (e.g., Shin, 2008; Wang & Li, 2008). A limited number of studies have also focused wholly on proofreading (e.g., Harwood et al., 2009, 2010; Turner, 2015a, 2015b). I first consider studies that have described NNEs as the predominant users of proofreading and examine the issues surrounding this assumption. Next, I discuss research on how value is ascribed to academic writing based on language features as well as content, and the possible roles for proofreading in this process. Then I introduce the debate on the ethics of proofreading and outline existing regulations that govern the use of academic proofreading in certain limited contexts. Based on the literature review, I identify the research gap. Next, in the statement of Researcher Positionality, I discuss how my personal experience as a professional proofreader led me to this topic and informed my approach to this research project.

2.1 Non-Native English Speakers and Proofreading

To my knowledge, very few previous studies have focused exclusively on proofreading of student work. The most comprehensive of these is a qualitative study based on interviews with multiple stakeholders and content analysis of email-distributed discussions that was carried out in the United Kingdom (Turner, 2012, 2015b). Another relevant study based on a student survey and content analysis was conducted in Australia (Lines, 2016). Proofreaders' perspectives have been considered in an interview study carried out in the United Kingdom (Harwood et al., 2009, 2010) and a quantitative survey study carried out in South Africa (Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010). The topic of proofreading has also been raised in broader studies about academic writing and/or international education from Australia (Kettle, 2017), Canada (Anderson, 2016; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014; Zappa, 2007), and China (Li & Flowerdew, 2007), and it has been the focus of numerous reflection pieces (e.g., Scott, 1998, in Australia; Scurr, 2006, and Turner, 2015a, in the United Kingdom; and van Aswegen, 2007, in South Africa). In

several studies proofreading and its resulting ethical dilemmas have been discussed with reference to “international students,” who are often represented as linguistically deficient. In this section I discuss previous works that have associated proofreading with certain student populations and critically evaluate the application of the label *international student* to student writers.

Several studies have presented proofreading as a corollary to increasing international student enrollment and the pressure on postgraduate students to dissertate and publish in English as a second or foreign language (e.g., Turner, 2015b). They have likewise communicated an assumption that it is predominantly NNEs who use proofreading services (e.g., Harwood et al., 2010) or who use them dishonestly (e.g., Lines, 2016). A significant limitation of these studies, however, relates to their exclusive focus on NNEs and subsequent neglect of NESs. The terms *native speaker* and *non-native speaker* are themselves problematic, as they fall short in capturing individuals’ diverse linguistic identities (Faez, 2011) and may misrepresent their language expertise (Rampton, 1990). These terms reify native speakerness as a quality that students either possess or lack, contributing to “the preservation of a privileged in-group” (Holliday, 2006, p. 385) of NESs while portraying NNEs as irreparably deficient. The effects of such usage can be damaging to people’s identities, as studies have shown that being labeled as an NNE based on their writing can be insulting to students (Fazel, 2018; Flowerdew, 2000)² and detrimental to their conceptions of themselves as academic writers (Séror, 2008). Nevertheless, labels related to native speakerness appear frequently in research on proofreading, often in essentialist collocations such as *NNS writer* and *NNS student*.

This usage can be seen, for example, in the work of Harwood et al. (2009, 2010), who studied proofreading practices within a U.K. university through interviews with 16 proofreaders. The participants included employees of the student resource centre, doctoral students who offered proofreading for

² Fazel’s (2018) study presented the case of an Anglophone doctoral student writer who was told by a journal reviewer to have her writing checked by an NES. The student’s feeling of insult at being mistakenly positioned as an NNE suggests that she perceived the label *NNE* as derogatory.

colleagues, and self-employed proofreaders who advertised on university notice boards. These participants, all but two of whom were “native speakers,” reported that the majority of their clients were “nonnatives,” and they described issues that may arise when such students produce writing below a certain level of English proficiency. One participant pointed out that even if undergraduates with low English proficiency have their out-of-class work proofread, they may still fail exams that require writing in class. Another proofreader noted that “tidy[ing] up the English” (Harwood et al., 2010, p. 58) might not be sufficient to make a student’s writing meet the instructor’s expectations—in other words, the paper might be free of errors but still might not meet the demands of the assignment in terms of content or quality.

Harwood et al. (2009, 2010) also asked participants to indicate which levels of English proficiency they had dealt with, on a 5-point scale from 1 (“very limited ability in English”) to 5 (“as proficient as, or nearly as proficient as, a native speaker”; p. 187). Some participants responded that they refused to work with authors whose writing was below a certain level of English proficiency. These proofreaders, when faced with an error-laden text that would need to be revised so extensively that it would no longer resemble the original author’s writing, considered it unethical to provide that level of correction. One asserted that “the work must remain the work of the person who has written it” (p. 58). With regard to students whose writing requires a high level of textual intervention to be comprehensible, particularly undergraduate students, one proofreader asserted that “institutions are at fault for accepting these students in the first place” (Harwood et al., 2010, p. 58).

For a related study that examined the underlying values and norms that have led proofreading to proliferate and the implications of this practice for higher education, Turner (2012, 2015a, 2015b, 2018) conducted interviews with students and academic staff, focus groups with students, and a thematic analysis of email-based discussions among English for academic purposes (EAP) practitioners. Her analysis of these various stakeholders’ perspectives on proofreading and reports of her conversations with other academics eloquently capture the complexity of this research space, revealing that the more one

tries to establish a firm relationship between writing pedagogy and proofreading, the more dilemmas one encounters (Blommaert, Street, Turner, & Scott, 2007; Turner, 2015a). Turner (2015a) likened this to a “Humpty Dumpty experience” in which proofreading might seem attractive as a “quick fix” to academic writing but in fact raises many deeper issues. These include where to draw the boundary between proofreading and altering content, how to prevent removing or distorting the student’s voice, and, in the case of postgraduate research, what happens when a student who “hasn’t had complete control over word choice” (Turner, 2015a, p. 378) attempts to defend his or her thesis.

In these discussions of the contentious role of proofreading in higher education, the assumption has been that this issue primarily (if not exclusively) concerns NNEs, who are recurrently referred to by the euphemism *international students*. For instance, issues have been raised over “international students in particular having their theses proofread” (Turner, 2015a, p. 375), “foreign students seeking proofreading support” (Shaw, 2014, para. 3), and “the pursuit of income from international students that has created the problem of writers whose language proficiency is not fit for purpose, and who then unsurprisingly turn to proofreaders with inappropriate requests” (Harwood et al., 2009, p. 61; see also Kettle, 2017, for an example of an instructor’s adoption of this parlance and Tardy, 2015, for evidence of its use on a university writing program website).³ This usage is problematic because it portrays all international students as NNEs and overgeneralizes in representing them as linguistically deficient. It simultaneously reinforces a false dichotomy in which domestic students are assumed to be NESs by default, thereby failing to recognize language diversity among them. By neglecting to mention domestic students and NESs, much of the literature problematizing proofreading has implied that even if these populations did use proofreading, this would not be a problem.

³ During my employment for an online proofreading company, I have observed student clients adopting this discourse in representing themselves and their writing, in comments such as “I am an international student so there might be some errors.” I find such comments concerning because they convey an uncritical self-affiliation with the stereotype that international students are linguistically deficient (see Spencer-Rodgers, 2001, for a discussion of stereotypical beliefs about international students).

Whether or not NNEs constitute the majority of users of proofreading services, to portray the use of proofreading as a “non-native speaker issue” would be an oversimplification. In the Australian postgraduate context, Scott (1998) characterized struggles with academic writing as more complex than whether a student “has enough English,” pointing out that although such struggles may be amplified in students for whom English is not a first language, all students face new challenges when presented with the task of writing a dissertation. She cautioned against “the idea that English is the problem and that students can be referred to experts to ‘sort out the English’, leaving the supervisors free to concentrate on content” (p. 219). Instead, she suggested that the development of writing skills should be encouraged as an integral part of doctoral education and that literacy brokering⁴ should be openly discussed as one of many resources that may support students in the writing process, rather than being problematized.

2.2 Expectations of Writtenness

Previous research efforts examining why university students may resort to proofreading services and the issues surrounding this practice have focused mainly on graduate students’ dissertations and writing for publication (e.g., Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Turner, 2012, 2018). Turner’s (2012) interviews with PhD supervisors in the United Kingdom revealed that they were willing to correct students’ written errors to a certain extent, but if students made recurring errors or did not seem to learn from corrections, the professors told them to pursue external proofreading. Turner noted that professors hedged when discussing the ethics surrounding this practice. They expected the students’ written errors to be corrected but implied that “the proofreader is supposed not to think” (p. 24). Drawing on the same interview data, Turner (2015b) described the role of proofreading in facilitating writtleness, which she defined as “the written nature of the text, the culture of evaluation surrounding the quality of the writing, and the wider

⁴ Although she did not use the term “literacy broker,” Scott (1998) conceived of the entire process of rewriting, redrafting, and proofreading as falling under the umbrella of editing of student work, and she acknowledged that the supervisor, the student writer, and others including professional proofreaders may be involved to varying degrees in this process.

socio-symbolic effects that this issue has in academic culture” (p. 205). As an example of how the quest for writtenness may play out in the postgraduate context, some professors in Turner’s study feared students’ errors could reflect poorly on themselves as supervisors, yet they would at some point draw the line on personally correcting their students’ texts. They recognized that a proofreader could ameliorate these issues by correcting the errors and thereby improving the work’s writtenness—in terms of both the end product itself and the visible effort that has gone into achieving that end product—which would in turn reflect well on the supervisor. Because at many universities (including the site of this research study) writing centre personnel will not provide proofreading services or read an entire thesis (Okuda, 2017; Scott, 1998; van Aswegen, 2007; see Anderson, 2016, for a student’s response to being refused such services), a supervisor who is unable or unwilling to personally correct students’ lexico-grammatical errors past a point has no choice but to refer the student to services outside the university. As Scott (1998) and Turner (2012) noted, many thesis manuscripts eventually receive corrections from both supervisors and proofreaders.

An argument that has been made to justify such proofreading interventions, particularly at the graduate level, is that the research itself is more important than how it is written. In multiple studies of graduate student writing, student interviewees have described their professors and research supervisors as being fixated on their grammatical errors and thereby distracted from their ideas and insights (Shin, 2008; Turner, 2015b; Wang & Li, 2008), an issue that proofreading could prevent. For example, Wang and Li’s (2008) study of international postgraduate research students from non-English-speaking backgrounds in a university in Australia found that although most students did not expect their supervisors to spend a lot of time correcting linguistic errors, they received such corrections anyway, sometimes with a lack of attention to macro-level features. One student reported having to “force” her supervisor to focus on the structure and content of her paper rather than just grammatical mistakes. Another stated that she would rather her supervisor focus on “the thinking, the research process” (p. 94) because she could receive language support elsewhere, such as from the Academic Skills Program or from native speaker

acquaintances. In Shin's (2008) study, native-Korean-speaking graduate students at a university in the western United States also expressed frustration with the difficulty of translating their ideas into English. Several participants reported having received comments from supervisors or journal reviewers that although the content of their papers was fine, their linguistic errors—variously described as “awkward sentences,” “writing usage,” “language problems,” or “poor English” (p. 362)—resulted in negative consequences such as requests for further revisions or lowered grades. The participants described feeling angry about such outcomes; one stated, “I was really frustrated because language problems are really beyond my control” (p. 362).

In addition to causing frustration, the type and quality of corrective feedback that students receive from their instructors or supervisors may be unhelpful to them. Many studies have found that students tend to value corrective feedback and believe they benefit from it (e.g., Hyland, 1998; Lee, 2007; see Ferris, 2004, for a review). However, students may adopt instructor feedback without fully understanding it (Hyland, 1998; Zhao, 2010). McMartin-Miller's (2014) study of student perceptions of instructor feedback found that some students felt overwhelmed or depressed when errors were marked comprehensively rather than selectively, and that some became frustrated if they did not understand how to interpret and respond to instructor feedback. These findings underline Ferris's (2004) point that error correction alone may not help students to become more effective writers; students may also need direct instruction on “why linguistic accuracy and editing skills are important” (Ferris, 2004, p. 59), as well as grammar instruction and an introduction to revision strategies. Students who receive corrective feedback with no supporting instruction may never learn how to correct their own work and may therefore feel the need to resort to proofreading.

Even though students or their supervisors may expect proofreading to eliminate any language issues that might prevent the students' ideas from being communicated effectively, students may not fully realize how their lexico-grammatical choices convey meaning or, in some cases, impede comprehensibility (e.g., Turner, 2015b). In turn, their instructors or supervisors may not know how to

provide instruction on how to make effective lexico-grammatical choices to represent their intended meaning—or they may not consider it their responsibility to do so. In the undergraduate context, multiple studies have considered the extent to which content instructors are willing to provide writing instruction and the relative value of such instruction in relation to their other responsibilities. For instance, in a study of U.K. university teachers' understandings of undergraduate writing, Tuck (2016) observed a discursive separation of writing from disciplinary meaning-making in higher education and a resulting marginalization of “writing work”—that is, the teaching, correction, and assessment of writing. Even while the teachers in the study, who included representatives from both sciences and humanities, recognized the importance of writing ability in their various disciplines, some also expressed annoyance at having to devote time to writing instruction and feedback. One participant, for example, spent long hours commenting on and correcting lexico-grammatical issues in students' writing yet made clear that she “experiences this work as a time-consuming distraction from what she believes is her core task: helping students ‘understand the science’” (Tuck, 2016, p. 1619). Based on her findings, Tuck suggested that writing work may be afforded relatively low value in institutions of higher education, unevenly distributed to those of lesser status (such as graduate students), and therefore resented by instructors or even considered risky to take on in lieu of more highly rewarded tasks. Similar findings were reported by Séror (2008) in a study on the role of writing feedback in the academic socialization of undergraduate Japanese exchange students at a Canadian university, who indicated that teaching activities—including providing detailed feedback on students' written assignments—took time away from conducting research, a more highly valued pursuit.

With respect to writing instruction, university instructors may view the enforcement of “standard written English” in particular to be outside their purview. In a multiple case study of undergraduate international students in an Australian university, Kettle (2017) described how one student received positive feedback on his expression of key ideas and written arguments, but was referred by his instructor to “the assistance offered to international students” (p. 103) for correction of grammar and expressions. In

fact, this instructor indicated that she would not assign a final mark until the assignment had been corrected. Similarly, Zappa (2007) and Séror (2008) found in their studies of undergraduate exchange students at a Canadian university that instructors did not always correct or even indicate students' written errors, and that students were often recommended to have their work corrected by a native speaker. There are two major implications of these findings: first, that the recipients of such feedback are positioned as weak writers who must depend on others to fulfill the writing objectives of their courses (Zappa, 2007), and second, that the withholding of writing correction constitutes one way for instructors to exercise power over their students. However, as Séror indicated, content area instructors may resist teaching English writing skills because they feel untrained or unqualified to do so, even while recognizing that it is unfair to students to "drop them in the water knowing that they can't swim" (p. 97).

This discursive separation of writing from content is also apparent in the context of postgraduate writing. In an analysis of documents including policies, guidelines, and tip sheets pertaining to doctoral thesis writing published on the websites of graduate schools in Canada, Starke-Meyerring et al. (2014) found that while the schools in their study conceived of the thesis as a knowledge product that would make an original contribution to the field, the process of writing the thesis was "conceptualized as separate from the discipline or research culture to which the thesis contributes" (p. A-17). This was evident in that writing support services tended to be placed in marginal or peripheral locations on campus rather than located within disciplinary contexts. Furthermore, guidelines and advice on thesis writing were inconsistent across institutions and were not based on empirical research. The researchers also found contradictory advice about proofreading. Some institutions explicitly allowed students to hire an editor and provided guidelines for how to do so. However, one institution asserted that hiring an editor is categorically unacceptable, reasoning that editing should take place as part of the learning process through collaboration between the student, the supervisor, and other academics in the university. This policy implies a concern that the learning experience might be negatively affected if a student resorts to using a third-party proofreader. Starke-Meyerring et al. suggested that such inconsistencies among

institutional policies may signify a developing response to “emerging concerns about how students arrive at the knowledge product that is the thesis” (p. A-21), indicating that there may be room for further development and clarification of proofreading policies given the changing context of academic writing. Their findings expose a need for more empirically informed guidelines on doctoral writing and an expanded dialogue on the potential role of literacy brokers in the thesis writing process.

A similar distinction between the written text and the learning process has been observed in South Africa, where many universities formally or informally require that theses and dissertations be subject to language editing prior to submission yet also provide inconsistent guidelines on acceptable practices for editors (Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010). A survey of 37 editors of theses and dissertations, most of whom edited in English, revealed that the participants limited their interventions to correcting language and other textual errors and did not consider themselves to play a significant role in students’ learning processes. They tended to abstain from “tasks related to layout and formatting, correlating parts, . . . ensuring adherence to the house style of the institution, and checking referencing and the bibliography” (Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010, p. 162), possibly with the understanding that matters of style and referencing are part of what students will be assessed on and are therefore the responsibility of students and their supervisors. These findings should be interpreted with caution, however, as they are based on self-reported data and may reflect editors’ conceptions of what is ethical rather than their actual practices. The authors noted that “in practice, it may be difficult for editors to reconcile their compulsion to optimise the communicative function of the text with their awareness of the ethical constraints on the editing of dissertations and theses” (p. 164).

Students may also resort to proofreading because they are under financial pressure to finish their degree. As the owner of an online proofreading company, Lines (2016) surveyed 47 clients (all graduate students) who had submitted a thesis in which she suspected or identified plagiarism in the form of copying text. All of them cited financial pressure to perform, in addition to lack of adequate English skills and lack of support from instructors and supervisors, as a reason for plagiarizing. Based on her personal

experience, Lines proposed that these are the same reasons students pursue substantive editing, which she characterized as another type of plagiarism in the form of collusion. When under financial pressure, students may try to purchase substantive editing from a proofreading service because it is a minimal expense compared to tuition fees, meaning that it costs less to hire a proofreader than to retake a failed course or to enroll for additional terms while revising or rewriting one's own work. This makes proofreading an attractive investment for students with a consumer mentality or who are under pressure to complete a degree within a certain time frame.

Finally, studies of doctoral students' attempts to publish in peer-reviewed journals have cast proofreading in a different light: as an accepted practice in the realm of academic publishing (as discussed by Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014; Lillis & Curry, 2010). For example, Li and Flowerdew (2007) examined the academic literacy practices of Chinese science doctoral students in Hong Kong and Mainland China who were under high pressure to publish in English. For these students, publishing in journals included in the Science Citation Index (most of which are in English) was a graduation requirement, and dissertations in their fields tended to be composed of published papers. Many of the students were described as having weak or inadequate English proficiency, and they were found to rely on writing correction from a variety of others, including supervisors, peers, language professionals (often academics within the same university who are also speakers of English as an additional language), and commercial editorial services. Li and Flowerdew suggested that Chinese science students and scientists (and presumably other NNES scholars as well) could benefit from more use of online editing services, given the importance of publishing in English language journals. They expressed hope that Chinese scientists' increasing ability to access and afford editing services would allow more people to take advantage of them. In the context of doctoral student publishing writers at a Canadian university, Fazel (2018) found that both NES and NNES students received feedback on language issues from journal peer reviewers. In line with Belcher (2007), he concluded that language issues alone did not often seem to constitute grounds for rejection of a

manuscript, yet presubmission proofreading would still be advisable for novice academics submitting to peer-reviewed journals.

2.3 Ethics of Proofreading

The ethics of commercial proofreading has been raised as a subject of debate in the media as well as among academics. On the one hand, it has been argued that proofreading may “help students with weak English language skills and dyslexia” (Shaw, 2014) or even correct a bias in favor of students who are highly proficient in written English (Harwood et al., 2009). On the other hand, opponents of proofreading have suggested that it allows students to play a passive role in the writing process, that students are unfairly rewarded for the proofreader’s linguistic proficiency when they receive high marks on proofread assignments, and—as mentioned earlier—that students who can afford to hire a proofreader have an unfair advantage over their peers who cannot (Harwood et al., 2009). It has also been suggested that students who use a proofreader are conceding ownership of their work. A related concern, particularly if a student uses an online service whose employees are anonymous, is that the student may not be able to choose a proofreader based on his or her qualifications. In such cases the proofreader may not be familiar with the genres or conventions of the student’s field of study and may thus make changes that are inappropriate. At the same time, the student may accept the proofreader’s changes without reflecting on them or learning from them (Harwood et al., 2009; Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010; Scott, 1998), effectively buying his or her way out of developing literacy skills (Scurr, 2006).

A further criticism of academic proofreading is that it is difficult to draw the line between a student’s work and a proofreader’s modifications. There is no definitive boundary between copy editing (“for paragraph organisation and form, sentence structure and grammar, word usage, spelling, punctuation, and so on”; Scott, 1998, p. 221) and content editing (“for proper logic, factual truth, sufficiency of evidence, and depth of insight”; p. 221). It has also been suggested that it is problematic to approach second language (L2) writing as if each error can be fixed by applying the corresponding rule (Turner, 2012). If that were the case, a student could merely accept or reject the suggestions offered by a

word-processing program (a discussion of interview participants' views on automated grammar correction software is presented in section 6.5.4). In reality, however, proofreading is not so straightforward: "One change leads to other changes. . . . There is then the likelihood, [sic] that an external proofreader could have substantial involvement in writing the text" (Turner, 2012, p. 24). In addition, Turner (2015a) advocated a reevaluation of the term *proofreading* itself, arguing that it masks the efforts of both the student author and the proofreader. Because in the publishing industry the term *proofreading* refers to a final quality check (Matarese, 2016), the same term when used in higher education institutions may gloss over the fact that more substantive textual alteration is taking place.

Many proofreaders deal with the ambiguity surrounding authorship by making comments as well as corrections. Scott noted that editors see themselves as "the readers' representative" (p. 221) and often insert comments to suggest how student authors could rephrase passages to make their meaning clearer. Harwood et al.'s (2010) interviews with academic proofreaders revealed that a number of participants used this strategy to avoid an ethically compromising position. Several proofreaders in their study reported limiting their direct corrections to mechanical issues such as grammar and spelling and then inserting comments on other issues, thereby leaving the responsibility of correcting those issues with the author. Harwood et al. (2010) concluded that it is up to universities to determine what constitutes acceptable practices for proofreaders and that such expectations should be made clear to all stakeholders.

In the interest of regulating proofreading practices, organizations in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada have instituted guidelines for what students and their supervisors may and may not ask proofreaders to do when editing student work. The Editors' Association of Canada (2006), for instance, requires that a student obtain written permission from his or her supervisor before purchasing proofreading services for a thesis. However, findings from the Australian context indicate that even where such guidelines exist, they are often ignored. For example, the Institute of Professional Editors (n.d.) in Australia publishes Guidelines for Editing Research Theses and provides separate guides for students, supervisors, and editors to clarify each party's roles and responsibilities in the editing of a thesis

manuscript. Yet Lines's (2016) survey of 50 online proofreading services revealed that 44 of them violated the guidelines by offering substantive editing. Six of the 44 sites mentioned ethical guidelines when explaining their services and did not seem to realize that their own services violated those guidelines by providing heavy editing or rewriting.

In Canada, the existence of the Guidelines for Editing Theses (Editors' Association of Canada, 2006) and the University of British Columbia's (UBC's) endorsement of this policy (UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, n.d.) indicate that thesis editing is a recognized practice among professional editors and within the institution. It is unclear, however, how many students and supervisors are aware of and adhere to the guidelines. In addition, while some proofreading companies in Canada have agreed to follow the guidelines in offering their services to students, presumably many have not. A student who wants a more substantive edit than the Editors' Association of Canada guidelines allow need only to find a proofreader or proofreading service that does not strictly enforce the guidelines or to look to a service in another country, such as the United States, where no editors' organization has published guidelines on thesis editing.

At the same time, those guidelines pertain only to thesis editing, and there is no clearly stated institutional policy on proofreading of other types of documents. The UBC policy on Academic Integrity & Plagiarism requires only that students "give credit to other people's ideas" by "completing assignments independently or acknowledging collaboration" (UBC Library, n.d.). Likewise, the university policy on Academic Misconduct defines "use of or participation in unauthorized collaborative work" as cheating and use of "another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs)" as plagiarism, both of which may be subject to disciplinary measures (UBC Student Services, 2018a). Neither policy offers specific guidelines for students who seek help from a proofreader. The program manager of the Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication reported to me that tutors are trained to expect student requests for proofreading, which they handle by trying to build relationships with those students and to provide social support with writing (R. Shaw, personal communication, November 11, 2017).

Much of the research on students' use of proofreading services has focused on graduate students' dissertations and writing for publication (e.g., Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Turner, 2012), whereas less attention has been paid to other genres of student writing or language brokering practices among undergraduates, and the North American context has rarely been considered. In addition, the a priori assumption that it is primarily L2 English speakers who engage proofreading services has not been empirically verified; most relevant research on student participants has begun with a sample of L2 English speakers. Finally, although many have weighed in on the ethical implications of students' use of proofreading, there has been little consideration of whether the practice affects students' academic identity, language development, or other learning outcomes. Further examination of these issues will allow for clarification of expectations toward student writing, both within and beyond the institution.

2.4 Researcher Positionality

Since July 2013, I have been employed as a senior editor at an online proofreading company, for which I was employed full time for about three years before switching to part time when I began my current master's program. In this capacity I have edited more than 7,000 documents amounting to more than 13 million words. Working alone or in tandem with other senior editors, I have also trained and provided ongoing feedback to more than 50 editors who have been employed by the company. In the course of these efforts, I have provided extensive written feedback to both NESs and NNEs who represent an array of language and educational backgrounds and varying levels of writing expertise.

My clients have included everyone from middle schoolers to university professors, and they represent a multitude of fields (e.g., computer science, fine arts, education, medicine, and philosophy) and submit documents intended for various contexts in a variety of genres (e.g., applications for university and postgraduate programs, course papers, email correspondence, marketing materials, and postgraduate theses). An aspect common to all clients is that they seek help with their English writing and are willing to pay for such help. It was my firsthand observations of how the achievement of "standard written English" stood as a barrier to these writers—who represent both NESs and NNEs—that impelled me to

pursue a research-oriented master's degree to further examine this issue. Yet although my experiences as an editor have shaped my research trajectory, I did not enter graduate school with the aim of becoming a better editor or benefitting the editing industry. Even so, since returning to school, I have found that my editing work and schoolwork are complementary: While the coursework I have completed has helped me to refine the feedback I provide to both clients and other editors, I have also learned much from my clients—particularly graduate students and research professors—about how to write for particular academic audiences. Simultaneously, the courses I have taken have given me a deeper respect for scholars who write in English as a second or foreign language, and this in turn informs how I approach the task of editing their work.

In the interest of transparency, I must note that this research project has never been affiliated with or sponsored by my employer. I have not discussed the findings with colleagues at work, nor have I used my employment as an editor to promote the study. The topic of my editing experience sometimes came up during follow-up interviews, in which case I made clear to the participants that the research was being conducted independently and did not mention the name of my employer. Ultimately, this research project represents the intersection of my professional experience with my scholarly interest and is equally inextricable from each aspect of my identity.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study was carried out drawing on the theoretical framework of academic literacies, a social practice approach to the study of literacy, particularly writing, in academic contexts. In a move away from the “textual bias” (Horner, 1999, as cited in Lillis & Scott, 2007), or “the treatment of language/writing as solely or primarily a linguistic object” (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 10), the aim of academic literacies research is to articulate the nature of the “problem” of student writing through a focus on literacy practices rather than on texts (Lillis & Scott, 2007). This transformative approach also constitutes a departure from the normative approach that has often been applied in research on literacy, which is a skills-focused, deficit model of identifying academic conventions and promoting students’ proficiency in using them (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). The choice of an academic literacies framework is based on the conception of academic writing as a meaning-making activity that occurs in the context of institutional pressures and power relations and is also tied up with issues of identity for all stakeholders (Lea & Street, 1998). Within this framework, viewing literacy as a social practice provides “a powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7).

3.1 A Social Practice Approach

Social practice approaches to knowledge construction recognize learning as a fundamentally social activity, the essence of sociocultural theory. In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky (1962) theorized that adolescents develop the capacity for conceptual thinking in response to challenges that arise as they enter adult society, and that development of higher-level thinking is predicated on social interaction. Language plays a fundamental role in this process, as it is one of the psychological tools by which one masters mental processes (Daniels, 2008). For Vygotsky, language itself was fundamentally social, and by extension, any use of language, even in isolation, was therefore social as well. It is important to note, however, that Vygotsky conceived of inner speech (thinking) and writing as opposites in terms of

attributes such as complexity and explicitness, even though he considered both to be monologic forms of speech (Miller, 2011).

Whereas Vygotsky's primary focus was human cognition, others have built on his work to examine human activity (Daniels, 2008). Lave and Wenger (1991), for example, described how learning takes place through participation in the social world rather than as an isolated cognitive process. Someone becoming part of a community of practice—whatever that practice may be—“gain[s] access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37). This view of learning as participation allows for recognition of the relations between the learning process and social reproduction of the community of practice, including its existing conflicts and inequalities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In the academic context, literacy practices play a key role in students' participation in various academic communities. Clark and Ivanič (1997) defined literacy in relation to language: “While ‘language’ is a semiotic system, ‘literacy’ is the ways of using, and ability to use, that semiotic system” (p. 10). Typically, literacy itself is not the end goal of education; it is embedded in a broader context and purposefully carried out as a means to some other end (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Therefore, an examination of literacy practices must take into consideration the context in which those practices take place as well as their underlying motivations. The plural term *academic literacies*, rather than the singular *literacy*, signifies that there is an array of literacy practices in use across institutions and discourse communities⁵ (e.g., Flowerdew, 2000), any of which may be examined through the academic literacies framework (Turner, 2012).

Literacy practices in particular are “understood as existing in the relationships between people” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) rather than within individuals, and they are based on shared ideologies, social identities, and adherence to rules governing the creation and distribution of texts. In the academic context, this means that students are initiated into the conventions of various fields through their

⁵ Flowerdew used this term instead of *communities of practice* but indicated that they are the same.

participation in literacy practices, which is guided by their instructors and supervisors. Aspects of students' identity may be reinforced or challenged by such participation (Ivanič, 1994, 1998). For example, some of the participants in Lillis's (2001) study of students from nontraditional backgrounds struggled to understand their instructors' expectations, which were presented to them as "common sense" and hence not clearly explicated. Lillis contended that this discourse of "common sense" functions to restrict access to higher education for students who are likely to be unfamiliar with academic writing conventions—that is, students whose identities were formed in contexts that do not privilege that kind of literacy. In particular, students whose writing contains surface features that are considered "nonstandard" may struggle to gain legitimacy in the higher education context, which may in turn affect their sense of identity (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1994; Lea & Street, 1998). In viewing literacy as a social practice, the academic literacies framework can be used to examine how aspects of identity such as agency (Duff, 2012) and authority (Clark & Ivanič, 1997) play a role in students' participation in literacy practices.

3.2 Academic Literacies in Relation to Other Approaches

An important consideration in using academic literacies as a theoretical framework is to define what it is not. In articulating the purpose of what was then a developing approach, Lea and Street (1998) pointed out that much research on student writing in higher education has focused on the difference between "good" and "bad" writing, considering writing as a concrete set of skills that students either possess or do not. This deficit model frames student writing—and diversity itself (Lillis & Scott, 2007)—as a "problem" that needs to be "fixed" (as observed in Tuck, 2016), without taking account of other factors in text production. A sinister extension of this view is that good writing reflects good, rational thinking, whereas, as Turner problematized in a discussion with other influential academic literacies theorists, "if there's something wrong with your writing, then there's something lacking in your thinking, which means there is something wrong with you" (Blommaert et al., 2007, p. 138). According to Turner, within the deficit model, correction of a student's writing may be perceived as a matter of applying a "quick fix," a view neglectful of the labor that goes into the revision process (Blommaert et al., 2007).

Another perspective is to view student writing as an aspect of academic socialization, through which students are inducted into specific domains of knowledge by their participation in language practices and social interactions (Duff, 2010). In outlining their new framework of academic literacies, Lea and Street argued in 1998 that at that time, the socialization approach had not gone far enough in acknowledging the heterogeneity of disciplinary conventions or questioning how power is exercised in the process of socialization. It seems probable that this critique was being leveled at a genre-based research orientation that had emerged in force throughout the previous decade, particularly in the area of EAP. Researchers in this area have worked to describe characteristics of academic discourse as well as discipline-specific genres and discourses in efforts “to assist learners in developing their academic communicative competence by means of explaining disciplinary practices, expectations, and discourses” (Morita & Kobayashi, 2008, p. 244). However, they have been criticized for essentializing disciplinary practices and for neglecting to recognize the power imbued in academic genres and associated with their use (Morita & Kobayashi, 2008; Street, 1996).

In a review of work on academic discourse socialization, Morita and Kobayashi (2008) explained that in contrast to such work on “what students need to know” (p. 244), more recent studies have also taken more critical perspectives toward “how they are socialized” (p. 244). In a follow-up review, Kobayashi, Zappa-Hollman, and Duff (2017) identified a trend toward more longitudinal research on students’ learning and identity development, as well as more studies recognizing students’ acts of resistance to or acceptance of academic discourses. Such research has allowed for a recognition that learners are not “passive, willing subjects who will necessarily appropriate and reproduce the various (socio)linguistic forms, practices, and values of their teachers or other co-participants” (Duff, 2008, p. 110), in alignment with work in academic literacies.

Lea and Street (1998) conceived of academic literacies as encompassing the study skills and academic socialization approaches while foregrounding how institutional practices, power relations, and writer identity factor into literacy practices. Given that related concerns have been raised by researchers

working from other theoretical orientations in the intervening decades, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that academic literacies is not the only suitable theoretical framework for this research. There were two main considerations that contributed to the choice of academic literacies: First, the construct of literacy brokering emerged from and remains closely linked with this theoretical orientation, and second, the major concerns that have been the driving force behind much academic literacies research resonate with me based on my experience of employment as an editor. The deeper one delves into the topic of proofreading, the more entangled one becomes in issues of academic integrity, language ideology, and conflicting discourses of internationalization and writing pedagogy. I chose academic literacies as a theoretical framework because it is an effective way of capturing the complex socio-political dynamics of such work (Turner, 2012).

At the core of academic literacies is a focus on epistemology and identity, which are viewed as potential sites of struggle in institutional writing practices (Jones, Turner, & Street, 1999). Generally speaking, students are expected to learn and eventually reproduce “standard academic writing conventions” (Lillis, 1997, p. 187) through academic writing practices. However, students may feel threatened or resistant if their prior experience or identity is at odds with such conventions, and this incongruity has been the subject of much academic literacies research (e.g., Ivanič, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2001).

A further consideration of the academic literacies framework is attention to “the gaps between academic staff expectations and student interpretations of what is involved in student writing” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). Studies from various orientations have uncovered evidence that expectations of student writing differ among students and their instructors or supervisors, which can result in frustration or even conflict (e.g., Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Tuck, 2016; Wang & Li, 2008). The practice of involving language brokers such as proofreaders in academic text production may alleviate some such tensions but raises others (Turner, 2015b). As a transformative approach rooted in a concern with

addressing issues of inequality and conflicting epistemology, academic literacies therefore provides an appropriate framework for viewing this multifaceted research problem.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology developed for this study. First, I discuss the rationale for employing a mixed methods design to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1. I then describe the procedures for selection and recruitment of participants and the methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the limitations of this study with regard to sampling and the scope of the survey instrument.

The research questions were addressed through a mixed methods design consisting of an online survey and follow-up interviews with students enrolled at the UBC Vancouver campus.⁶ Mixed methods research “enables the researcher to simultaneously ask confirmatory and exploratory questions” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 33); therefore, this approach is well suited to the aims of this study, which are to examine whether non-native English speakers are the predominant users of proofreading and to explore the nature of proofreading services students receive, students’ reasons for using proofreading, and their perceptions of the outcomes of this practice. This study can be classified as an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design in which “the initial quantitative results are explained further with the qualitative data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). The quantitative data collection instrument, an online survey, was used to answer the first and third research questions, who uses proofreading services and to what extent, and to provide partial data on the second and fourth research questions, why students use proofreading services and what the perceived outcomes of this practice are. The results of the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (see Chapter 5). Qualitative data were then collected through follow-up interviews, which were coded thematically and analyzed to further explore the second and fourths research questions (see Chapter 6). Salient findings from both data sets are further analyzed and discussed in relation to the previous literature in Chapter 7.

⁶ Students enrolled at UBC’s Okanagan campus were not included in the study because it would not have been possible for me to visit their campus to advertise the study or conduct interviews in person due to the limited time frame of this research project.

Academic literacies researchers have advocated and often employed an ethnographic design in examining literacy practices. Influential ethnographic studies of academic writers and their texts include Ivanič's (1998) examination of how academic writing both shapes and is shaped by identity, which is based on a case study of a student's struggle with the presentation of self in her writing; Lillis's (2001) ethnographic multiple-case study of the academic writing practices of 10 nontraditional students entering higher education; and Lillis and Curry's (2010) longitudinal ethnographic study of multilingual scholars writing for publication in English-medium journals. In all three of these studies, the analysis of texts in addition to interview data provides a nuanced view of the interactions of context and identity with academic writing practices. However, Lillis and Scott (2007) pointed out that the small scale of many such ethnographic studies is a weakness in the field of academic literacies and called for more large-scale and/or longitudinal studies. One of the aims of this study is therefore to draw on a larger sample to contribute a new perspective to this line of research. This exploratory study will pave the way for more in-depth research in the future by identifying potential populations of interest and illuminating issues that warrant further exploration.

4.1 Participants

The survey sample consisted of students enrolled in any capacity at the UBC Vancouver campus. Because one of the survey aims was to identify the typical characteristics of students who use proofreading services, the survey was open to students in all degree programs and at the undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate levels. The criteria for inclusion were current enrollment at UBC and at least one experience of having submitted writing to a proofreader or proofreading service. These inclusion criteria were assessed on the first page of the online survey, and the survey was terminated for respondents who did not meet both criteria (rates of survey termination and completion are presented in Chapter 5).

UBC represents an ideal site for research on this topic because of its academic ranking and demographic characteristics. Its high ranking among universities both in Canada and globally signifies its

competitiveness in recruiting students from all over the world. International students as an administrative category⁷ make up about 24% of the student body enrolled at the Vancouver campus (UBC, 2017), compared to about 11% of the postsecondary student population in Canada (2012–13 data; Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2016). These figures are representative of a trend across Canadian universities, where increasing international enrollment coupled with steady hikes in tuition rates for both undergraduate and postgraduate international students has partially offset decreases in nonfederal funding⁸ since the early 2000s (Anderson, 2015). Total enrollment at UBC Vancouver at the time of the survey in November 2017 was 56,436 students, including distance education students (UBC Student Services, 2017).

Although UBC’s relatively high international enrollment reflects the diversity of students on campus to an extent, it cannot be interpreted as an indicator of linguistic diversity, as not every international student is an NNES and not every domestic student is an NES. Indeed, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (2014) has recognized that “second language writers include international visa students, refugees, and permanent residents as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the United States and Canada” (para. 2) and that they may display different levels of literacy and proficiency in their two or more languages. Enrollment figures fall short in accounting for some of these groups, especially multilingual immigrants and refugees, because they are categorized as domestic students (Tardy, 2015). At the same time, international students may speak English as a primary home language⁹ or consider themselves to have near-native English proficiency (relevant findings from this

⁷ This figure represents the enrollment of students who do not meet the criteria for domestic student status. To enroll as a domestic student, one must either be a Canadian citizen, be a permanent resident of Canada, have refugee status in Canada, or have a parent or guardian who is a diplomat stationed in Canada (UBC Student Services, 2018c). International students must obtain a federal study permit to attend UBC. The relation between enrollment status and linguistic diversity of the student body is discussed in Chapter 6.

⁸ Nonfederal funding includes provincial and municipal sources as well as private donations, investments, endowments, and nongovernmental grants (Anderson, 2015).

⁹ As a speaker of English as a first language (based on the typology delineated by Faez, 2011) from the United States who is enrolled at a university in Canada, I fall into this category.

study are discussed in Chapter 5). Therefore, the survey was designed to include multiple questions about participants' language backgrounds to allow for describing proofreading practices in relation to students' linguistic repertoires.

Sampling was carried out in multiple phases. In the first phase, I contacted the program assistant or equivalent of each academic department on campus (about 90 departments in total) to request assistance in distributing the survey invitation. If a department's website listed multiple program assistants or it was not clear who would be the best person to contact, I sometimes reached out to several people in that department. My initial email explained the purposes of the study, outlined the research questions, and described that participation in the study would entail filling out a survey, which was expected to take about 10 minutes (see Appendix A). If a program assistant agreed to distribute the survey invitation, I replied with an email message that could be forwarded to all students in his or her department. The email contained an invitation to participate in the study, an explanation of the inclusion criteria, and a link to the online survey (see Appendix B). Of about 200 individuals who were contacted, 38 agreed to forward the survey to their student listservs and/or to include the survey invitation in a weekly departmental newsletter. I also advertised the survey by posting flyers on message boards and at bus stops around campus (see Appendix E).

Students who chose to participate followed the link to the online survey hosting site, where they were informed that completion of the survey would indicate consent to participate in the research. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. At the end of the survey, they were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Selection of interview participants from those indicating willingness constituted the second phase of sampling. All participants were offered the incentive of a chance to win a gift card in a random drawing, which was carried out after the survey window closed.

4.2 Data Collection

The first source of data collected was the online survey (see Appendix F). The survey was administered using the UBC Survey Tool, hosted by FluidSurveys. At the time of data collection in November 2017, this tool was available to all UBC faculty, staff, and active students. The data set was hosted and stored in Canada, in compliance with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The survey consisted of about 40 multiple-choice questions and was expected to take about 10 minutes to complete. Participants were first prompted for demographic information such as age, gender, nationality, primary home language, and program of study. In the main part of the survey, they were asked about their writing practices and use of proofreading services. Students had the option to provide an email address if they wished to be entered into the gift card drawing, and then they could check a box to indicate willingness to participate in a follow-up interview.

The online survey was open to participants for a total of three weeks, which was deemed sufficient for collecting the desired number of responses. The survey website was configured to prevent anyone from taking the survey more than once from the same device. After the survey window closed, I sent three waves of emails to respondents who had agreed to participate in a follow-up interview to invite them to schedule an interview date and location (see Appendices C and D). Although I originally attempted to select interview participants through diversity sampling (Gerring, 2007), this strategy was not ultimately feasible because of a low initial rate of response to the interview invitation. Therefore, I expanded the pool of candidates to include all participants who had indicated willingness to undergo a follow-up interview and scheduled an interview with any student who was willing to meet in person on campus. Of the 50 students who indicated willingness to participate in an interview in their survey responses, 46 were contacted and eight of them agreed to schedule an interview. Four individuals were not contacted either because they did not provide an email address or because they were personal friends enrolled in my department. I chose not to interview friends for the study for several reasons: First, I was concerned that their familiarity with the theoretical framework of the study, other discourses in the field,

and my personal accounts of employment as a proofreader could affect their responses, in the sense that they might deliberately craft statements that would correspond to my expectations (or not). In addition, I worried that they might not feel comfortable speaking openly about their relationships with their instructors and supervisors in the department, some of whom would be likely to read the results.

Each interview was conducted in a quiet meeting room on campus where the participant could speak confidentially. Prior to each interview, the participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix G) and invited to select a pseudonym. (Some students did not state a preference, so I randomly chose pseudonyms for them.) All participants were informed that they had the right to skip any question or withdraw from the study at any time. I gave each participant a hard copy of the consent form and invited each of them to contact me after the interview if they had any questions. I had further email contact with four participants after their interviews: two provided more detail about something they had mentioned in the interview, and two changed their pseudonyms.

Each interview lasted between 25 and 60 minutes, with an average time of approximately 41 minutes. The interviews were carried out following a semistructured protocol consisting of open-ended questions (see Appendix H), and the sessions were digitally audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. All sound files and transcripts were encrypted and stored on a password-protected laptop and backed up on an external hard drive, which was kept in a locked room to which I was the only person with access. Pseudonyms were used in the qualitative portion of data analysis and reporting to protect the identity of the participants, who are introduced in Chapter 6.

4.3 Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using the reporting functions provided by UBC Survey Tool. Parts of the data set were also edited in Microsoft Excel and imported into JASP software for statistical analysis. Some findings were illustrated using charts created in Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel, which provided a useful means of between-groups comparison based on students' demographic characteristics. The data are summarized using descriptive statistics in Chapter 5.

Qualitative data were collected for the purpose of explicating and extending the findings of the quantitative analysis. Directly following each semistructured interview session, I transcribed the interview using a transcription scheme adapted from Lillis (2001). Each transcript was then imported into NVivo Pro software (QSR International), which was installed on my personal computer under a UBC student license. NVivo allows both inductive and deductive coding as well as hierarchical organization of codes (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). Coding allows a researcher to “find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct, or theme” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 97).

For this study, inductive codes were developed based on the participants’ responses. In the first stage of coding, I read through each transcript and assigned descriptive labels (single words or phrases) to passages of text to summarize their topic(s) (Miles et al., 2014). Coding was a heuristic process in that it allowed me to make sense of the data and later helped in identifying and exploring commonalities and differences among the participants’ responses. Throughout the process of coding, I iteratively categorized, reorganized, and renamed codes as a means of refining them and recognizing relationships between them. In this process, the theoretical framework of academic literacies served as a lens through which to view the data, informing how I labeled and interpreted the participants’ statements.

Once the interviews were coded, it was possible to identify recurring themes as well as similarities and differences among the participants’ responses. I then selected several major themes to discuss in relation to the theoretical framework of academic literacies and previous findings in the literature. In this way, I was able to contextualize and make meaning of the findings with the aims of discussing their implications and suggesting directions for future research.

4.4 Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the survey sample is not representative of UBC students because it was not feasible to conduct simple random sampling of the entire student body. In addition, although I attempted to distribute the survey invite to people at every academic department on campus, some may

have been missed, and the response and level of enthusiasm varied. In one faculty the survey was not distributed at all because none of the 21 people I contacted agreed to forward the survey invitation. On the other hand, there was a relatively high level of participation from some of the departments whose administrators had been more enthusiastic; thus the participation of students from some departments may reflect their response to the encouragement of administrators and should not be taken to indicate a higher prevalence of proofreading in those departments. Likewise, the lack of response from some departments does not necessarily mean that no students in those departments use proofreading.

A further limitation relates to the follow-up interview sample, which is not representative of either the survey sample or the UBC student body as a whole. In particular, there is a noticeable lack of students from East Asia or speakers of East Asian languages among the interviewees. This is a significant shortcoming, given such students' high enrollment at UBC and sizable representation in the survey sample. Students from China, Japan, and South Korea together make up more than one third of international students at UBC (UBC, 2017) and about one third of international students in the survey sample (33.9%; see Chapter 5). In addition, about one quarter of the entire survey sample (25.8%), including about 20% of domestic students, identified Chinese, Japanese, or Korean as their primary home language. Although some of these survey participants indicated willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, none of them ultimately responded to my requests to schedule a meeting. Therefore, the follow-up interviews should not be interpreted as representative of students' (or international students') perspectives on or experiences of proofreading.

During the survey window, I received critical feedback from one participant regarding the scope of the survey questions. For instance, he thought the definition of the term *proofreading* was confusingly open-ended and that the questions about use of proofreading might force students to generalize about one proofreader or one instance of proofreading rather than capturing the multifaceted experience of someone who had used multiple proofreaders over time for various purposes and with various outcomes. In response, it should be recognized that the survey instrument employed in this study was not intended to

provide detailed accounts of individual students' proofreading experiences but rather to portray the range of possible uses and outcomes of proofreading across a diverse student sample. Some of the student's suggestions could be incorporated into a more fine-grained version of the survey for future studies.

Chapter 5: Quantitative Findings

This chapter presents the results of the online survey about students' use of proofreading services. The questions in the survey were designed to answer the first three research questions, which are further explored along with the fourth research question in Chapter 6. Drawing on the survey data, in this chapter I introduce the findings on who uses proofreading services, explain why, and describe the nature and extent of proofreading support they receive.

During the three-week survey window there were 380 attempts to take the survey, of which 208 were terminated because they did not meet both inclusion criteria, two were terminated because the participant was less than 18 years of age, and 25 were incomplete. This resulted in 145 completed responses. Participants were allowed to skip any question in the survey except those that assessed the inclusion criteria, meaning that a survey attempt was considered complete if the participant reached the end, but some questions may not have been answered. The statistics reported in this chapter represent the percentage of students who answered each question. Questions that allowed more than one response are identified as such in the analysis. The survey was not administered to a simple random sample, and therefore the results cannot provide meaningful indications of statistically significant relationships among variables. To avoid any implication of statistical significance, I use general terms such as *notable* in place of *significant* in the Quantitative Findings chapter.

5.1 Who Uses Proofreading Services

5.1.1 Demographics

The first part of the survey consisted of questions designed to construct a demographic profile of students who use proofreading services, and the results revealed great diversity among the respondents. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 44 ($M = 24.7$, $SD = 5.4$). In terms of gender, 72.9% were female ($n = 105$), 26.4% were male ($n = 38$), and one (0.7%) preferred not to answer. Slightly more than half of them were undergraduate students ($n = 71$; 54.2%), and there were similar numbers of master's students ($n = 31$; 23.7%) and doctoral students ($n = 29$; 22.1%). Fourth-year undergraduates made up the largest

student group ($n = 23$; 17.6%), followed by third-year undergraduates ($n = 20$; 15.3%) and first-year master's students ($n = 16$; 12.2%; see Figure 1). One quarter of doctoral students indicated that they had advanced to PhD candidacy ($n = 7$).

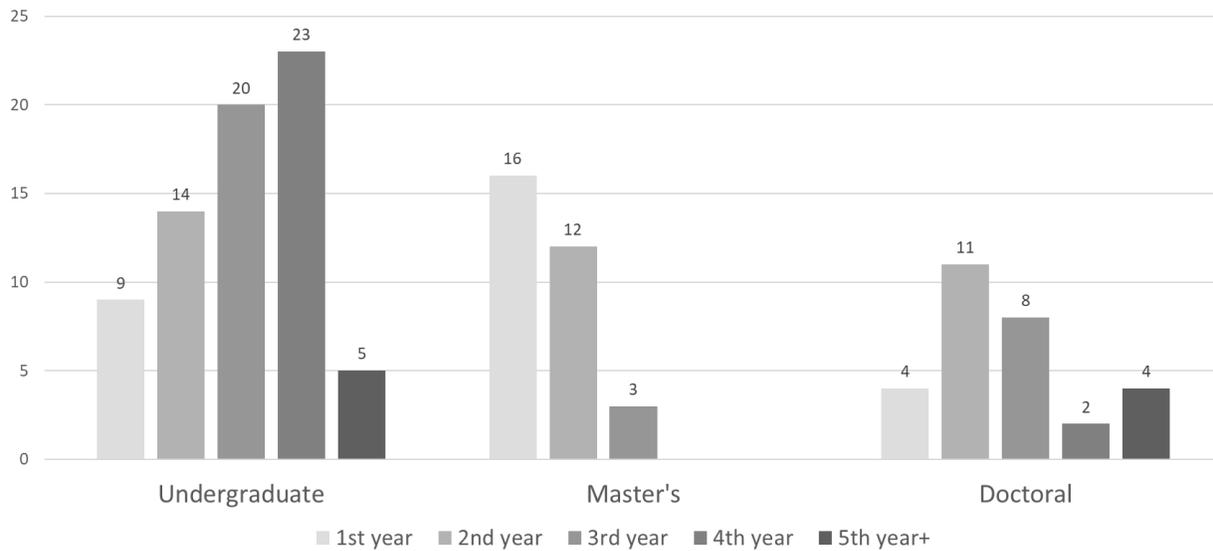


Figure 1. Survey participants' year in school ($n = 131$).

The respondents represented 13 different faculties and schools, with the largest proportions enrolled in the Faculty of Arts ($n = 41$; 28.3%), Faculty of Science ($n = 30$; 20.7%), and Faculty of Applied Science ($n = 20$; 13.8%). They reported 64 different majors, the most common of which were international relations with 12 students (8.3%), computer science with eight students (5.6%), and civil engineering, mining engineering, and dental medicine with six students each (4.2% each). Five students (3.5%) reported being undeclared or unclassified. Ten students reported having a second major, which was unique to each of them. There were also 21 students who reported having a minor, the most popular of which were psychology ($n = 4$; 19%) and law ($n = 3$; 14.3%).

In terms of enrollment status, 58.6% ($n = 85$) of respondents were domestic students, and 41.4% ($n = 60$) were international students. The latter reported 22 different countries of origin, with the largest contingents representing China ($n = 15$; 25.4%), India ($n = 8$; 13.6%), Brazil ($n = 5$; 8.5%), and the United States ($n = 5$; 8.5%).

5.1.2 Language and Educational Background

The next section of the survey consisted of questions about students' language and educational backgrounds. A great majority ($n = 102$; 70.3%) considered themselves to be a native English speaker or to have near-native English proficiency, whereas 29.7% ($n = 43$) did not. The most commonly reported primary home language was English ($n = 61$; 42.4%), followed by Mandarin Chinese ($n = 23$; 16.0%). Twenty-six other languages were reported by between one and eight speakers each. A notable data point is that more than one third of domestic students reported a primary home language other than English ($n = 30$; 35.7%) and 11.8% ($n = 10$) self-identified as NNEs, reflecting the language diversity of Canadian students (see Figure 2).

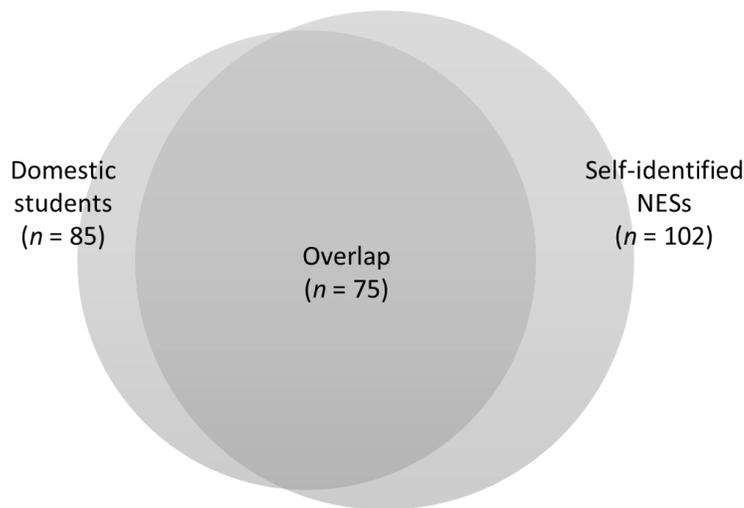


Figure 2. Venn diagram of overlap between domestic students and self-identified NESs, showing that not all domestic students self-identify as NESs.

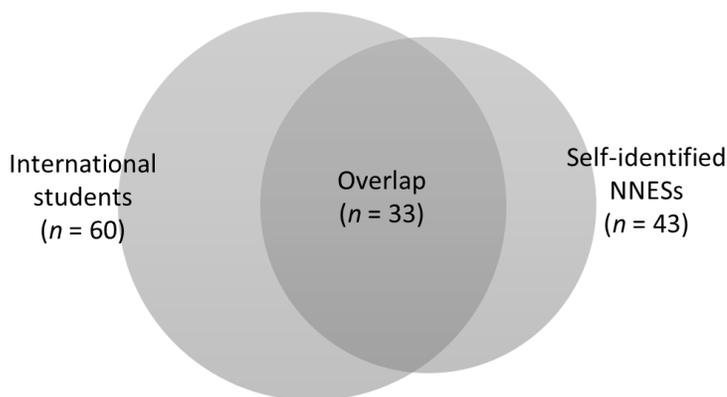


Figure 3. Venn diagram of overlap between international students and self-identified NNEs, showing that almost half of international students do not identify as NNEs.

International students' survey responses further illuminate the diversity and complexity of language backgrounds among UBC students. Although only 11.7% ($n = 7$) of international students reported English as their primary home language, 45% ($n = 27$) of international students considered themselves to be a native English speaker or to have near-native English proficiency (see Figure 3). Among international students who considered themselves native or near-native English speakers, 77.8% ($n = 21$) had attended a high school where the primary language of instruction was English. These high schools were located in India ($n = 8$; 38.1%), the United States ($n = 5$; 23.8%), China ($n = 2$; 9.5%), and Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom ($n = 1$; 4.5% each). Of the six students who considered themselves native or near-native English speakers but had not attended a high school where English was the primary medium of instruction (EMI), one had received a bachelor's degree at an EMI university, two had received graduate-level degrees at such a university, and one had received both a bachelor's and a graduate-level degree at such universities. In other words, of the 27 international students who considered themselves native or near-native English speakers, 92.6% had received previous instruction at an EMI institution.

Considering both domestic and international students whose primary home language was not English ($n = 83$), 48.2% ($n = 40$) self-identified as native or near-native English speakers, whereas

51.83% ($n = 43$) did not. Among those who had attended EMI high school ($n = 49$), 69.4% ($n = 34$) considered themselves native or near-native English speakers. Interestingly, of the 15 students (30.6%) who had attended EMI high school but did not consider themselves native or near-native English speakers, seven (46.7%) had attended high school in Canada. Three of them were enrolled at UBC as international students, and the other four may have been immigrants or generation 1.5 students.¹⁰ Self-identified NNEs also included two students who had previously received a bachelor's degree from an EMI university, three students who had received a postgraduate degree from such a university, and two students who had received both bachelor's and postgraduate degrees from such universities.

Regardless of primary home language, students who had a previous diploma or degree from an EMI institution were much more likely to identify as native or near-native English speakers than those with a diploma or degree from an institution where English was not the primary medium of instruction (see Figures 4 and 5 for a breakdown based on high school medium of instruction). This was true for all levels of education, as 85.5% of students with a diploma from an EMI high school ($n = 91$), 86.6% of students with a bachelor's degree from an EMI university ($n = 46$), and 72% of students with a postgraduate degree from an EMI university ($n = 18$) identified as native or near-native English speakers. In comparison, only 28.9% of students with a diploma from a non-EMI high school ($n = 11$), 25% of students with a bachelor's degree from a non-EMI university ($n = 5$), and 27.3% of students with a postgraduate degree from a non-EMI university ($n = 3$) identified as native or near-native English speakers. Thus, prior English-medium education seemed to contribute to the student participants' English-speaker identity but did not guarantee self-identification as a native or near-native English speaker.

¹⁰ The survey did not include any questions about students' citizenship or residency status in Canada.

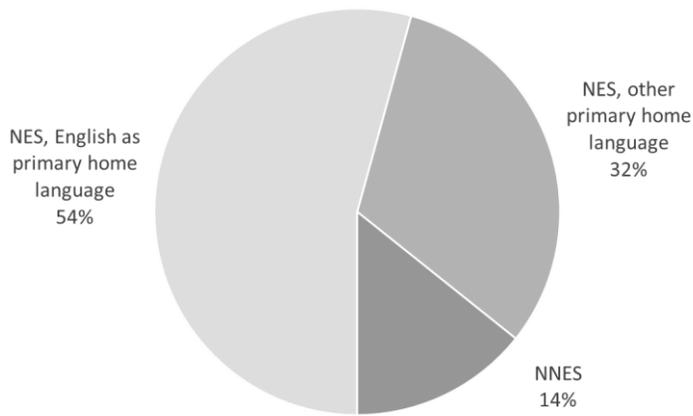


Figure 4. Self-identified NES status, graduates of EMI high schools ($n = 105$).

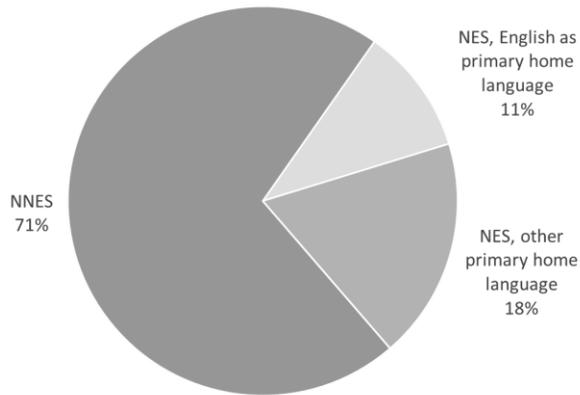


Figure 5. Self-identified NES status, graduates of non-EMI high schools ($n = 38$).

The data revealed that very few students who had attended an EMI high school went on to a non-EMI institution at any level of higher education, and students who had attended a non-EMI high school tended to move gradually toward EMI institutions (see Figure 6). Of the entire sample, 73.6% ($n = 106$) of students had attended an EMI high school. Most of those who had gone on to receive a bachelor's degree had studied at an EMI university, and the same was true for those who had pursued a postgraduate degree. Only two (4.2%) of the students who had pursued a bachelor's degree had studied at a non-EMI university, and only two (11%) of the students who had pursued a postgraduate degree had studied at a

non-EMI university. In contrast, among the 38 students (26.4% of sample) who had not attended an EMI high school, 68% ($n = 17$) of those who had pursued a bachelor's degree had studied at a non-EMI university, and 47% of those who had pursued a postgraduate degree had studied at a non-EMI university. In other words, once students entered EMI education at any level, they tended not to pursue further education in any other language besides English. (It should be noted that UBC, an EMI institution, was the next destination for all students in the sample.)

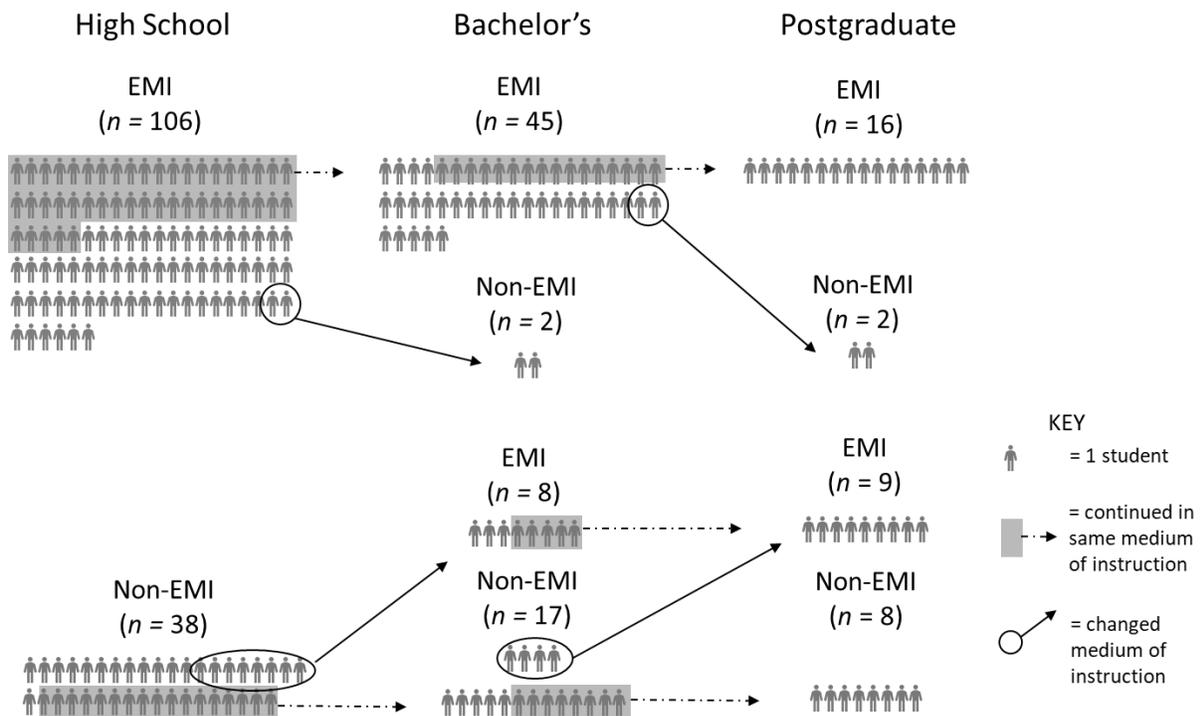


Figure 6. Flows of students from EMI high schools and non-EMI high schools into EMI or non-EMI institutions of higher education prior to enrolling at UBC.

5.1.3 Between-Groups Differences

To examine whether any between-groups differences might provide further insight into the findings, I filtered the data set based on several pairs of binary characteristics: domestic versus international students, self-identified NES versus NNES students, male versus female students, and paid versus unpaid proofreading. The resulting reports revealed several interesting findings. First, when comparing the domestic student group to the international student group, a notable difference is that about

67% ($n = 49$) of domestic students in the sample were undergraduate students, whereas about 38% ($n = 22$) of international students were undergraduates. The inverse was found among graduate students, as about 33% ($n = 24$) of domestic students and 62% ($n = 36$) of international students were graduate students. A similar difference was found when comparing groups by gender, as 60.1% ($n = 57$) of women in the sample were undergraduate students, compared to 34.2% ($n = 12$) of men. The majority of students in the group that paid for proofreading were graduate students as well (63%; $n = 12$), whereas the majority in the group that did not pay were undergraduate students (57%; $n = 64$). There was a less pronounced between-groups difference when comparing the self-identified NES group to the NNES group, as 57.1% of NESs and 47.5% of NNESs were undergraduate students. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of women, domestic, and unpaying students in the sample were undergraduates, whereas the majority of men, international, and paying students were postgraduates (see Figure 7).

There were also a few notable demographic differences between the group of students who had paid for proofreading services ($n = 22$) and those who had not ($n = 123$). First, 54.5% of students who had paid for proofreading considered themselves to be NNESs, versus 25.2% of students who had not paid for proofreading. In addition, 68.2% of students who had paid for proofreading identified as having international student enrollment status, as opposed to 36.6% of students who had not paid for proofreading. Put differently, more than one quarter of self-identified NNESs had paid for proofreading ($n = 22$; 27.9%), compared to just 9.8% ($n = 10$) of self-identified NESs, and similar results were found in a breakdown of international versus domestic students (25% of international students, $n = 15$, vs. 8.2% of domestic students, $n = 7$, had paid for proofreading). Thus, international students and NNES students were found to be more likely to have paid for proofreading than their domestic and NES counterparts, respectively. However, these results should be interpreted in light of the fact that in all four of these groups, as well as in the sample as a whole, the majority of students did not pay for proofreading. In addition, there was virtually no difference between men and women in the sample with regard to payment, as 15.8% of men and 15.2% of women reported that they had paid for proofreading services.

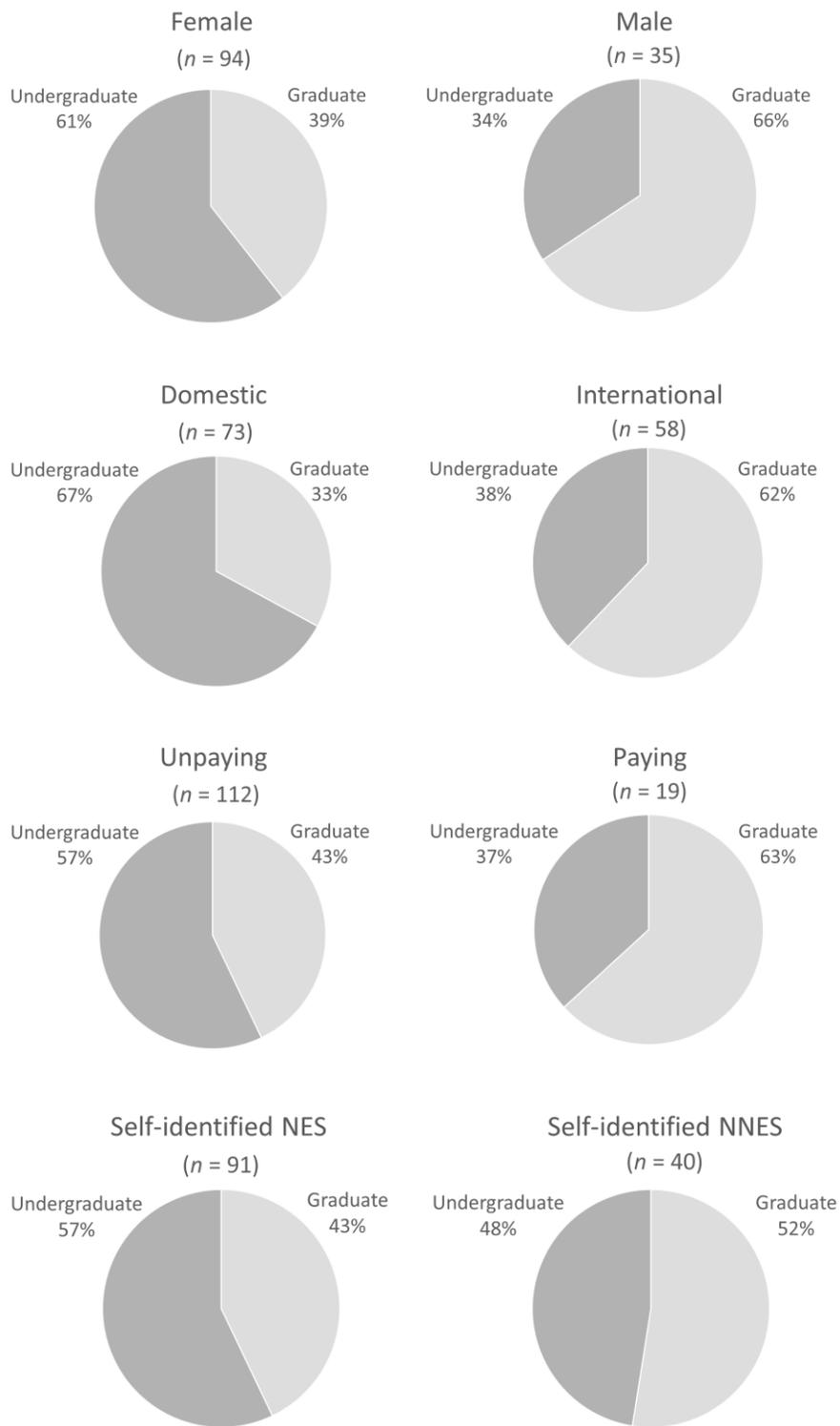


Figure 7. Demographic variables in relation to students' year in school.

5.1.4 Learning Disabilities

Finally, 2.8% of respondents ($n = 4$) indicated that they had been diagnosed with a learning disability, as opposed to 95.9% who had not ($n = 139$; 2 preferred not to answer). Although it has been suggested that proofreading services help to level the playing field for students with dyslexia or other disabilities (Shaw, 2014), to my knowledge, there has been no empirical examination of whether students with disabilities resort to proofreading services or whether such services are effective in helping them improve their writing or other outcomes. The findings of this survey do not provide sufficient quantitative evidence to explore this issue in more depth; however, in Chapter 6 it is addressed further from a qualitative standpoint based on one of the follow-up interviews.

5.2 Use of Proofreading Services

Having at least one prior experience of receiving proofreading was an inclusion criterion for the survey. The first page of the survey provided the following definition of proofreading:

A proofreader is a person who corrects and/or gives feedback on another person's writing. A proofreader may be paid or unpaid. For the purposes of this study, correction provided by instructors or classmates as part of a course does not count as proofreading.

Students were then asked to indicate whether they had ever used a proofreader or commercial proofreading service to correct a document they wrote in English. The survey was terminated for students who did not answer "Yes."

The majority of students had used a proofreader several times: 17 students (11.7%) had used a proofreader once, 64 (44.1%) indicated two to five times, 20 (13.8%) indicated six to 10 times, and 44 (30.3%) indicated more than 10 times. About 15% of students had paid the proofreader ($n = 22$; 15.2%). These figures may include students' use of proofreading prior to enrollment at UBC.

5.2.1 Reasons for Proofreading

Participants could indicate multiple responses to explain their reasons for using a proofreader. The majority indicated that they wanted to improve their writing skills ($n = 101$; 69.7%), and almost half

indicated that they wanted higher grades ($n = 67$; 46.2%). In addition, 21.4% ($n = 31$) reported that an instructor or advisor had asked them to get their work edited, 15.2% ($n = 22$) indicated that they wanted to avoid plagiarism, and 4.8% ($n = 7$) indicated that a journal editor or reviewer asked them to get their work edited. About one quarter of respondents (25.5%; $n = 37$) also indicated other reasons; in the blank provided, many mentioned variations on “typos,” “grammatical mistakes,” and “a second set of eyes.”

There were slight differences in reasons for proofreading between students who had paid for such services and those who had not. As shown in Figure 8, the number of students who had received a request from a journal editor or reviewer to have their work edited was about 10 percentage points higher in the paying group than the unpaid group. Students in the paying group were also slightly more likely to have been asked by an instructor or advisor to have their work edited. At the same time, the number of students who wanted to improve their writing skills was more than 20 percentage points higher in the unpaid group than the paying group. Considered together, these results indicate that students who pay for proofreading are slightly less likely to want to improve their writing skills and slightly more likely to be trying to meet others’ demands that they improve their writing. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, as the direction of these relationships are unclear.

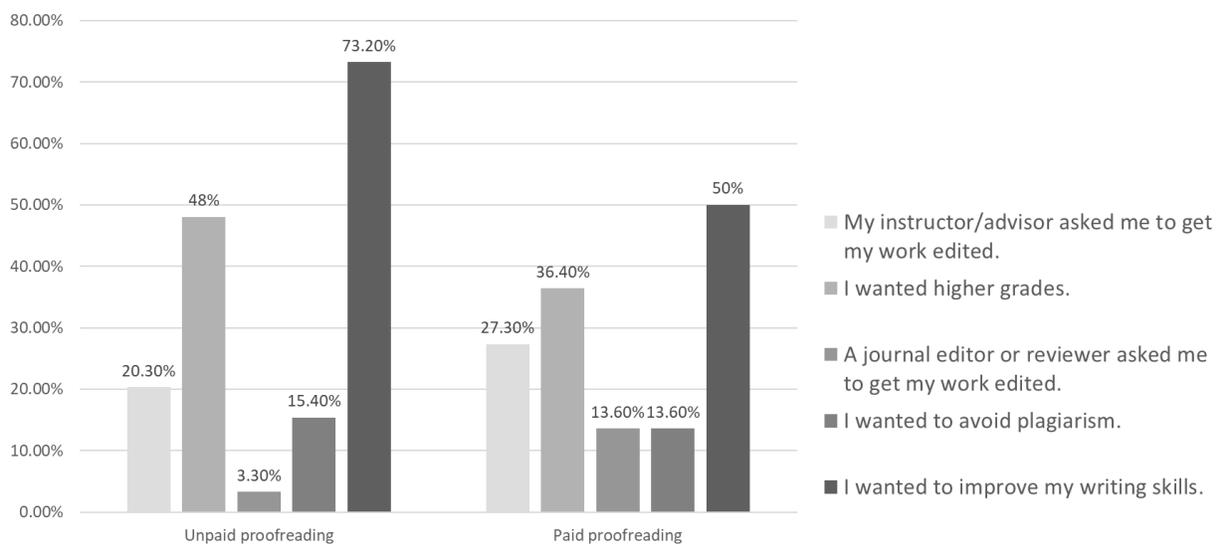


Figure 8. Reasons for proofreading among unpaid students ($n = 123$) and paying students ($n = 22$).

5.2.2 Relationship With the Proofreader

The next question dealt with how each participant found a proofreader. Again, more than one response was allowed. The majority of students ($n = 88$; 60.7%) identified the proofreader as a friend or family member. In addition, 27.6% ($n = 40$) said they found a proofreader through an Internet search, 15.2% ($n = 22$) through a recommendation from a friend, and 13.1% ($n = 19$) through a recommendation from a fellow student. In spite of the prevalence of flyers advertising proofreading services on the UBC campus, only 4.1% of students ($n = 6$) indicated that they had found a proofreader from such an advertisement. About 7% of students ($n = 10$) indicated another means of finding a proofreader; in the blank provided, some of them mentioned that the proofreader was a classmate, lab mate, or supervisor.

Again, there were slight differences between self-identified NES and NNES students and between unpaying and paying students with respect to their method for finding a proofreader (as shown in Figures 9 and 10). Students in the NES group were almost 3 times as likely to have a friend or family member who proofread their work ($n = 77$; 75.5%) than those in the NNES group ($n = 11$; 25.6%). Likewise, the percentage of students who identified the proofreader as a friend or family member was much higher in the unpaying group ($n = 85$; 69.1%) than in the paying group ($n = 3$; 13.6%). Both NNES students and students who had paid for proofreading were more likely to find a proofreader through a recommendation from a friend, instructor, or the Internet than either NES students or unpaying students. These discrepancies could be understood to indicate that among students who use proofreading, NNES students draw on their social resources differently than NES students do. It is possible that those in the NES and unpaying groups were more likely to have friends or family members who were willing to proofread their work, whereas those in the NNES and paying groups may have been less likely to have existing social connections with people who could proofread their work and therefore more likely to turn to their social networks for *recommendations* of proofreaders, who would presumably be outside their social networks. However, another possibility is that students in the NES and NNES groups had equal access to others who could proofread their work but chose to draw on those resources differently. There are many

conceivable reasons why a student might not want to involve a friend or relative in his or her writing practices, and in some cases receiving proofreading from a stranger may actually benefit students (as is discussed further in Chapter 6).

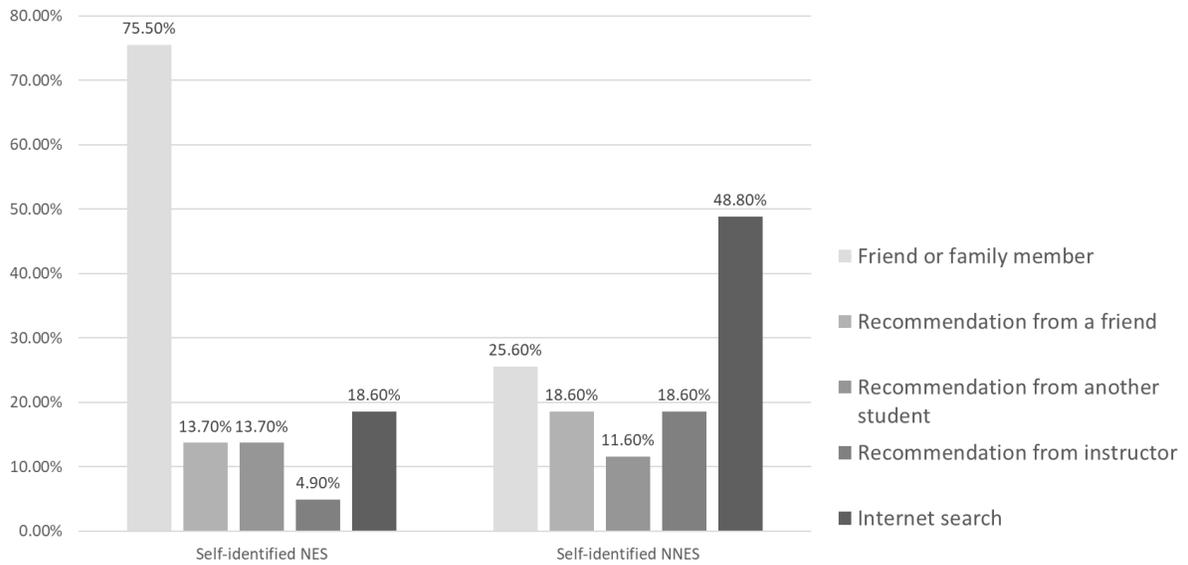


Figure 9. How the proofreader was found by NES students ($n = 102$) and NNES students ($n = 43$).

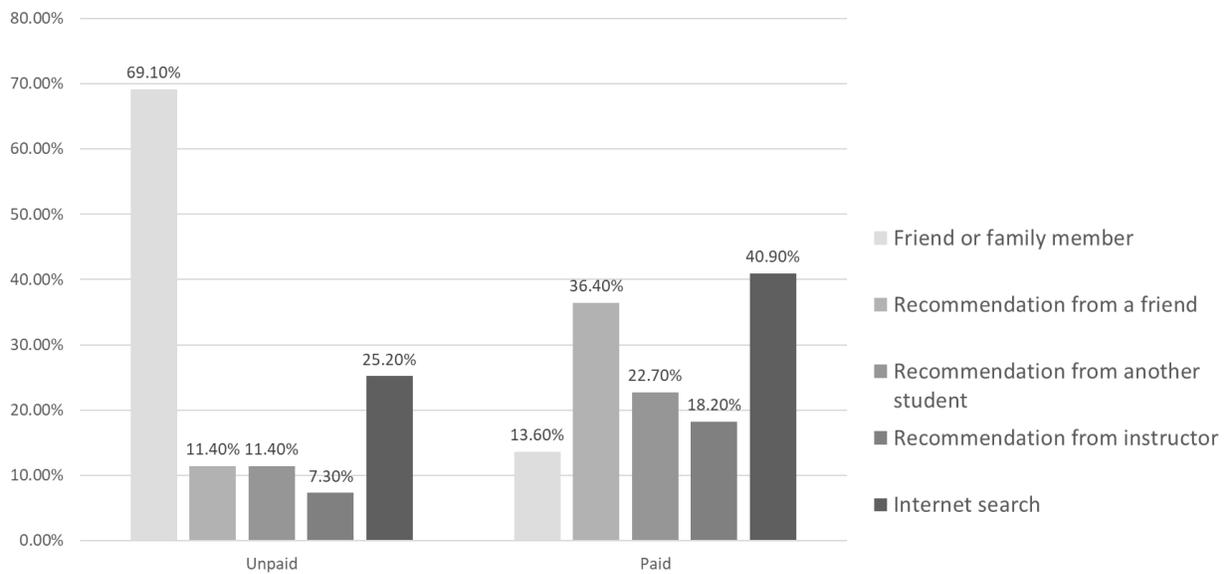


Figure 10. How the proofreader was found by students who did not pay for such services ($n = 123$) and those who did ($n = 22$).

The participants indicated that they had considered many factors when choosing a proofreader (more than one response allowed). The top considerations were the proofreader's qualifications, the proofreader's familiarity with the student's field or type of document, and the proofreader's status as a native English speaker, each of which was indicated by 43.1% of the sample. Price ($n = 49$; 34%), personal recommendation from someone the student trusted ($n = 46$; 31.9%), and the proofreader's reputation ($n = 42$; 29.2%) were also common considerations. Responses to this question differed slightly between groups (see Figure 11); in particular, self-identified NNES students were more likely to consider price (51.2% vs. 26.7% of NES students) and much more likely to consider the proofreader's Internet rating (39.5% vs. 7.9% of NES students), which could be explained by the fact that NNES students are also more likely to pay for proofreading services and more likely to find such services by searching online. The proportions of NES students and NNES students who considered the proofreader's qualifications and reputation were roughly the same (42.6% of NES students versus 44.2% of NNES students considered qualifications; 29.7% of NES students vs. 27.9% of NNES students considered reputation); however, NES students were more likely to consider the proofreader's familiarity with their discipline or type of document (48.5% vs. 30.2% of NNES students). Surprisingly, NNES students were also less likely to look for a proofreader who was a native English speaker (32.6% vs. 47.5% of NES students; see a further discussion of this consideration in Chapter 6).

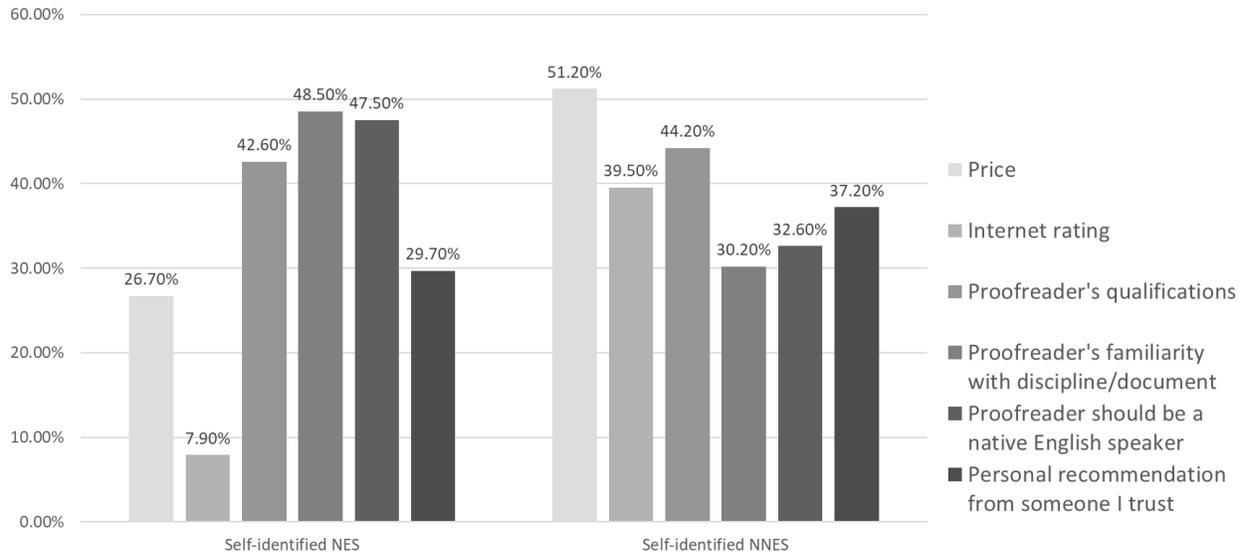


Figure 11. Factors considered in choosing a proofreader among self-identified NES ($n = 101$) and NNES ($n = 43$) students.

5.2.3 Types of Documents Proofread

The survey responses revealed that students had received proofreading for many types of documents during their current program (with more than one response allowed). A large majority of students had had a course assignment or term paper proofread ($n = 101$; 70.1%), and more than half had received proofreading for a resume or cover letter for a job application ($n = 84$; 58.3%). More than one quarter of students indicated that they had received proofreading for their email correspondence ($n = 43$; 29.9%) or a research proposal ($n = 42$; 29.2%). Many students had also received proofreading for a PowerPoint or multimedia presentation ($n = 27$; 18.8%) or grant application ($n = 26$; 18.1%). Considering groups in terms of self-identified native speaker status, NES students were more likely to have received proofreading for a grant application (22.8% vs. 7% of NNESs). NES and NNES students reported proofreading of all other types of documents at similar rates. Only 5.6% of the sample ($n = 8$) indicated having received proofreading for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, and just one of these students

identified as an NNES.¹¹ This finding was surprising given that much previous research and scholarship has focused exclusively on proofreading of postgraduate theses, particularly with reference to NNES students (e.g., Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010; Lines, 2016; Turner, 2012, 2015a, 2015b). One caveat, however, is that the survey question asked specifically which documents students had had proofread since coming to UBC, ruling out the possibility of collecting data on proofreading during previous degree programs. The finding regarding thesis and dissertation proofreading and its implications are discussed further in Chapter 7.

The next question asked students what type of contact they had had with the proofreader or proofreading service. More than one response was allowed. The majority of students ($n = 100$; 69.4%) stated that they had met the proofreader in person, and 38.2% reported having had direct email contact with the proofreader. There were some differences between the responses of self-identified NES students and NNES students; most notably, a great majority of NES students had met the proofreader in person ($n = 80$; 79.2%), whereas less than half of NNES students had done so ($n = 20$; 46.5%). On the other hand, NNES students were slightly more likely to have had email contact with the proofreader (41.9% vs. 36.6% of NESs), and they were much more likely to have had no contact with the proofreader at all (37.2% vs. 8.9% of NESs). These findings may be reflective of the greater prevalence of paid proofreading among self-identified NNESs in this sample, as the paying group contained a lower percentage of students who had met the proofreader in person (40.9% vs. 74.6% in the unpaying group) and a higher percentage of students who had had email contact with the proofreader (72.7% vs. 32% in the unpaying group). Yet the factor of payment does not entirely account for the discrepancy in types of

¹¹ The percentage of *postgraduate* students who had received proofreading could not be determined accurately because only four of the eight students who reported proofreading of a master's thesis or dissertation indicated their year of enrollment in their program. Even based on the assumption that they were all enrolled as postgraduate students at the time of the survey, however, they would still represent only 13.6% of postgraduate students in the sample.

contact, as the percentage of students who reported having had no contact with the proofreader was roughly the same in the paying group ($n = 4$; 18.2%) as in the unpaid group ($n = 21$; 17.2%).

5.3 Nature and Extent of Proofreading

The aim of the questions in the next section of the survey was to discern the nature and extent of proofreading services students had received. These questions asked about the types of writing corrections students had received, how the corrections were made, and how the students revised their writing after receiving the corrections. To allow for the possibility of having had more than one proofreader, students were asked to answer these questions with respect to the proofreader they had worked with most often.

The majority of students indicated that they had received corrections to grammar ($n = 115$; 79.9%), word choice ($n = 104$; 72.2%), punctuation ($n = 96$; 66.7%), and spelling ($n = 80$; 55.6%; more than one response allowed). All of these interventions come under the umbrella of copy editing, the most superficial form of editing (Matarese, 2016). Most had also received corrections to sentence structure and/or flow ($n = 108$; 75%), which can be considered an aspect of the next level of editing intervention, language editing (Matarese, 2016). There were relatively minor differences between self-identified NES and NNES students in the sample with respect to most of these types of corrections; for instance, NNES students were slightly more likely to have received grammar corrections (86% vs. 77.2% of NES students) and spelling corrections (65.1% vs. 51.5% of NES students) and slightly less likely to have received punctuation corrections (62.8% vs. 68.3% of NES students) and word choice corrections (69.8% vs. 73.3% of NES students). There was a slightly wider gap in the proportion of students who had received corrections to sentence structure and/or flow (79.2% of NES students vs. 65.1% of NNES students).

Two types of corrections included in the survey, rephrasing information and summarizing and/or paraphrasing information, represent a deeper level of intervention characterized as substantive editing. This type of editing is forbidden in the thesis editing guidelines of both the Institute of Professional Editors (n.d.) of Australia and Editors' Association of Canada because it goes beyond "using the author's

own words” (Editors’ Association of Canada, 2006, p. 2) and therefore leads to a misrepresentation of the student’s writing ability. In the survey responses, rephrasing of information was reported by 46.5% of participants, including about half of self-identified NES participants ($n = 52$; 51.5%) and about one third of NNES students ($n = 15$; 34.9%). Roughly equal numbers of NES and NNES students reported that the proofreader had summarized and/or paraphrased information (20.8% of NESs and 18.6% of NNESs). The implications of these findings regarding substantive editing are discussed in Chapter 7.

The majority of students indicated that the proofreader tracked changes in their work using computer software ($n = 81$; 55.9%), and slightly less than half reported that the proofreader highlighted changes in a different color ($n = 62$; 42.8%). About one third of students reported that the proofreader made changes to a paper copy of the document ($n = 49$; 33.8%), and 21.4% stated that the proofreader also wrote a summary of feedback about the whole document (holistic feedback; $n = 31$). Six students (4.1%) reported that the proofreader did not indicate where he or she had made changes. This finding can be interpreted in a couple of different ways. It may signify that the students’ proofreaders implemented changes directly to the text without providing any indication of where they had made edits; however, it may instead signify that the proofreader did not make changes to the text but rather delivered comments orally or in writing. When given the option to indicate other ways that the proofreader had made changes, 11% of the participants said they had received other types of corrections and clarified this response with comments such as “they suggested things, but I had to change it myself,” “verbal communication,” and “comments were provided” in Microsoft Word or Google Docs.

Thus it seems that the vast majority of students did not adopt the proofreaders’ suggestions or corrections unquestioningly, but rather they considered the suggestions carefully and in many cases implemented the edits themselves. This is further supported by the finding that 93.8% of the participants ($n = 136$), when asked how they decided to accept or implement the proofreader’s changes, indicated that they accepted or rejected each change one at a time, compared to only 6.2% ($n = 9$) who indicated that they automatically accepted all of the proofreader’s changes.

5.4 Outcomes of Proofreading

The next section of the survey consisted of questions designed to assess students' perceptions of the outcomes of their use of proofreading. More than three quarters of the respondents reported that the proofreader had left comments with explanations or suggestions ($n = 112$; 72%), and the vast majority of students who received such comments indicated that the explanations or suggestions helped them to improve their writing ($n = 105$; 93.8%), though the wording of the question left open the possibility of improvement in this particular instance or more generally. Similarly, about three quarters of students thought the proofreader made their writing sound more academic ($n = 110$; 76.4%). Of the self-identified NNEs, about three quarters ($n = 32$; 74.4%) also indicated that the proofreader made their writing sound more like a native speaker's writing. There were only slight differences between self-identified NESs' and NNEs' responses in this part of the survey. For instance, self-identified NESs were slightly more likely to receive comments with explanations or suggestions (80.4% as opposed to 69.8% of NNEs). Yet almost all students in both groups reported that these suggestions helped to improve their writing (95.1% of NESs vs. 90% of NNEs). These findings were also relatively consistent across the paying and unpaying groups.

Although roughly equal numbers reported that they learned from the proofreader's changes and/or feedback (85.3% of NESs vs. 83.7% of NNEs), the two groups differed in the types of concepts they reported learning (see Figure 12). Most notably, 72.2% of NNEs reported learning grammar rules (vs. 37.9% of NESs), 66.7% reported learning new vocabulary (vs. 26.4% of NESs), 50% reported learning punctuation rules (vs. 31% of NESs), and 44.4% reported learning alternative expressions (vs. 35.6% of NESs). Similar numbers of students reported learning how to organize sentences and/or paragraphs (63.9% of NNEs vs. 58.6% of NESs), how to support an argument (36.1% of NNEs vs. 35.6% of NESs), how to cite sources (11.1% of NNEs vs. 6.9% of NESs), and how to avoid plagiarism (6.3% of NNEs vs. 2.3% of NESs). Still, it is noteworthy that self-identified NNEs were more likely than NESs to report learning in every category except "other." Only self-identified NESs ($n = 9$; 10.3%)

specified other types of learning, which included “how to use clear language and avoid discipline-specific jargon,” “more professional sounding writing,” and “academic register!” A further analysis of the differences in learning outcomes reported by NES and NNES students is presented in Chapter 7.

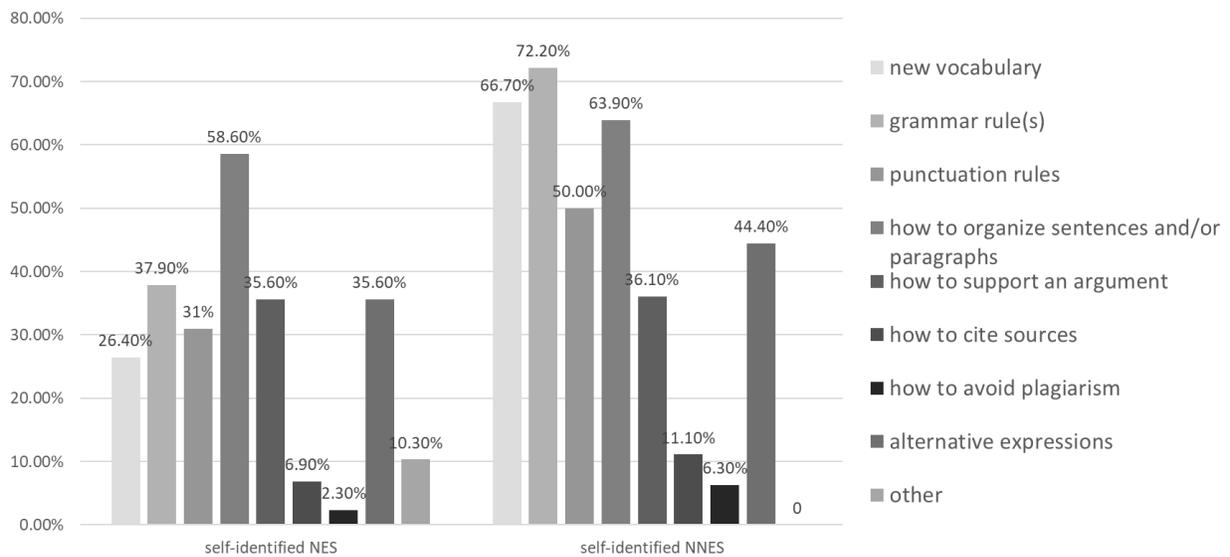


Figure 12. Responses to “What did you learn?” among self-identified NESs ($n = 87$) and NNESs ($n = 36$).

5.5 Other Resources

The final section of the survey consisted of questions designed to assess students’ familiarity with other types of resources and writing supports at the university. First, students were asked to indicate which other types of resources they use to improve their writing in addition to proofreading. Most of the participants indicated that they use the spell-check or grammar-check functions built into their word processing software ($n = 127$; 87.6%) as well as a dictionary or thesaurus ($n = 108$; 74.5%). Style manuals, such as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* and *Chicago Manual of Style*, were also commonly reported ($n = 82$; 56.6%), and more than one quarter of participants indicated that they use an automated grammar checking application such as Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com>; $n = 43$; 29.7%). There were slight differences between self-identified NESs and NNESs with respect to their use of some types of resources (see Figure 13). For example, self-identified NESs were more likely to use their word processor’s spell-check and grammar-check functions

(91.2% vs. 79.1% of NNESs) and much more likely to use style manuals (63.7% vs. 39.5% of NNESs). At the same time, self-identified NNESs were more likely to use online plagiarism checkers (27.9% vs. 19.6% of NESs) and more than twice as likely to use automated grammar checkers such as Grammarly (48.8% vs. 21.6% of NESs). In terms of social supports, NESs were slightly more likely to use the writing centre (18.6% vs. 12.7% of NESs) or peer writing groups (16.3% vs. 11.8% of NESs), whereas NESs were slightly more likely to attend instructors' office hours (19.6% vs. 11.6% of NNESs).

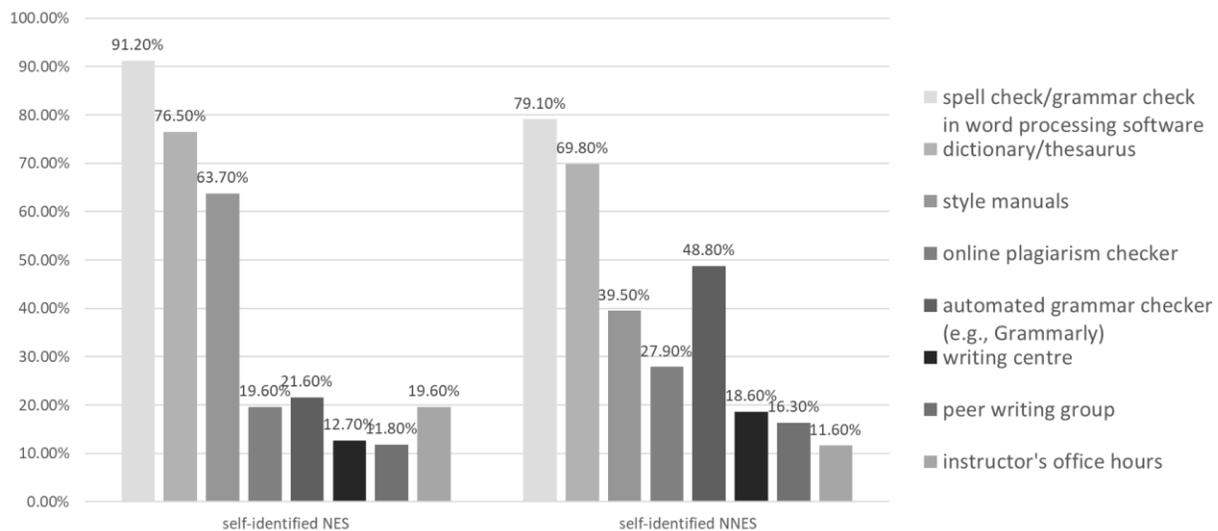


Figure 13. Other resources used by self-identified NESs ($n = 102$) and NNESs ($n = 43$) to improve their writing.

To contextualize the participants' responses in relation to debates over the ethicality of proofreading, they were next asked whether they were familiar with the university's policy on academic integrity, to which 89.5% ($n = 128$) responded "yes." Students who had indicated enrollment in a master's or doctoral program were also asked whether they were familiar with the university's Guidelines for Editing Theses, and 46.7% indicated that they were. Self-identified NNESs were more likely to be familiar with the thesis editing guidelines (61.8% vs. 38.5% of NESs). Finally, all students were asked whether UBC provides sufficient writing support services for students in their opinion. More than one

third of students responded “no” ($n = 50$; 35.2%). Self-identified NNEs were also slightly more likely to indicate that UBC does not provide sufficient writing support services (38.1% vs. 30.3% of NESs).

Summary

The survey results reveal that UBC students who use proofreading services are diverse in terms of their language and educational backgrounds, domestic or international enrollment status, levels in higher education, and fields of study. A noteworthy finding is that both international students and self-identified NNEs were the minority in this sample, raising doubts about the assumption that these populations are the predominant users of proofreading (as is discussed further in Chapter 7). Although there were some differences between NESs and NNEs in the sample, most notably with regard to their reasons for proofreading and ways of accessing a proofreader, students in both groups generally reported receiving the same types of corrections for the same types of documents and perceived similar learning outcomes. These findings are further explored in light of the follow-up interview findings in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Qualitative Findings

In this section I present the findings from the semistructured follow-up interviews with eight of the survey participants. First I introduce the interview participants and describe their linguistic and educational backgrounds. I then detail aspects of their identity, including their identities as English speakers, students, and writers. This background contextualizes their reasons for pursuing proofreading, which are discussed in the following section in relation to the importance of writing—and writing “correctly”—in their respective fields. Next, I focus on the social-practice dimension of proofreading through an examination of the participants’ relationships with their proofreaders and relevant factors in this relationship. I then describe the nature and extent of proofreading support the students had received. Finally, I discuss the outcomes of proofreading as perceived by the participants. The transcript excerpts used in this section are presented unedited, except in a few cases when repeated words or filler words such as *like* and *um* were deleted if they impeded sentence flow without adding meaning to the participants’ utterances. I made every effort to transcribe the interviewees’ responses accurately and chose not to edit them for grammatical correctness because the meaning was clear. (The transcription conventions are provided in Appendix I.)

6.1 The Participants

This section introduces the interview participants in order of their level of program completion and provides some background information about each of them. The participants are not representative of the survey sample in terms of demographic characteristics, but they still reflect diversity in terms of age, year in school, field of study, language background, and enrollment status. Pseudonyms are used in place of their real names and their academic majors are not reported in order to ensure confidentiality. The participants’ profiles are summarized in Table 1.

Monica was a second-year undergraduate in the Faculty of Science. At 19, she was the youngest interview participant. While growing up in Iran, she had spoken Farsi and a religious language. She had begun studying English at the age of 3 or 4 years old, and she and her sister received weekly English

language instruction from a British tutor for about six years beginning when she was 7 or 8. Her family had come to Canada six years previous to this study when she was in ninth grade. She was registered at UBC as a domestic student and considered herself a native English speaker and a good writer. A theme in Monica's interview was the negative impact of low motivation on her studies. She had no postgraduation plans yet, but she expressed enjoyment of helping people and had considered entering law school.

Tracy was a fourth-year undergraduate in the Faculty of Arts. She was 44 years old and was working toward her first postsecondary degree. Tracy reported that she had dropped out of high school in Grade 10, but decided to return to school when her son, now 22, was in high school. She had earned her high school diploma just before her son earned his, then gone on to university at the same time as he had. Tracy had grown up in Canada and identified as a native English speaker and a domestic student. She stated that she had mild dyslexia, which she explained had gone undocumented because there was no official documentation or support for such conditions in the Canadian public school system when she was enrolled as a child in the late 1970s and 1980s. Tracy's goal was to eventually work at an art gallery, museum, or historical site, possibly in curation or an education program. She said she had been encouraged to pursue a master's degree and was considering that option, but she wanted some professional experience first. Based on her age, she thought she was unlikely to advance to doctoral study.

Megan was a second-year master's student in the Faculty of Forestry. She was a dual citizen of Canada and the United States and identified as a native English speaker, adding that she had also learned a bit of French. She had completed high school in the United States and then earned her bachelor's degree from UBC, where she registered as a domestic student. She considered herself a good writer and said she had been exempted from taking a mandatory writing and speaking course in her master's program because her supervisor did not think it would be useful for her. She was 24 years old at the time of the survey.

Anna, 28, was a master's student in the Faculty of Arts and an international student. It was her fourth year in her program, but she had spent the previous year overseas on leave. She identified French

as her mother tongue and English as the primary language of her studies, and she considered herself a near-native English speaker. In addition, she spoke Japanese conversationally, and she had studied German and Mandarin many years earlier but reported that they had “washed out” as a result of disuse. She had completed her last two years of high school in East Asia and then received her bachelor’s degree from UBC. She considered herself an “average” student and described often feeling stressed that she wasn’t working hard enough. After graduation, she thought she would like to stay in academia.

At the time of the survey, Nora, 33, was a fourth-year master’s student in the Faculty of Education. She defended her thesis shortly thereafter and had already graduated by the time of the follow-up interview. Her family had immigrated to Canada from Iran when she was 12, and she spoke Farsi and also considered herself “quite fluent” in English. She had received her bachelor’s degree and a previous non-research-oriented master’s degree at institutions in Canada where English was the primary language of instruction. She was undecided about her career path; she had considered working in a school but had realized that she might not possess the requisite credentials for the type of position that appealed to her, so she was thinking about seeking more professional training.

Nora and I had met the previous year when she hired me to proofread her master’s thesis. We met in person once to discuss the proofreading process and sign a contract, and at that time she offered to help with my study, which I was then writing a proposal for. Although I had originally wanted to avoid interviewing any participants whom I knew personally, I decided to invite Nora to a follow-up interview because I did not want her perspective—as a graduate student who had paid for thesis editing—to go unrepresented. She was the only interview participant who had paid a stranger to proofread her work.

Boris, 28, was a second-year PhD student in the Faculty of Science. He had completed his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in his home country, Brazil, and was enrolled at UBC as an international student. Although Portuguese was the primary medium of instruction at all of the institutions he had previously attended, he reported that he had studied English in a private language school for several years before entering university and had opted to write in English rather than Portuguese for his master’s

program in Brazil because he recognized that most of the scholarly communication in his field is conducted in English. Boris described himself as an “okay writer” and stated that he was better at writing in English than Portuguese. He did not identify as a native English speaker and attributed some issues with his writing to this fact. He said he would like to remain in Canada after graduation, even though there might be more opportunities to obtain a research position if he returned to Brazil.

Daniela was also from Brazil and had also received her bachelor’s and two master’s degrees at universities in Brazil where Portuguese was the primary medium of instruction. She was a third-year PhD student in the Faculty of Forestry and was 31 years old. Like Boris, she had studied English in a private language school in Brazil for several years as a child. She also spoke Spanish and said she was learning French and wanted to learn some Chinese because she expected to visit China someday. Daniela said she loved traveling and wanted to have an international career.

Elena was a fifth-year PhD student in the Faculty of Science and was 31 years old. She identified as a native Spanish speaker and had received her undergraduate degree and master’s degree in her home country, Mexico, at institutions where Spanish was the primary medium of instruction. She considered herself to have a “pretty high English level” and described several ways that she was working to improve her English on a regular basis. Still, she said her writing ability was much stronger in Spanish than in English. After finishing her PhD, she intended to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and eventually work in academia or as a researcher in her industry. She said she would like to remain in Canada if possible.

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Year in School at Time of Interview	Faculty	Primary Home Language	Self-Identified NES Status*	Enrollment Status
Monica	19	2nd-year undergraduate	Science	Farsi	NES	Domestic
Tracy	44	4th-year undergraduate	Arts	English	NES	Domestic
Megan	24	2nd-year master's student	Forestry	English	NES	Domestic
Anna	28	4th-year master's student	Arts	French	NES (preferred "fluent")	International
Nora	33	graduated with MA	Education	Farsi	NES (preferred "fluent")	Domestic
Boris	28	2nd-year PhD student	Science	Portuguese	NNES	International
Daniela	31	3rd-year PhD student	Forestry	Portuguese	NNES	International
Elena	31	5th-year PhD student	Science	Spanish	NNES	International

* NES: native or near-native English speaker; NNES: non-native English speaker

Table 1. Interview participant profiles based on survey data and interview responses.

6.2 Identity

One outcome of academic literacies research is a growing recognition that engagement in writing practices both shapes and is shaped by the identity of the writer. This allows for a useful contrast to the deficit model of academic writing: Rather than viewing a struggle with writing as the result of an inadequacy in the writer, it is pertinent to consider that there may be “a mismatch between the social

contexts which have constructed their identities in the past and the new social context which they are entering” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 12). Following previous studies that have examined the reciprocal relationships between student identity and writing practices (e.g., Ivanič, 1994, 1998; Lillis, 2001), in this section I discuss the student participants’ identities as students, writers, and speakers of English in relation to the context of their academic experiences at UBC.

6.2.1 Identity as an English User

The participants represented a range of language backgrounds. Megan and Tracy, who had grown up in the United States and Canada, respectively, both identified themselves without hesitation as native English speakers; they had each studied French in school but expressed that English was their dominant language at home and in their education. In contrast, Monica, who had come to Canada at the age of 14 and spoke Farsi as her primary home language, identified as a native English speaker but with “some exceptions.” She elaborated that she sometimes encountered vocabulary she did not understand, particularly on standardized tests.

The remaining study participants did not identify as native English speakers, although most of them considered themselves to have a high level of English proficiency. Anna, Elena, and Daniela each drew a distinction between fluency and native speaker proficiency. Anna described herself as “near native” but then hedged, explaining that she associated native speakerness with the use of slang and specialized vocabulary. She eventually settled on “fluent,” as evidenced by the fact that she carries out her studies in English. Similarly, Elena considered herself to have “a pretty high English level” but said it is sometimes more difficult for her to find words in English than in her native language, Spanish. Daniela, whose enrollment in a PhD program in Canada marked the first time she had lived in an English-speaking country, said she felt at home speaking English but did not consider herself a native speaker:

I feel really comfortable with English. I can tell some lies and crack some jokes. I think I find myself in the language, I mean, being myself, . . . authentic and extroverted. . . . But native? . . . No. I’m not a native, I’m not close to a native speaker.

She stated that her use of English while studying the language for 10 years in Brazil was quite different from her experience “living the language 24/7 a week, thinking, and having to write, and also communicate like in informal and formal ways” in Canada. Nora, who had lived in Canada since the age of 12, said she considered herself “quite fluent” but expressed uncertainty about the definition of the word *native*.

6.2.2 Identity as a Student

Most of the participants readily identified themselves as good students and attributed this to their degree of effort and caring. For instance, Elena described herself as a “dedicated and hard worker.” Nora, Daniela, and Megan also defined themselves as good students based on the amount of effort they exerted. Megan further suggested that her motivation to work hard came from choosing to study topics she cared about. Working hard had earned Tracy an entrance scholarship without which she would not have been able to attend university, and she stated emotionally that she was therefore “willing to do the work for it.”

As a counterexample, Monica reported having struggled in university because of a lack of purpose in her classes. Her program appealed to her because it allowed her to try courses in multiple scientific fields, but she said she often felt unmotivated to study because it was difficult to see how each class might contribute to her future. She stated, “I tend to put in more effort into things that actually matter for my future I guess. Maybe it does, I don’t know, but I haven’t seen the point of it yet.”

Some of the participants also discussed how comparing themselves to other students had affected their sense of themselves as students. For instance, Tracy suggested that some of her younger classmates seemed to take their undergraduate education for granted, as evidenced by their lack of effort and disrespectful behavior in class. Boris also conceived of himself as a good student but was concerned that he was not communicating well enough with the people in his lab. Being “the new guy” had made him shy away from others who seemed to have already established strong roles in the lab. In a similar way, Anna seemed to construct her sense of self based on her observations of other students around her. Although she spoke passionately about both her research and her responsibilities as a teaching assistant,

she described herself as merely an “average” student in comparison to others who seemed to work harder and know everything. She went on to describe struggling with imposter syndrome and constant stress about how to balance her roles as a master’s student and teaching assistant. As she explained, “I think I could put much more effort always. . . . I feel like I’m not a good student because I’m not studying all the time.”

6.2.3 Identity as a Writer

The student participants’ writerly identities were in many cases incongruous with their student identities. Whereas most of them had associated effort and hard work with being a good student, they conversely cited hard work as the reason they did *not* identify as good writers. Daniela, for instance, stated, “I suffer to write” and described how procrastinating and striving for perfection made writing time-consuming and exhausting for her. This did not diminish her enjoyment of the overall process of writing, however, as she expressed a keen interest in learning about others’ writing processes and experimenting with new methods. Similarly, Tracy described herself as a mediocre writer based on a recent paper that had been challenging to write, yet she conceived of writing as an integral and enjoyable part of the learning process. She stated that writing “helps me learn more about the subject matter, to delve into it deeper. That’s why I enjoy it because it helps me literally take it apart and put it back together.”

Several participants attributed part of the struggle of writing to being NNEs. Anna recalled having practiced academic writing for many years and said she could get her point across but did not consider herself a great writer. She stated, “I’m not a native speaker, so I feel I’m not the best English writer”; however, she later stated that other students in her department were less fluent in English than she was and conceded, “in that scale, I’m not the worst.” Boris labeled himself as merely an okay writer and attributed this to the fact that English was not his native language, describing his writing as “less fluid” than that of NESs. Elena also spoke of features in her writing that might differentiate it from an NES’s

and discussed the ways in which she worked consciously to eliminate these differences, such as proofreading.

Some students also expressed confidence that they knew how to write certain genres or subgenres required for their disciplines, yet immediately qualified their statements by mentioning deficiencies in the surface features of their writing. For instance, when asked whether she considered herself a good writer, Elena responded that she could effectively describe the objectives of her work and felt prepared to write her dissertation. Yet she then stated that she struggled with run-on sentences and punctuation when writing in English. Boris also moderated his view of himself as a writer based on lexico-grammatical features, stating, “I can write all the things that I want, but sometimes the text is not fluid as it was supposed to be.” In other words, these students’ perceived strengths in the genre features of their writing were tempered by their perceived weaknesses in the surface features, which they attributed to being NNEs.

Nora, in contrast, reported that she had considered herself a good writer until it came time to write her master’s thesis, which was more difficult for her than any previous assignments. Her challenge was twofold, as she struggled simultaneously with the process of data analysis and with her ability to put the analysis in writing. Although there were also some surface errors in her writing, both she and her supervisor conceived of these issues as secondary to the analysis itself (as is discussed further in section 6.3.1). She did not speak of features of her writing in relation to her native speaker status.

Two interview participants, Megan and Monica, considered themselves good writers. However, both also mentioned that there was always room for improvement. Megan said she had always done well in writing classes but sometimes found it hard to write consistently well. Similarly, Monica recounted that she had recently received an A (but not an A+)¹² on a paper, which led her to recognize that “I’m pretty

¹² In most UBC courses, an A is awarded for a score of 85–89%, and an A+ signifies a score of 90–100% (UBC Student Services, 2018b).

good, but I'm definitely not perfect." Although Megan and Monica had in common that they had both identified as native English speakers, they did not speak of their own writerly identity in those terms.

6.3 Reasons for Proofreading

The participants expressed various reasons for having looked for a proofreader in the first place. Some had sought a proofreader on their own, whereas others reported that an instructor or supervisor had asked them to have their work corrected. Several participants also mentioned mistakes with word choice and/or grammar, which the self-identified NNEs attributed to their language background. In this section I present their reasons for using a proofreader and their broader discussions of the importance of writing and writing "correctly" in the academic context.

6.3.1 A Supervisor's Request

When asked why they had first looked for a proofreader, some participants mentioned that they had been prompted to do so by a research supervisor or instructor. Anna, for instance, recounted that when she had submitted her first paper at the beginning of her master's program, the course instructor, who was also her supervisor, had commented that she should find someone to correct the grammar errors in her work, especially when it came time to write her thesis. At the time, Anna took this comment personally. She recalled:

I took it very negatively. I was very hurt because I felt that . . . I was not good enough, and that I needed someone to look at my work, and at the time I had this idea that my work should speak for itself, I should not have somebody look over it. I have sort of revised this notion now, but yeah, it took me a lot of time to actually feel comfortable with the idea that I needed someone to look at my work.

At first, Anna planned to avoid using a proofreader until she wrote her thesis; however, with time she had become more accepting of the idea and had had several documents proofread (see section 6.5.1).

Nora's supervisor had also suggested that she find a proofreader for her thesis, but only after she had already been working on it for over a year. Nora recalled that although the thesis had been through several drafts and her supervisor kept asking her to rewrite or revise certain sections, particularly the analysis, she had expected this process to continue "until . . . it makes her happy." Later, she came to

understand that her supervisor felt the correction of surface features in Nora's writing was occupying too much of her attention. Nora recounted:

She was also at the time very backed up and swamped with so much that she also felt “this is taking way too much.” So it was almost taking away from her time to actually help me with the analysis, so she was stuck on editing all these punctuations and grammar stuff that she was like “no, I don't want to do that, I'd actually rather have you . . . take care of that while you and I look more deeply at the analysis.” So, I think that's . . . also one of the reasons she sort of wanted me to outsource that part.

Nora said this request did not upset her; in fact, she later described how proofreading had benefited her working relationship with her supervisor (see section 6.6.2).

6.3.2 Making Sense

The remaining interview participants expressed that they had sought the services of a proofreader on their own initiative. For several of them, one purpose of proofreading was to help them communicate clearly and effectively. For Elena, it was important that her writing be both “professional and understandable,” and she suggested that surface errors would lower the quality of her writing in both respects. She was aware that there were sometimes mistakes in her writing such as grammatical errors or issues with sentence structure, which she associated with being an NNES. She was concerned that such features would make her writing seem unprofessional if they were not corrected. Although Elena said she came to these conclusions on her own, she later expressed that her supervisor knew she had her work proofread and had come to expect this of her, going so far as to ask her when she submitted work whether it had already been checked (see section 6.6.2).

In line with Scott's (1998) characterization of proofreaders as “the readers' representative” (p. 221), several of the interviewees expected their proofreaders to stand in for readers in their field or in general. Daniela, for example, stated that her proofreader helped her to determine whether her message would be clear to her scientific community:

One thing that I learned and actually I'm learning here is that scientific writing— you have to think about the reader, it's not about you. It's how the people are gonna perceive, and it has to be really clear and direct. So the use of the proofreader for me is first to achieve that goal.

Daniela's proofreader also helped her with word choice, punctuation, and other surface features of her writing, but she specified that she most appreciated his help "not just with English but with making the reading more clear, concise, and . . . simple, in a way that even someone who is not from my field can understand."

Tracy explained that her proofreader's unfamiliarity with her discipline challenged her to explain her ideas more clearly. She then described a time when she had used a term learned in one class in a paper for another class and the professor had been unfamiliar with it. This led her to reflect on her use of the term, which she was then careful to fully explicate in a follow-up paper. She reflected:

I'm supposed to be writing for someone who is as smart as me, but may not necessarily know what I'm talking about. . . . And so that was the opportunity for me to— I had to be careful because I didn't want to be condescending, but it was to the point that I actually was able to teach them [the professor and the proofreader] something.

In describing this episode and others, Tracy relayed her view of writing as a means of both developing her ideas and demonstrating her learning. The proofreader's attention to ambiguity helped her to gauge whether she had effectively accomplished these objectives.

6.3.3 Importance of Writing

In discussing their reasons for seeking proofreading, many of the participants reflected on the importance of writing in their academic programs and in general. Daniela suggested that writing was very important "because that's a way that I'm communicating my research." This response was reflected among the undergraduate interviewees as well. For instance, writing allowed Tracy to share her ideas and "to show that I've really done my research."

These responses reflect the participants' understanding that writing—though important—was related to but distinct from disciplinary knowledge. Megan illustrated this point in her acknowledgment that "it's not a primary skill that most people think of, but in order to like be able to publish or like communicate effectively, you have to be able to develop those skills." Later, when describing the importance of writing to her supervisor, she specified that the importance of writing is linked with the

importance of publishing in academia; her supervisor seemed to consider it important for students to publish but did not want to expend much effort on helping them with their writing, so it was necessary for them to possess strong writing skills.

Boris also mentioned the importance of publishing and speaking at conferences for students in his program, again suggesting an epistemological separation of research from writing:

You have two things to do: The first one is to have top-level research, which is already challenging, and on top of that, being like convincing enough to say “yeah, what I did is. . .” So yeah, it’s really important.

6.3.4 Importance of Writing Correctly

In line with the survey results (see section 5.3), most of the interview participants explained that they expected their proofreaders to detect and correct surface errors in their writing, which they described in terms such as “little slip-ups” (Tracy), “small typos” (Boris), and “easy mistakes” (Anna). For Elena, writing should look professional, which meant it should be well organized and free of grammatical errors. For a PhD student writing grants or funding applications, she suggested, “being able to write correctly is basically like what decides whether you get something or not.” Boris provided an explanation for the line between success and failure:

If you get a paper and . . . you see all these small typos, it like cuts off the . . . attention from the whole picture. And then you are reading and saying yeah, there is an error here, there, and you don’t care anymore about like the real content or the message that you are trying to pass.

Although most of the discussions focused on academic writing, Daniela, Elena, and Anna all mentioned that even the ability to write an email was important; as Daniela said, “I think that’s the ultimate writing, is like write a one-paragraph email to someone that you never know, and be as concise as possible and polite.” Both she and Elena reported receiving proofreading for important emails such as messages to professors, which they wanted to be appropriately formal in register as well as grammatically correct. Similarly, Anna feared making mistakes in the mass emails she had to send as a course teaching assistant, so she would have them proofread first. Generally speaking, the participants did not want written errors to detract from their communication with others in their academic communities, including

both professors and students. They seemed to believe they helped the reader by eliminating errors from their work—which thus benefitted them as well. In addition, several participants discussed how proofreading likewise benefitted their instructors or supervisors (see section 6.6.2).

6.4 Proofreading as a Social Practice

In this section I present evidence for considering students' use of proofreading as a fundamentally social practice. Most of the participants had an existing relationship with their proofreaders, yet they also discussed their proofreaders' qualifications in terms of their writing expertise. The participants further described their experiences of working with the proofreader, touching on how familiarity and reciprocation contributed to the student–proofreader relationship. I conclude this section by presenting the experiences of those participants who had paid for proofreading, as well as their explanations of how and why they paid for this service.

6.4.1 Relationship With the Proofreader

For seven of the eight interview participants, the proofreader was a friend or family member. Four of them received proofreading from their romantic partners: Elena's proofreader was her wife, a PhD student in the United States; Tracy's was her husband, whose job involved writing reports; Anna's was her partner, who had a degree in English and worked for an online service that provided essay feedback; and Daniela's was her partner, who was a professor in another faculty at the university. Most of the remaining participants received proofreading from a variety of friends or other family members. Boris indicated that he was currently receiving proofreading from a lab mate, and he had received feedback from others in his academic community in the past. Megan reported that she had received proofreading from her mother and her aunt earlier in university, whereas during her master's program, she was receiving help from other people in her lab. Monica said she occasionally had work proofread by her sister.

Nora was the only participant who had received proofreading from a stranger (me). When her supervisor first suggested that she have her thesis edited, Nora was not sure where to look for a

proofreader, and she was disappointed to find out that no editing services are offered by the university. Her supervisor then suggested that Nora reach out to another student whose thesis I had edited a few months earlier, and that student gave her my contact information. She had never had work proofread before, although she had sometimes received feedback from classmates and instructors. One friend in particular had helped her a lot, she said, but that help took the form of guidance on structure and organization rather than word- and sentence-level edits.

6.4.2 Perceptions of the Proofreader's Qualifications

Most of the participants had friends or family members whom they considered to hold adequate qualifications to be a proofreader. Several of them believed the proofreader should be a native English speaker, which assured the self-identified NNEs that the result would sound more native-speaker-like. For instance, Daniela said she had sometimes received feedback that her writing “doesn’t sound like English,” and she wanted the proofreader to help her correct this issue. Because her primary proofreader, her partner, was not an NES, she also relied on a lab mate and her supervisor—both of whom were NESs—for such corrections and recalled that her supervisor had given her feedback such as “in English we wouldn’t use that word.”

In the survey responses, NES students were slightly more likely than NNEs students to indicate that the proofreader should be an NES. When I asked Megan, a self-identified NES, about this, she suggested that having an NNEs proofread her work would not be helpful to her:

I can like confuse the definition of a word or . . . I’ll tend to make my sentences too long or something like that. I would be worried that someone that wasn’t a native English speaker wouldn’t catch those.

The other two self-identified NES interviewees did not share this view, however. In fact, native speaker status hardly came up in either of their interviews.

Many of the participants also provided their proofreaders’ writing ability as a qualification for proofreading. Boris, for instance, described his lab mate as “really skillful in writing,” and Megan stated that she would not ask someone to proofread her work unless “they are a better writer than me.” These

comments suggest not only that part of the participants' trust in their proofreaders was based on the proofreader's writing ability, but also that these participants were assessing their own writing ability in comparison to that of their proofreaders.

6.4.3 On Familiarity

Many of the participants appreciated that their proofreaders' familiarity with them and their ways of thinking benefitted the proofreading process. Tracy, for instance, stated, "I think it's helpful having someone who knows how you think, so then they're able to catch what you mean to say if you haven't articulated it properly." Both she and Elena also mentioned that their proofreaders—their spouses—could recognize tiredness in their writing. Familiarity could also add a level of tension to the student–proofreader relationship, however (see section 6.6.4).

In keeping with the finding that most of the students pursued proofreading for the purpose of communicating clearly to their audience, several students also found it helpful that their proofreaders were not familiar with their discipline. They explained that this forced them to better explain their ideas, as they could not assume that the proofreader would have familiarity with the terms or concepts they employed in their writing. Anna, for instance, explained:

What's nice about him is that since he's not in the field, if he doesn't understand some things, I know I need to put more efforts, like adding dates, or explaining some words, . . . so there's this aspect also with him about understanding what the heck I'm talking about.

Tracy and Daniela made similar comments about how the proofreader's unfamiliarity with their discipline made them more cognizant of how well they were demonstrating content expertise.

6.4.4 Proofreading as Reciprocal

For many of the participants, especially those who received proofreading from a romantic partner, proofreading was part of an exchange with the proofreader rather than a one-way process. Some of them also read and gave feedback on their proofreaders' work; for example, Daniela said she would read her partner's writing and give suggestions. Others exchanged writing with fellow students; for instance, Daniela shared a small office with a lab mate, and they would share works in progress or discuss issues of

word choice and phrasing. Megan also traded work with others in her lab, although she said, “I’m early enough in my career I’m usually leaning on other people more than I’ve been asked to edit.”

Several of the students who had a primary home language other than English also shared that they served as a resource for their proofreaders’ use of that language. Elena, for example, said she would correct work that her wife had written in Spanish. Through this practice, she had noticed improvement in her wife’s writing:

She actually translates a lot of things from English to Spanish, so I have seen that usually she would make like very common mistakes, and I kept telling her, no this is not the way it’s written, and I see that she . . . now corrects . . . those things before I have to . . . tell her.

Elena and her wife also seemed to experience similar outcomes of proofreading, as Elena also observed that the number of corrections she received from her wife had dwindled over time (see section 6.6.1).

Another example of language exchange came from Anna, whose primary home language was French. She described her partner as “my go-to walking dictionary right now,” then added, “I’m his for French, so I feel it’s, you know, back and forth.”

Only one interview participant, Monica, avoided establishing an equal exchange with the proofreader, in the sense that she sometimes shared her writing with her sister but avoided reading her sister’s work:

Monica: I would say our writing abilities are kind of at the same level, but she tends to write more than me, like she can write a lot more than I can. I just tend to like summarize a bit more. She can go into a lot more detail. But yeah.

Nina: Okay, do you read her work sometimes too?

Monica: Um, I do sometimes but like I said, because she’s always too much detail, when I read her work I sometimes get stressed. I’m like, should I include that? But at the same time I don’t want it to like be, you know, plagiarizing, you know what I mean, so that’s kind of like a struggle for me. So I usually tend to not read her work. She just reads mine.

Even so, Monica stated that she rarely shared work with her sister because they usually worked independently.

6.4.5 On Payment

Two of the eight interview participants, Anna and Nora, had paid the proofreader. Anna paid her partner to proofread her work because he was employed by an online company that provides essay feedback, so she did not expect him to perform similar services for her for free, although she acknowledged receiving a friends-and-family discount. Recounting how her partner tracked his hours and made an invoice, Anna also expressed that payment kept things professional between the two of them. She related this to her discomfort with having other people change her work, which seemed to reflect a concern with ceding her own authority (Ivanič, 1998). At another time in the interview she noted that she liked being able to accept or reject her partner's suggested changes. Thus for Anna, paying the proofreader and thereby keeping things professional was a means of maintaining authority over her writing practice. She paid the proofreader out of her own pocket, although my questions prompted her to wonder whether she might be able to apply for a grant to cover the expense.

The other participant who had paid her proofreader was Nora, who had hired me to proofread her master's thesis about six months prior to the interview. Although the price I had quoted Nora at first had been too high, we had negotiated and I had lowered the price because she was a friend of a friend. She thought the price we settled on was "fair" and did not object to the idea of paying for proofreading in general; as she stated, "at that point, I just— I really wanted to just finish my thesis." Nora too had paid out of pocket for proofreading.

6.5 Nature and Extent of Proofreading

In this section I explore the nature and extent of proofreading support students received. Information on the types of documents the students had had proofread and the types of corrections they had received was gleaned from both their survey responses and their in-person interviews. After introducing these findings, I move on to discuss their views on the extent of corrections they receive, the types of feedback they prefer, and the perceived differences between human and automated correction among those who also used the grammar correction app Grammarly.

6.5.1 Types of Documents and Corrections

Consistent with the survey sample (see section 5.2.3), the interview participants had received proofreading for a variety of types of written documents. Some sought proofreading for “pretty much everything” (Elena), whereas others only asked for help with documents of great significance, as in the case of Nora’s master’s thesis. Although Nora was the only student who had had a thesis proofread, Anna and Boris planned to receive thesis and dissertation proofreading, respectively.

The most common types of correction indicated in the interview participants’ survey responses were changes to grammar and punctuation. Yet in their interviews the participants rarely pointed to specific grammar rules that had tripped them up; rather, they conveyed that their grammar in general was in need of correction. For instance, when I asked Anna why her supervisor had prompted her to find a proofreader, Anna said, “I think she mentioned grammar issue, or like some easy mistakes that could correct.” Nora also adopted this discourse when recalling that her supervisor had been “stuck on editing all these punctuations and grammar stuff” rather than helping her with the analysis for her thesis. She went on to recount that I had made corrections to grammar and punctuation, but she did not remember any specific examples. In our discussions, the participants often portrayed grammar corrections as small or insignificant; for instance, Daniela stated that her lab mate helped her a lot “especially with words. Um, or yeah, like small stuff. Like some preposition. . . . You think *of* or *about*, *on*, *at*, *in*. . . . I use him . . . especially for, as I said, that small stuff.”

The participants were also somewhat dismissive about punctuation, the other most common type of correction they had reported in the survey. Several mentioned commas in particular as an area of weakness. For Tracy, this meant that her husband “[took] out my overabundance of commas,” whereas for Anna it meant that her partner pointed out where she needed to add Oxford commas in lists of three or more terms or phrases. Anna also complained that she liked to place information in parentheses, which her partner would change to commas. This she found infuriating, even though she understood why he would make this change. All in all, the participants’ trivializing comments about these types of

corrections suggested that they might be as annoying as they were helpful—or perhaps the participants were annoyed at themselves for persistently needing such corrections. Anna displayed such frustration when she stated, “I’m very bad with Oxford comma. I– I– pfft, this is way over my head.”

The next most common types of corrections were changes to sentence structure and word choice. Elena, Anna, Tracy, and Nora all stated that the proofreader helped with run-on sentences in their writing. Both Elena and Anna attributed this to a common feature in their primary home languages, Spanish and French, respectively. Anna explained:

- Anna: I run on and on and on and on, and sometimes it’s hard to understand, so he will help me.
Nina: You mean like a long sentence?
Anna: Extremely long, yeah. Which I realize, because I’m also teaching French to my partner . . . I notice by reading literature in French, we do run on a lot. So I feel that maybe that’s what’s showing through is that I’m used to write long sentences ‘cause we do that, and now he just comes in and like cut it down into parts.

Tracy noted that she had a difficult time seeing issues related to sentence structure in her writing, a difficulty that she suggested might result from either having dyslexia or working too quickly.

Another type of correction was organizational correction, which included changes to the order of sentences and paragraphs. Daniela had received many corrections of this type from her partner, a professor in another faculty. Although she did not use technical terms in describing the changes he made, her descriptions made evident that he had offered suggestions for writing topic sentences, organizing information with signposts, and structuring sentences by providing known information followed by new (known in systemic functional linguistics as *theme* and *rheme*; e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004). While this feedback seemed unnecessary to her at first, Daniela came to understand that her implementation of it would help readers comprehend her writing. As mentioned previously, she was highly attuned to her readers’ needs and saw proofreading as a way to make her writing clearer from the reader’s perspective; it seemed that her proofreader’s organizational corrections had played a role in helping her define that goal and were instrumental in helping her to achieve it.

Word choice corrections could also help the students with orienting their writing to a specific reader. Boris recalled one major type of word choice correction: The proofreader had often changed *while* to *whereas*. This usage tends to be preferred by scientific writing style guides such as the *APA Publication Manual*, which stipulates that *while* should be restricted to its temporal meaning to prevent ambiguity (APA, 2009). In this way, the proofreader's corrections helped Boris to meet the stylistic demands of writing for his scientific field.

Two students, Nora and Anna, also discussed how their proofreaders had helped them to implement the preferences of a particular style guide. Nora recalled how I had helped her to properly format her references according to APA style and instructed her how to produce the type of dash that should be used in a number range. I had made corrections to Nora's thesis manuscript using the track-changes tool in Microsoft Word, and she also remembered that I had sometimes added a comment to explain a pertinent rule from the *APA Publication Manual* (2009). She could not remember any specific types of changes I had made, however.

Whereas Nora's field required her to apply APA style, Anna needed to use the *Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press, 2010). At the time of the interview she was taking a course on how to create a bibliography using this reference style, and she had also asked her partner to learn to apply the guidance in the manual when proofreading her work. She said:

So he actually went online and got like, one of these *Chicago Manual* thing, and he knows more about Chicago than I will ever do, but there was a lot of thing that he was telling me, like "this is the way you do it in Chicago," and I had no idea, so I'm learning from him about these kind of [things] as well.

Later in her interview, Anna brought up her partner's efforts to study the *Chicago Manual of Style* as evidence that he would do a thorough job, which was something she appreciated about his work (the participants' preferred types of feedback are discussed in section 6.5.3). Both Anna's and Nora's accounts of how the proofreader helped them to apply the stylistic preferences of their respective style guides also indicate that they learned from this guidance, as is discussed further in section 6.6.1.

6.5.2 Extent of Corrections

In line with the previous observations of how the participants described that their proofreaders focused on the “small things” in their writing, they also made comments to emphasize that the proofreader’s interventions were limited. These comments provide further evidence of a discursive separation of writing conventions from disciplinary content. Anna, for instance, wanted her work to “speak for itself” and was therefore uncomfortable with having it proofread, as mentioned previously. When her supervisor first asked her to find a proofreader, she did not want to do it. She recounted, “My idea was that I would continue to write my own paper even though it, you know, the English might not be great, and when I write my thesis I’ll get someone to look at it.” At the time of the interview, Anna had had only one high-stakes document proofread, but she had already envisioned how her thesis proofreading might proceed:

[What] I think I’ll do for my thesis is when I feel content with what I’ve written, so I feel it’s complete, so I feel I’m gonna show him chapters. . . . I feel my edition in my thesis will go to steps, because first I will write it, I’m happy with it, I will show it to him, revision revision, send it to my advisor, she will put some comment as well and then send it back to me, I’ll rewrite, and then it goes to my committee when it’s over. And then after I’m done with . . . my defense, they’ll send it back to me and I’ll rewrite it again. So in a way I’m gonna have a lot of proofreading for my thesis.

Thus she conceived of proofreading as part of the thesis revision process that would occur after she had fully developed the content of her thesis but before she submitted it for her supervisor or committee’s approval. Her conception of proofreading seemed to encompass both her committee’s feedback and the proofreader’s feedback, yet she indicated that they would take different forms: *revisions* from the proofreader as compared to *comments* from her supervisor.

Nora expressed a strong sense of ownership over the content of her thesis, which was not diminished by the “technical revisions” she received during proofreading:

- Nina: In terms of it . . . being your project and your writing, did your sense of that change at all when you had me, but also your supervisor, other people contributing to the writing?
- Nora: Um, no. Because I think the gist of the thesis for me was the analysis, and I felt quite solid in my interpretations and my thoughts and feelings about what I was analyzing.

The rest was technical revisions, and for me it was more of an objective– yeah, I didn’t take it personally. . . . I wasn’t touched by it.

Nina: So the analysis was yours?

Nora: Yeah. That– for me, the thesis– my thesis was really revolving around the message that it– it sent out, at least that’s what I’m hoping for readers to get.

Nina: Yeah. Well, and it was a personally relevant topic.

Nora: Yeah, exactly. So yeah, I saw myself throughout all– every bits of it.

Nora discussed elsewhere in her interview how her pursuit of proofreading affected her relationship with her supervisor (see section 6.6.2).

One student, Tracy, adopted a seemingly defensive stance in specifying that the proofreading she received did not affect the content of her papers. In her survey, Tracy had checked the box indicating “I have not had any documents edited since coming to UBC.” Yet her responses in her interview were not consistent with that response. When I asked Tracy whether she had her course papers proofread, she stated that her husband read “every paper I write, for the most part; there’s only a couple that he hasn’t. But just to clarify, he doesn’t write my paper for me.” Tracy was the only participant to make such a comment in an interview, but another survey respondent’s answer to an open-ended question expressed a similar sentiment:

The proofreader was from the writing centre here at ubc, I didn’t pay him or anything, I made an appointment online because I’m dyslexic and my professor suggested someone to read my essays to improve coherence. [It] wasn’t anything illegal.

Given that both Tracy and the other survey respondent identified themselves to have a form of dyslexia, it is possible that their defense of their use of proofreading reflected a greater concern with the right of students with disabilities to access support services in general. As noted previously, the proportion of the survey population that identified as having a learning disability was too small to allow for drawing any meaningful conclusions regarding use of proofreading among students with learning disabilities.

6.5.3 Preferred Types of Feedback

The participants overwhelmingly agreed that they liked thorough, sincere, informative feedback and appreciated the proofreaders’ efforts to understand what they were writing. Elena noted that her wife would read her writing thoroughly and try to understand everything, even though Elena admitted that “the

kind of reports I write are very dry, very like scientific and very boring if you are not interested in science.” She went on:

She actually tries to understand, and she actually asks questions about the project . . . because she really tries to understand . . . what I am trying to transmit. . . . Usually when there are like a lot of parts of my writing that sound a little bit conflicting for her, we just like have a conversation about the project, and we review it together, and we talk about . . . which parts are not very clear and which parts are more clear.

It had taken them a while to get to this point, as Elena recalled that at first her wife had often given her suggestions that did not make sense to her:

- Elena: She wanted to correct things that um made more sense for– grammatically made more sense, but sometimes scientifically didn’t. It was like– like I had to go over those kind of things and explain to her to make sure that what I was saying was understandable, but what she was trying to correct it to was not actually the real thing, you know like–
- Nina: Uh-huh. So it changed the meaning?
- Elena: Yeah yeah, because– especially because we use a lot of acronyms and . . . very like specific ways to say things . . . that a normal person would never use. . . . She would say “but that doesn’t make sense” and I was like “no it actually makes sense.” . . . But then she got more familiar with those kind of things and we would struggle less.

In addition to expressing her appreciation of her wife’s efforts to understand her intended meaning, these comments provide further indication that with time, Elena’s wife was becoming familiar with the writing conventions of Elena’s field. Other participants described similar outcomes, such as in Tracy’s account of teaching her husband a new term and Anna’s discussion of her partner’s study of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Like Elena, Daniela expressed that she appreciated the proofreader’s sincere effort to understand her message. Therefore, she became frustrated if the proofreader wasn’t specific about what the problem was and how to fix it: “I don’t like when– when you do a– a little bit of editing . . . in the grammar . . . and then say, ‘oh, it’s a little bit vague,’ but then you don’t tell me exactly where you think it’s vague, for example.”¹³ Boris made a similar complaint regarding vague feedback:

¹³ Daniela’s and Boris’s use of *you* in this section is impersonal, whereas Nora’s use of *you* in later sections refers specifically to me.

I really don't like when you only circle the stuff and say, like you put a question mark there or say "unclear." . . . Because . . . I don't get the reason why. . . . Like I know that the person is saying that it's unclear, but I'm . . . reading that, and it looks clear to me. And I'm like I don't know why— what this person is asking here. And sometimes I don't know even— I don't know if it's the context of the paragraph or it's like if I just rearrange the sentences or. . .

Although Boris described his lab mate's proofreading as "methodical," he stated that he had encountered this problem with the lab mate and others who had proofread his work in the past.

6.5.4 On Automated Grammar Correction

Two of the participants, Boris and Tracy, regularly used the automated grammar correction app Grammarly in addition to having a human proofreader. Tracy said she used it mainly to catch punctuation errors, whereas Boris used it to catch typos and grammar errors. In fact, Boris would run his writing through Grammarly to make sure it was "good enough" before sending it to his proofreader. Boris implied that he used Grammarly for all writing assignments, whereas he was more likely to use a human proofreader only for high-stakes writing.

Although both students found Grammarly a useful tool, they also discussed its limitations. Drawing on the example of the usage of *while* versus *whereas*, Boris remarked that Grammarly can check whether the use of a term is grammatical but cannot assess whether it is semantically appropriate for the context. This was one type of correction for which he relied on his human proofreader. Implicit in this example is the fact that the proofreader, Boris's lab mate, was also familiar with the specific requirements of writing in their discipline, whereas Grammarly presumably was not. It should be noted that Boris was using the free version of Grammarly, whereas the premium version is advertised to offer "genre-specific writing style checks" (Grammarly, n.d.); therefore, it is unclear whether he might have received guidance on scientific writing style if he had upgraded to a paid subscription. Tracy did pay for such a subscription and said it was "worth investing [in]," but she still found it to have some limitations. For instance, the app had suggested that her use of a field-specific term was an error, so she had had to "teach it" that term rather than accepting the suggestion. She remarked, "other people using these proofreading services need to kind of be aware that you do sometimes know more than they do, and so don't, you know, self-doubt

yourself, and don't take every edit that's made for face value.”¹⁴ These participants' comments about Grammarly suggest that they trusted the app to catch what they had termed elsewhere the “small things” while relying on their human proofreaders to ensure that their writing made sense and clearly communicated their intended meaning.

6.6 Outcomes of Proofreading

The focus of this section is on the perceived effects of proofreading in terms of students' academic outcomes and their development of language and writing skills. (The aspect of identity is addressed in the Discussion in Chapter 7.) After summarizing their accounts of having learned from their proofreaders' corrections and suggestions, I analyze evidence from the participants' interviews to suggest that use of proofreading may mediate the relationship between students and their supervisors. Then I outline the perceived benefits and negative consequences of proofreading according to the participants. Finally, I discuss the participants' apparent willingness to openly discuss their use of proofreading.

6.6.1 Learning From Corrections

All of the interview participants indicated that they had learned from the proofreader's corrections to their work. Some explained that they had learned new words, phrases, or rules of grammar. Perhaps more importantly, many of them mentioned learning to detect patterns of error in their own writing. For instance, Anna said her partner's feedback on the components of her PhD program application—the only formal writing he had proofread for her so far—had led her to try to write more concisely and to use Oxford commas since then. Boris had internalized his proofreader's feedback as well. He stated:

It's funny how these small things catch in my mind, cause from time to time now I'm writing something, and then I like— it's kinda like this small bubble where the person appears and say, “you always do this instead of that.”

¹⁴ The same could be argued about human proofreaders, however; for instance, Tracy told of a similar instance when she had taught a different term to both her husband and her course instructor.

Although Nora had difficulty recalling specifically what she had learned, she said she had approached the process of accepting or rejecting my changes to her thesis as a learning opportunity:

I did go through the tracked changes one by one. I didn't just blindly accept them all, because I wanted to (a) see what you've made, what is your suggestion, and (b) trying to also make sure that I understand what— why this change is— has been put in place.

However, Nora also admitted that because she was under time pressure then and had not engaged in any academic writing since defending her thesis, she did not remember most of what she had learned—and she had difficulty recalling the types of changes I had made to her manuscript.¹⁵

In addition to recalling specific types of corrections they had learned from, some participants also mentioned that they had recognized improvement in their writing over time. This showed further evidence that they had internalized the proofreader's feedback. Daniela, for instance, remembered several previous writing projects that seemed poorly written to her now:

When I read my dissertation that I wrote like five years ago, I don't think it's good. . . . But at that time, it was— it was good enough. . . . When I— I read my proposal, and I defen[d]— I had my comps last year in October, I reread my proposal now, and I feel like oh, I was a little bit vague, oh, I could've done that, and I start like editing my— my own writing now.

Daniela also reported that her writing *process* had developed over time, as she now spent more time brainstorming and outlining what she wanted to write about. This process, she explained, “helps organizing my thoughts. So if I have something to say, then writing, it's easier!”

Another way of recognizing improvement in their writing was a decrease in the quantity of corrections from the proofreader. As Tracy put it, “less and less correction are coming back, which makes me really happy. So generally my first page, it's not a sea of red blood.” Likewise, Elena reported that the email drafts she asked her wife to proofread now came back with hardly any corrections, and her wife's

¹⁵ To be fair, I had little memory of what kinds of changes I had made to Nora's writing, either. My recollection of her thesis is that—like most theses and dissertations—it contained a small number of issues related to grammar, word choice, and punctuation, but each had to be corrected repeatedly throughout the manuscript of about 40,000 words. For this reason, thesis proofreading can be quite tedious; thus it is understandable why a research supervisor might not want to do it.

corrections to Elena's academic writing now tended to be limited to "small things, it's not like big things that it was at the beginning."

When I asked Boris whether he had learned from his proofreader's corrections, he said he learned the most from making the changes himself. His proofreader would mark Boris's errors on paper, and then Boris would implement the corrections manually on the computer. In relation to Boris's previous comment expressing his annoyance with vague feedback (see section 6.5.3), this suggests that he wanted feedback to be specific but did not necessarily expect an explicit correction for each error. He seemed to feel it was beneficial to determine and implement the appropriate corrections himself.

6.6.2 Relationships With Research Supervisors

Several participants at the postgraduate level revealed that their use of proofreading had also affected their relationships with their research supervisors. For most of the students, this was because proofreading freed their supervisors from making word- and sentence-level corrections and allowed them to focus on content feedback instead. In describing the importance of writing ability to her supervisor, Megan explained, "the less . . . time he has to spend like really helping us writing and like holding our hands with it, then the faster everything goes." This she based on the importance of publishing: "I guess that's like the crux of it, is just how are you gonna be able to get this published, and good writing is like a big piece of that." It thus seemed that Megan consciously reduced her supervisor's workload by drawing on feedback from other students in her lab before submitting her work for his review.

Even though her proofreader had no connection to her academic department, Elena pursued proofreading for similar reasons to Megan's. She explained that her supervisor mostly focused on "the science" rather than "the text by itself," and that he encouraged her to have her work proofread by her wife, as illustrated in the following extract from our conversation:

- Elena: My advisor, when . . . I give him something, he is like, "did your wife check it already?" I'm like "yes she did," and he's like "okay."
Nina: Like he won't even read it if she—
Elena: I mean like, he— he just wants to make sure that . . . it's like my final version, so like he doesn't have to worry about anything else. You know, like . . . he's not gonna read like

every single word. He's just like . . . scanning the document, like he's just like more or less reading it and making sure that things are in the right order and everything that should be there is there, but he doesn't actually pay attention to every single thing that is written there. So if he knows that my wife read it, he doesn't have to worry about grammatical errors or anything else, so he has to work less.

Likewise, Nora recounted that proofreading allowed her supervisor to focus on helping her with the analysis for her thesis, and that this ultimately changed the relationship between them in a number of ways. As described previously, Nora had sought a proofreader at her supervisor's request. She had been working on her thesis for two years, and it seemed her supervisor was getting impatient. Nora recalled:

I think at the time, I'm gonna be honest here, it did show my supervisor that (sigh) I genuinely want to defend and . . . the fact that I took up her word on finding an editor, I think it put her at ease. You know, for some reason towards the end—or before, before that even—she maybe didn't feel the dedication that she might have expected from me. . . . But . . . showing her that I followed up on her recommendation and getting an editor, I think it was a good positive sign for her that I'm here trying to really learn, and I'm not trying to waste anybody's time.

Even after her thesis had been proofread, Nora said she still went through several more drafts of the analysis section because “the analysis kept changing and so of course the writing keeps changing too.” Yet her supervisor no longer asked her to have it proofread. Nora explained, “she didn't mention anything else because she had already seen that I had sought out editorial services with the other drafts. And I think she assumed that I had picked up on some writing techniques.” Thus it seemed that in Nora's case, proofreading not only led to tangible outcomes—in the sense that her grammatical and punctuation errors were corrected—but also signified to her supervisor that Nora was committed to completing her thesis and thereby receiving her degree.

Some of the postgraduate students also spoke of how such changes in their relationships with their supervisors in turn improved their life as students. The following excerpt from Daniela's interview illustrates how these aspects of her student experience were interconnected:

Nina: Do you think that using a proofreader or proofreaders has affected your grades or your academic reputation?

Daniela: Mmhmm, yeah, it makes me a better student.

Nina: In what way?

Daniela: Um, the writing is better so my supervisor is happy, I'm happy. And that— that feeling, as I said, of improvement.

6.6.3 Benefits of Proofreading

The participants mentioned several other ways in which they had benefitted from having their work proofread. For example, Megan attributed her success on previous grant applications to improvements made as a result of others' feedback. She also thought proofreading had improved her grades, although she did not cite a specific example. Similarly, when I asked Monica about whether proofreading had affected her grades, she stated that she sensed it had, but she did not know for certain because "I haven't submitted the work that hasn't been proofreaded, right?" She could not remember ever receiving a lower grade as a result of implementing a proofreader's suggestion, and this seemed to be sufficient evidence for her that proofreading was beneficial.

In terms of their academic reputation, both Daniela and Nora expressed that their supervisors had looked favorably on their pursuit of proofreading, as discussed previously. Anna also conveyed that her academic reputation was important to her and explained that she was already thinking about how her thesis would be published in the university research repository where anyone could see it. She predicted that having her thesis proofread would help her prevent potentially reputation-damaging errors:

Even if it's horrible, you know, it's gonna be sort of like my— my card, you know, something that's gonna be stamped on me for a long time. So having somebody look at it and, you know, cut all these little mistake that make me look silly, or, you know, or uneducated is gonna be very helpful.

At other times in her interview, Anna had mentioned struggling with imposter syndrome and feeling as if she was not working hard enough; in contrast, it seems from this comment that she expected to feel some reassurance as a result of the proofreader's involvement in her thesis. Megan similarly expressed that she was not confident submitting written work until it had been proofread: "Even if something reads well to me, I'm nervous about like submitting it to something unless I've had a couple other people read it, just probably out of habit at this point."

Another suggested benefit of proofreading was that it helped participants to make the self-identified NNES participants' writing sound more like a native speaker's. Both Elena and Boris suggested

that having an NES proofreader who could correct their English grammar, word choice, and usage gave them an advantage over other NNEs who did not receive such support. Elena reported that she had not sought a proofreader but rather took advantage of having a wife who is an NES. As a result, she stated, “I can tell that my writing looks closer to a native English speaker than other people’s.” Similarly, Boris recalled a conversation in which another researcher in his department had commented that NESs “have a natural advantage versus someone that is . . . not a native speaker. And at the end . . . it’s just like, yeah, the way that it is.” Both students attributed weaknesses in their writing to being NNEs, and they conceived of the proofreader’s support as a way of compensating for their limitations. Yet both Elena and Boris as well as others in the study also continued to work on improving their writing and their mastery of English in general; in other words, they did not use proofreading in place of but rather as a complement to development of their writing and language skills.

Finally, as mentioned previously, several of the participants conceived of being a good student in terms of showing effort and caring about their work; for them, proofreading seemed to be one of several ways of demonstrating their desire to excel in their studies. Tracy, for instance, became emotional when describing how hard she worked when writing a course paper and stated, “that’s how I end up with A grade final papers, because I put in the time. I put in the effort. Because I care.” Thus it seemed that her pursuit of proofreading was one of several strategies she used to produce high-quality written work. Similarly, having recognized that proofreading would lower their supervisors’ workloads, Megan, Elena, and Nora took personal responsibility for this aspect of the writing process and thereby demonstrated their commitment to their studies—and to pleasing their supervisors.

6.6.4 Negative Consequences of Proofreading

The participants’ perceived outcomes of proofreading were not all rosy. Even as they relayed that they appreciated their proofreaders’ assistance, several participants also mentioned that the corrections hurt their feelings. Anna openly discussed how her partner’s proofreading—as well as the thought of needing proofreading at all—upset her. As the following excerpt indicates, she thought this might have

something to do with her existing relationship with her partner, but she was not sure whether having a different proofreader would fix the problem:

Anna: Sometime I just get angry, and maybe that's— that's part of the relationship about, you know, being so close, and having him criticize my work make me feel insecure, and maybe it comes again from this idea of, you know, not belonging, and not feeling good enough. So, yeah, I think it just show that I don't feel comfortable, really, having somebody correct my things, but I need it so I do it.

Nina: Do you think it would be different if it was someone you didn't know already?

Anna: Mm. . . I mean yes and no, I feel there would be benefit in both case scenario. Uh, I feel that if it was not somebody I, you know, spend my daily life with, and if this person would told me something, I would be more maybe accepting of it because I— I can feel comfortable enough to argue against it, but because it's my partner and I wanna appear smart, and I wanna appear, you know, like I know what I'm doing in front of him, I might be like arguing with him on things that I would not with somebody I don't know. But at the same time, maybe somebody I don't know would not be open to tell me these things, so yeah, I see benefit and, you know, drawback on both sides.

Daniela, who also asked her partner to proofread her writing, described how proofreading introduced a similar emotional dimension to their relationship. She said they would sometimes adopt an angry tone in their discussions about proofreading; even though she was able to recognize that he was criticizing her writing, not her as the writer, she would still sometimes feel affronted. She explained that she would tell him, "I know you're talking about the— the paper itself, it's not about me, but I get it personal because that's what I wrote." Tracy also expressed that corrections had sometimes hurt her feelings, although she made light of this by joking that the only negative outcome of proofreading she had experienced was a bruised ego. What was clear from all of these responses was that the participants ultimately found proofreading worthwhile in spite of the temporary discomfort it might raise for them.

Of course, proofreaders are not the only dispensers of critical feedback, and some of the participants had also felt hurt by feedback from instructors and supervisors. For instance, Tracy recalled a time when a professor's feedback made her cry, explaining "it hurts when someone rips your stuff apart." This feedback, she specified, pertained not to her ideas but to "grammatical issues, sentence structure, you know, like *real basics*. Nuts-and-bolts kind of stuff when it comes to writing." As mentioned previously, Anna had also expressed feeling hurt when her research supervisor told her she would need to pursue

proofreading. These accounts indicate that a proofreader's involvement has potential to prevent students from feeling criticized by their instructors or supervisors—which, in the case of a proofreader who is also a romantic partner, might also offset any effects on the relationship between the proofreader and the student.

The other negative outcome reported by some interviewees was disagreement with their proofreaders' corrections. For instance, Daniela recounted how her partner sometimes changed the order of sentences or paragraphs in a way she didn't approve of. She suggested that he sometimes went too far, intervening more than was necessary "because he is in that role of okay, I'm proofreading . . . I'm editing, I need to give feedbacks." Explaining how a proofreader's suggestions might make the revision process more arduous, Megan described a frustrating experience when she had spent a long time cutting down a document to meet a length requirement, only to have a proofreader add in so much more detail that the document once again exceeded the page limit. In addition, both Megan and Daniela reported that they did not always accept all of the proofreader's suggested edits; in fact, all of the interview participants—like the majority of the survey sample—indicated that they accepted most but not all of their proofreaders' suggestions.

6.6.5 Openness About Proofreading

Most of the participants were forthright about their use of proofreading in their interviews and seemingly in their relationships with others in their academic communities. Elena, Daniela, Megan, Anna, Nora, and Boris all reported that their supervisors knew about their use of proofreading, and (as noted previously), some of them had initially pursued proofreading with the encouragement of their supervisors. Boris, who also used Grammarly regularly, drew a distinction between this app and human feedback, specifying that his supervisor knew about the proofreading he received from his lab mate but not about his use of Grammarly. In general, the postgraduate participants did not seem to consider their use of proofreading as something to conceal or be ashamed of; as Nora pointed out, "even good writers get editors, and I don't see it as a downside." This comment was consistent with her earlier statements that

she was not offended by her supervisor's request that she pursue proofreading—although another participant, Anna, had taken such a request personally.

In contrast, Tracy was more guarded about her use of proofreading. She stated that she did not share with others the fact that her husband proofread her work, explaining, “If the subject doesn't come up, I don't openly [tell them], you know, 'cause he really doesn't change that much per se. As I say, he doesn't write it for me.” Again, this statement came across as somewhat defensive, although Tracy did not explain why she felt the need to defend her use of proofreading. She said none of her instructors had ever mentioned proofreading as an issue of academic integrity.

Although most of the participants were generally willing to discuss their use of proofreading, not all of them credited their proofreaders when publishing. Elena, for instance, said she had never credited her wife's contributions to her published work. On the other hand, Daniela said her partner had requested that she credit him in a footnote when she published. Yet when I asked whether he had credited *her* input, Daniela said no and explained that he had many coauthors and “I never help to— to that point.” Thus even though they exchanged feedback on each other's writing (as discussed earlier), she seemed to consider her partner's feedback to play a greater role in her writing than her feedback did in his, indicating that their exchange of proofreading, though reciprocal to an extent, was also somewhat imbalanced.

6.7 Summary

The follow-up interviews allowed for exploring the participants' reasons for using proofreading, the nature and extent of proofreading they received, and the effects of proofreading on their learning outcomes and their relationships with their instructors and supervisors. In keeping with the survey results, the interview findings indicate that students seek proofreading for a variety of types of documents, particularly high-stakes writing assignments, and that they tend to value and believe they learn from their proofreaders' corrections and suggestions. In addition, proofreading has the potential to affect students' academic outcomes and their relationships with their instructors and supervisors. The interview findings also provide evidence that proofreading of student work is fundamentally a social practice rather than

merely a textual intervention. These findings and their implications are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter presents a synthesis and discussion of the key findings introduced in the previous two analysis chapters. In this mixed methods study, an online multiple-choice survey and follow-up interviews were employed to explore the use of proofreading among postsecondary students enrolled at a large Canadian research university. As one of the first studies to consider proofreading and its outcomes by employing a broad definition of proofreading and by drawing on students' perspectives, this work uncovers findings that call into question how student writers—particularly NNESs and international students—have been framed in institutional discourses and some previous research. In this chapter, I discuss the salient findings with regard to each of the four research questions and in relation to previous literature on proofreading practices, writing practices, and writerly identity.

7.1 Who Uses Proofreading

Much of the previous work on students' use of proofreading has conveyed that it is mostly NNES students—often euphemistically referred to as *international students*—who engage in this practice. Unfortunately, even as researchers in this area have otherwise worked to reject the deficit model of student writing, they may have instead contributed to the perception of NNES students as linguistically deficient through their uncritical promotion of this assumption. Previous studies' focus on commercial and/or institutionally embedded proofreading services may be partly responsible for this, as it has resulted in a neglect of less public, less visible forms of proofreading. For instance, although Harwood et al.'s (2010) definition of proofreading encompasses services offered by friends and family members, their studies rely on interviews only with professional or institutionally affiliated proofreaders (Harwood et al., 2009, 2010). After reporting that it was mainly NNS students who sought these proofreaders' help, they concluded, "we suspect that the vast majority of those writers seeking proofreaders' help are in any case NNS" (2009, p. 175). This perception would probably resonate with others in the proofreading industry. Yet to the contrary, self-identified NNES students were not the principal receivers of proofreading among the survey participants in this study, and the majority of students in fact received proofreading from a

friend or family member, not an institutional affiliate or commercial service provider. To my knowledge, this is the first study to quantify the types of proofreading support that students may receive from friends or family members, and therefore it is the first to recognize that research on students' use of proofreading—and especially research on NNES students' use of commercial proofreading—may be missing the forest for the trees. Although it is probable that NES and NNES students receive different types of corrections from the proofreader and experience different outcomes (as discussed further in section 7.3), the findings of this study serve as a caution against designating proofreading a “non-native speaker issue” (see also Scott, 1998).

Whereas previous studies' focus on students who receive proofreading from institutionally affiliated or commercial services has been used to imply they are more in need of writing correction than other students, the results of this study suggest that social factors, especially the composition of a student's existing social network, may play a greater role in students' selection of a proofreader. The survey findings revealed that self-identified NES students were nearly 3 times as likely as NNES students to report that the proofreader was a friend or family member, which was one of the greatest differences between the NES and NNES student groups. Additionally, among the interview participants, the seven students who had partners, friends, or family members who could correct their work drew on those existing relationships when they needed proofreading, whereas the one participant who did not already have such a connection had to look outside her social network to find a professional proofreader. Thus it seems that students in need of proofreading may turn first to their existing social network, then go elsewhere if none of their acquaintances are able or willing to provide the necessary services. In this sense, the students' relationships to their proofreaders may symbolize their level of access to a particular form of social capital: friends or relatives perceived to have proofreading qualifications. This finding is significant because it suggests that certain populations of students who have previously been framed as linguistically deficient based on their use of publicly visible proofreading services—NNES students and international students—may actually use such services because they are less likely to already know a

proofreader. In other words, it is possible that those lacking social capital are being singled out for their particular form of participation in an otherwise widespread practice. It may also be that both needing a proofreader and knowing a proofreader are affected by another variable, such as years of enrollment at English-medium institutions. It is also unclear whether students who can easily afford to pay for proofreading services are more likely to do so; in this sense, use of commercial proofreading services may indicate better access to financial capital, whereas students with fewer financial resources may instead depend on friends or relatives who can provide proofreading for free. Either way, these considerations encourage a shift from a deficit model of proofreading to a social practice perspective that accounts for the social context in which proofreading takes place.

The survey findings also provide strong evidence that the labels *NNES student* and *international student* should not be conflated. Even though only 11.7% of international students spoke English as their primary home language, nearly half of international students in the sample (45%) considered themselves to be native English speakers or to have near-native English proficiency. The discrepancy between the terms was further underlined in the follow-up interviews, where several participants described themselves as fluent in English but expressed confusion or ambivalence about the term *native English speaker*. Further contradicting commonly held assumptions, 11.8% of domestic students did not consider themselves native or near-native English speakers, and more than one third (35.7%) of domestic students had a primary home language other than English. This population may include transnational students (those who hold close ties to two or more countries, including immigrants, children of immigrants, refugees, and expatriates), who constitute an invisible category within domestic enrollment figures (Tardy, 2015). A clear implication of these findings is that students' language background and/or linguistic resources cannot be assumed based on their enrollment status.

Taken together, the demographic findings from the survey make clear that neither the NES/NNES dichotomy nor the international/domestic dichotomy adequately represents the language backgrounds or identities of students in the sample. As others have acknowledged, these dichotomies essentialize students

while foregrounding aspects of difference and deficit (e.g., Faez, 2011). For instance, the term *non-native English speaker* and its distorted relative *non-native speaker* foreground what students lack rather than the multilingual resources they bring to their education (see Tardy, 2015). When adopted by instructors, these labels can have a powerful effect on students' self-efficacy in speaking and writing in English. For example, in a study of feedback on undergraduate exchange students' writing, as mentioned previously, Séror (2008) found that some participants were positioned as deficient through instructor feedback, and thus "often reported an image of themselves as L2 writers with language problems who were different from regular students, and hence would never be able to write well" (p. 130). In this study, some interviewees had been told that their English writing was deficient or not legitimate, as evidenced in Daniela's supervisor's comments "that doesn't sound like English" and "in English we wouldn't use that word." Multiple interview participants had been prompted to pursue proofreading by their supervisors, yet they had difficulty pointing to specific aspects of grammar or usage that those supervisors had found objectionable in their writing; instead, they seemed to infer that their grammar in general was deficient. Their subsequent dismissal of such grammatical issues as "small stuff" (Daniela) and "easy mistakes" (Anna) may have allowed them to save face while concealing the underlying issue of their being positioned as deficient writers.

Some participants also resisted describing their English proficiency in terms of native or near-native speakerness at all; Anna, in particular, was reluctant to show overconfidence in labeling herself a near-native English speaker and seemed more comfortable with the term *fluent*. Similarly, some participants in Faez's (2011) study of 25 linguistically diverse teacher candidates in Canada found the NES/NNES dichotomy "confusing, variable, and meaningless" (p. 246). Faez saliently argued that a continuum of native speakerness is also inadequate, as "one's level of language proficiency can be placed along a continuum but identity cannot" (p. 246). Her analysis of the participants' English proficiency, self-identification as an NES or NNES, and evaluation by others led her to classify them in a six-category

typology,¹⁶ which she acknowledged might change or expand in other contexts. Still, it should be recognized that some participants in Faez's study, like Boris and Elena in the follow-up interviews for this study, willingly identified as NNEs; further research would be needed to determine how similar students negotiate the underlying notions of difference and deficit embedded in this term. In line with previous research, the findings of this study signify that linguistic identity is complex and socially constituted, and individuals may exercise agency in accepting or rejecting the labels ascribed to them. It may also be pertinent to distinguish between how someone uses a language (practice) and who someone has become through prior experience (identity). Anna and other participants' discomfort with the terms *native* and *near-native* may signify an underlying resistance to the adoption of language proficiency as an element of their identity, which could be resolved by characterizing students in terms of linguistic expertise (Rampton, 1990; see also Kubota, 1998) rather than rigid notions of NES/NNES status.

If the term *non-native English speaker* is associated with deficit, it is also worth examining the meaning embedded in its counterpart: *native English speaker*. Rampton (1990) contested the myths of native speakerness, of which the most pertinent to this study are that languages are inherited and that inheriting a language means being able to speak it well. Along the same lines, in a study questioning the assumption that NES scholars are at a disadvantage in academic publication, Hyland (2016) summed up the "Native speaker's advantage" as "the idea that Native speakers own and control their mother tongue" (p. 61). These myths are responsible for the assumption that *any* NES qualifies as a proofreader (Matarese, 2016), a view that is still espoused by some journal publishers in their submission guidelines (e.g., Cambridge University Press, n.d.). In the context of research on proofreading, this problematic notion of native-speaker proficiency is also implicit. For instance, Harwood et al. used "as proficient as, or nearly as proficient as, a native speaker" as the highest anchor on a scale by which proofreaders were

¹⁶ The six categories were (1) bilingual, (2) English as a first language speaker, (3) second-generation English speaker, (4) English-dominant, (5) L1-dominant, and (6) English variety speaker.

asked to characterize the student writers they worked with, and many commercial proofreading services advertise that they employ only NESs (e.g., American Manuscript Editors, n.d.). In the present study, nearly half (43.1%) of survey participants indicated that the proofreader should be a native English speaker, and several of the interviewees held this belief as well. Yet, as Matarese (2016) pointed out, “Being able to speak fluent, colloquial English does not guarantee proficiency in writing nor, especially, skill in editing other people’s writing” (p. 139).¹⁷

While previous researchers of academic proofreading have sometimes acknowledged that both NES and NNES students (or both domestic and international students) use proofreading, discussions of ethicality in such studies have implied that proofreading among NESs is not problematic. A germane example can be seen in Lines’s (2016) study of postgraduate students’ reasons for seeking substantive editing. By introducing English as a second language (ESL) students as more likely to engage in unethical behaviors and more likely to seek thesis proofreading, she conveyed that ESL students pose a problem for Australian institutions. Yet about one third of the students surveyed in her study, all of whom had committed plagiarism in a postgraduate thesis, identified as “native English” (p. 378). Furthermore, “lack of adequate English-language skills to write their ideas in their own words” (p. 378) was cited as one reason that all students in the study (ESL and non-ESL alike) had plagiarized. These findings clearly indicate that lack of language skills and subsequent engagement in unethical practices are not limited to the ESL population—nor is the use of commercial proofreading services, as Lines stated that native English students made up about half of the clientele at her academic editing business.¹⁸

By focusing on ESL students’ use of proofreading services while glossing over native English students’ use of the same services, Lines’s (2016) study contributes to the construction of what Holliday

¹⁷ In my experience of training more than 50 employees of an online proofreading company, sometimes even ample training and constructive feedback cannot turn a well-qualified individual into a good proofreader. Many people who are skilled writers themselves are unable to spot and/or correct lexico-grammatical errors in other people’s writing.

¹⁸ It is unclear from the context of the article whether this figure is an estimate.

(2006) in a critique of native speakerism called “an imagined, problematic *generalized Other* to the unproblematic Self of the ‘native speaker’” (p. 386; emphasis original). In this way, her study further reifies the notion of the ESL speaker as linguistically deficient, bolstering the deficit model of academic writing. This may be an effect of Lines’s position as a proofreading industry insider and her reliance on personal experience both when designing the study and when drawing conclusions from the findings. Her point that ESL students are disproportionately represented among users of proofreading services is a valid one, but it should not be taken to suggest that proofreading is merely an “ESL student issue,” as Scott (1998) also pointed out with respect to international students. In this study, the survey results showed that self-identified NNES students were more likely to pay for proofreading services than NES students, and there were some differences in the groups’ means of finding a proofreader and the types of contact they had with the proofreader. In general, however, the differences between these groups were slight, and the findings do not indicate that any aspects of academic writing or proofreading are practiced exclusively by self-identified NNES students.

7.2 Reasons for Proofreading

Most previous research considering students’ reasons for using proofreading has focused on postgraduate students, with particular attention to proofreading of theses or dissertations (Lines, 2016; Turner, 2012, 2018). In the context of postgraduate writing, Turner (2012, 2018) posited that students may employ proofreading in pursuit of *writtenness*, a term she proposed to represent both a textual end product and the textual labor involved in its creation. In Turner’s estimation, writtenness in academic writing is expected but undervalued, particularly in terms of the labor—on the part of both named authors and literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2010)—that goes into its achievement. This concept is a useful one for the consideration of writing as a social practice because it allows for a recognition of how the considerable labor that goes into achieving writtenness may be distributed or shared among multiple individuals.

The survey findings indicate that most of the students in this study sought to achieve writtenness in their academic writing. About 70% of them reported that they wanted to improve their writing skills, which could be interpreted as seeking improvement of both the end product and their ability to perform the necessary labor of writing. Many also indicated a desire to eliminate typographical and lexicogrammatical errors through proofreading, which conveys an awareness that these kinds of issues can detract from writtenness (Turner, 2018). Furthermore, students recognized the inherent value of writtenness, as 46.2% indicated that they sought proofreading out of a desire to improve their grades. While it is problematic if improved grades are based in part on another person's labor, most respondents also reported learning from the proofreader, as discussed further in section 7.3. When considering the responses of students who had paid for proofreading in comparison to those of students who had not, there were slight differences between the groups' reasons for using proofreading, most notably that students who paid for proofreading were slightly more likely to report that they had been encouraged to do so by another person, such as an instructor, advisor, or journal reviewer or editor. Overall, these findings foreground how the students' audience awareness shaped their academic writing practices in that many of them sought self-improvement while simultaneously aiming to please others of higher status in their academic communities.

The participants' stated reasons for proofreading also provide further evidence of the artificial separation of writing from content that has previously been observed by scholars in many contexts of academic writing (e.g., Kettle, 2017; Séror, 2008; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014; Tuck, 2016; Turner, 2018; Woodward-Kron, 2007; Zappa, 2007). This is most poignantly illustrated in Nora's recollection that her supervisor had told her, "you . . . take care of that [punctuation and grammar issues] while you and I look more deeply at the analysis." The discursive separation of writing from content misleadingly implies that a proofreader can apply a "quick fix" merely to "surface features"¹⁹ of a text as if lexico-

¹⁹ See Turner (2015a, 2018) for a critique of both terms.

grammatical features were not involved in the construction of meaning (see Schleppegrell, 2004). The finding that about 1 in 5 survey participants (21.4%) sought out a proofreader or proofreading service at the request of an instructor or advisor suggests that many faculty members may also hold the assumption that grammar and meaning are separable aspects of student writing.

Previous studies of L2 doctoral student writers have depicted some students' supervisors as fixated on correcting lexico-grammatical features of their writing to the extent that they cannot see the bigger picture, the organization and content of a text (Shin, 2008; Turner, 2015b; Wang & Li, 2008), and some of the postgraduate student interviewees in this study sought proofreading to prevent a similar situation. For instance, Megan, Elena, and Nora all discussed how proofreading allowed their supervisors to focus on the content of their writing. In contrast to the participants in previous studies, however, these interviewees did not express frustration at their supervisors but rather seemed greatly deferential to them and respectful of their time; they saw themselves as relieving their supervisors of a burden through their pursuit of proofreading. This subsequently appeared to improve their relationships with their supervisors, especially in Nora's case. For some participants, however, having a friend or family member as a proofreader simultaneously introduced new tensions to their relationship with that person. For instance, Anna and Daniela both described having angry exchanges with their partners over their writing. In Anna's case, even paying the proofreader in order to keep things professional did not entirely prevent such tension. These findings provide support for the consideration of proofreading as a social practice as well as a textual one, particularly in the sense that writerly identity shapes and is shaped by written texts (Ivanič, 1998; see section 7.4 for further discussion). Though the participants recognized that their proofreaders were being critical of their texts, not them personally, they still sometimes felt criticized. It seems that such criticism may be easier to swallow when received from a friend or relative than from a research supervisor, and perhaps it is easier yet to receive proofreading from an impartial stranger (as Nora did from me). Further research would be needed to draw conclusions regarding the affective outcomes of proofreading in relation to the student-supervisor relationship.

Although many of the interviewees perceived themselves to be lifting a burden from their instructors or supervisors, they did not seem to think of proofreading in terms of placing a burden on the proofreader; rather, they regarded the proofreader as a helpful resource and recognized the proofreader's corrections and suggestions as learning opportunities. Most of them took an active role in improving their writing with the aim of developing expertise; they perceived the proofreader to help in this process, not to absolve them of the responsibility to develop their language and writing, as some have accused (e.g., Scurr, 2006). However, it should be noted that they volunteered to participate in this study for no compensation, which suggests that they had some personal interest in discussing their writing and proofreading practices. In addition, most of them also intended to pursue careers in which writing would play a central role. In light of this, further research should consider the role of proofreading in the learning trajectories of students who do not perceive a need to develop their writing skills for the long term.

7.3 Nature and Extent of Proofreading

As noted previously, self-identified NNES students and NES students in this sample reported similar reasons for using proofreading. The findings indicate that students in the two groups may not receive equivalent services from their proofreaders, however. Although each group reported similar types of corrections and similar rates of having learned from those corrections, students in the NNES group were more likely than their NES peers to indicate almost every type of learning outcome, especially at the lexico-grammatical level. In particular, self-identified NNES students were much more likely to report having learned grammar rules and new vocabulary from the proofreader's corrections. These findings indicate that proofreading may facilitate different learning outcomes for NES and NNES students, possibly because they may tend to make different kinds of errors. In the context of second language instruction, Corder (1967/1974) distinguished between *mistakes*, which are unsystematic "slips of the tongue (or pen)" (p. 24), and *errors*, which are systematic and provide evidence of a learner's understanding of a language. Corder suggested that anyone, including native speakers of a language, can make mistakes, whereas he linked errors specifically to the transitional competence of second language

learners. In the context of the present study, it seems logical that a proofreader's correction of systematic errors could result in learning of new concepts. One example is how Boris learned the distinction between *while* and *whereas* from his proofreader (and could thereafter imagine the proofreader popping up in a "small bubble" to tell him, "you always do this instead of that"). Because the study relied on self-reported data rather than textual analysis, however, it was not possible to determine a breakdown of errors versus mistakes in the participants' writing or to know whether NNES students did in fact learn from the correction of different types of errors than NES students.

Regarding the extent of proofreading, this study found that for many students, proofreading represents not a final quality check of their writing, but rather a more substantive level of textual intervention. Three quarters of students indicated that the proofreader made changes to sentence structure and flow, almost half reported that the proofreader rephrased information, and 1 in 5 stated that the proofreader summarized and/or paraphrased information in their writing. In addition, more than three quarters of survey respondents reported that the proofreader left comments with explanations or suggestions, and the vast majority of these students believed they learned from these comments. Although several interview participants emphasized that their proofreaders focused mainly on the "small things" in their writing, they also disclosed that they expected the proofreader to stand in as the "reader's representative" (Scott, 1998), attending to whether their writing made sense and whether it communicated clearly and effectively to the intended audience. All of these findings make clear that these students' proofreaders were engaging with the text beyond the surface level, upholding Turner's (2015a, 2018) argument that the use of the term *proofreading* in the context of higher education, as opposed to its use in publishing, is misleading and needs to be reconsidered.

A novel contribution of this study relates to the types of documents for which students in this study had sought proofreading—and by extension, writtenness. Whereas most relevant research on proofreading has focused on postgraduate theses and dissertations (e.g., Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010; Lines, 2016; Turner, 2012), the findings of this study reveal that students seek proofreading services for

many other types of writing. More specifically, the majority of survey respondents had received proofreading for a course assignment or term paper and/or a resume or cover letter, and sizable proportions had also received proofreading for a research proposal and/or email correspondence. Together, these findings indicate that many students who use proofreading recognize the value of writtenness and aim to achieve it in various types of documents throughout their academic careers, not just in the high-stakes, summative writing project that is the thesis or dissertation. Perhaps it is the value allotted to the writtenness of the thesis and dissertation in particular (Turner, 2012, 2018) that has caused these types of texts to receive focused attention in the literature and thus led to a number of papers in which proofreading is brought up in the greater context of postgraduate writing instruction and support (e.g., Scott, 1998; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014; Wang & Li, 2008; Woodward-Kron, 2007).

A caveat worth noting is that the survey results cannot be generalized to the student body population, and therefore they cannot be taken to represent the prevalence of thesis proofreading at the university. There are many possible reasons why the finding regarding thesis proofreading in particular may be misleading. First, the survey question asked specifically which documents students had had proofread since coming to UBC, ruling out the possibility of collecting data on proofreading during previous degree programs. Several factors related to the postgraduate student experience may also have affected the responses. For instance, postgraduate students may be less likely to come to campus, especially during the later stages of writing their theses, and may therefore have been less likely to see advertisements for this study. Students who receive thesis proofreading may do so during a narrow window not long before the thesis defense, which may not have corresponded with the survey window. One of the follow-up interview participants, Nora, serves as an example of a student who had received thesis proofreading, took the survey shortly before defending her master's thesis, and had already graduated by the time I invited her to an interview. It is also possible that the terminated survey responses included students who had received thesis proofreading but were no longer enrolled at the university at the time of the survey. Finally, because thesis proofreading happens near the end of a student's period of

postgraduate enrollment, the sample may also include students who will have a thesis proofread in the future but have not yet reached that point (as was the case for some of the follow-up interview participants).

Nevertheless, the findings of this study point to a need for future consideration of the thesis as only one in a long series of academic texts, which may or may not be the last part in that series. A key finding is that the point at which the proofreader becomes involved seems to vary among students. In terms of thesis proofreading, some students (Anna and Boris) had received proofreading for other types of documents and said they planned to pursue proofreading for a thesis or dissertation, whereas one student (Nora) had never received proofreading services before purchasing them for her thesis. It was outside the scope of this study to consider whether proofreading has different outcomes or implications for students who use it regularly throughout their academic career than for students who use it only at the very end of a postgraduate program. Given the participants' reports about learning from their proofreaders' corrections, however, it seems likely that the introduction of proofreading earlier in a student's program could result in learning—and subsequent improvement of writing ability—throughout that program. Concurrently, however, students who use proofreading throughout their program may repeatedly submit work that misrepresents their actual writing ability and may therefore miss out on receiving relevant instructor feedback. Furthermore, it goes without saying that there are ethical implications of receiving grades based on another person's labor. Future work should consider the development of students' ability to achieve writtenness—and the role of proofreading in this development—across their academic trajectories in light of these issues.

The transition from student writing to scholarly writing for publication is also of relevance in this discussion. For some of the interviewees, one reason for proofreading was to produce the “standard written English” (e.g., Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014) that they knew was necessary for publishing. For example, Boris and Elena spoke of the importance of participating in their scientific communities by publishing and giving conference presentations in English. These students and others were aware of how

the presence of standard written English functions as a gatekeeping device in academic publishing (e.g., Clark & Ivanič, 1997).²⁰ In research conducted in that context, it has been suggested that language brokers can help writers to get past the journal editors and publishers who function as gatekeepers (Belcher, 2007; Burrough-Boenisch, 2006; Canagarajah, 2002; Li & Flowerdew, 2007; Lillis & Curry, 2006, 2010), and many journals actually expect proofreading prior to submission (Heng Hartse & Kubota, 2014). Therefore, when students publish during their graduate programs, like the doctoral students in Li and Flowerdew's (2007) and Fazel's (2018) studies and some of the postgraduate interviewees in this study, it may become more difficult to draw the line between student writing practices and scholarly writing practices (see Matarese, 2016). In other words, it is conceivable that some of the contention around thesis and dissertation proofreading could be diminished through a recognition that many postgraduate students have already taken the leap to writing for a context in which proofreading is actively encouraged.

A further implication of the findings regarding the types of texts for which students received proofreading relates to the regulation of proofreading in higher education. The institutional policies on proofreading at the site of this research and many other universities are limited to postgraduate theses and dissertations (for a discussion of the Canadian context, see Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014), as are the ethical guidelines published by editing associations such as the Editors' Association of Canada (2006) and the Institute of Professional Editors (n.d.) of Australia. When analyzed in the context of these limited regulations, the survey findings indicate that among students in this sample, the vast majority of use of proofreading services is not addressed in policies on proofreading but rather falls under the broader policies on academic integrity and academic misconduct (UBC Library, n.d.; UBC Student Services, 2018a). These policies do not make clear whether any form of proofreading constitutes acceptable practice.

²⁰ It should be acknowledged that "standard written English" is not the only factor involved in whether a journal submission is accepted or rejected (Belcher, 2007) and that the appropriate use of language and register presents difficulties for many novice scholars, not just NNEs (Hyland, 2016).

The lack of a specific policy on proofreading is responsible for the “ethical grey area” (Harwood et al., 2010, p. 62) surrounding the practice. It is ethically questionable, for example, for the proofreader to rephrase information (reported by 46.5% of students) or to summarize/paraphrase information (reported by 20.1% of students).²¹ These practices are categorized as forms of substantive editing (Lines, 2016; Matarese, 2016) and, if they were indeed applied in proofreading students’ coursework,²² it would be a clear violation of the university’s requirements that students complete assignments independently using their own words and phrases (UBC Library, n.d.; UBC Student Services, 2018a). Concerningly, 26% of students who received either of these types of substantive corrections reported that they had sought proofreading at the request of an instructor or advisor. Furthermore, more than 90% of students who reported these types of corrections later indicated that they were familiar with the university’s policy on academic integrity, signifying that they may have either misinterpreted the policy or knowingly violated it. In light of these findings, students should be provided with specific guidelines on proofreading of other types of texts besides theses and dissertations, particularly graded coursework, and instructors should clarify what types of proofreading practices are acceptable for students to engage in (see also Harwood et al., 2010). On a related note, more than half of postgraduate survey respondents were unfamiliar with the university’s thesis editing guidelines, which suggests that those guidelines also need to be better disseminated among students and their supervisors.

7.4 Outcomes of Proofreading

One aim of this study was to adopt a social practice perspective when examining proofreading as one aspect of students’ academic writing practices, hence the adoption of academic literacies as the

²¹ The relevant survey question was worded “What types of changes did the proofreader or proofreading service make?” It is possible that some students misinterpreted the question and actually meant to indicate that the proofreader had given them *help* with rephrasing, summarizing, and/or paraphrasing their own writing. This question should be clarified in any future version of the survey to prevent ambiguity.

²² About 90% of students who reported that the proofreader rephrased and/or summarized/paraphrased information also indicated that they had received proofreading for some form of coursework or assessed work such as a comprehensive exam or thesis; however, it was not possible to draw correlations between specific types of documents and types of corrections from the survey data.

theoretical framework. Researchers working from this perspective recognize writing as a socially and contextually embedded practice (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Lillis & Scott, 2007). They champion a move away from the deficit model of student writing that has been promoted through research on written texts, arguing that this “textual bias” (Horner, 1999, as cited in Lillis & Scott, 2007) frames student writers as deficient (Turner in Blommaert et al., 2007) and diversity itself as problematic (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Research based on this framework has described student writers’ practices in relation to their social, political, and institutional contexts and examined the complex interplay between aspects of the writing context and writerly identity (e.g., Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2001; Lillis & Curry, 2010).

From a social practice perspective, an interesting consequence of proofreading explored in this study is that it creates a new relationship or new dynamic in an existing relationship that is contingent upon the text being proofread yet often has more far-reaching effects. Students’ use of proofreading can affect not only the text and the writer, but also the relationships between the writer and others, such as his or her proofreader(s) and research supervisor. In the case of the only interviewee (Nora) who did not have a previous relationship with her proofreader (me), proofreading resulted in an entirely new, mutually beneficial relationship that had the extended benefit of positively affecting her relationship with her supervisor. Not every proofreading relationship is like this, however. Other interviewees mentioned that proofreading at least temporarily introduced tension into their relationships with significant others, as discussed previously. A number of the survey participants also indicated that they had no contact with the proofreader at all, including 37.2% of self-identified NNES students. Because none of the interviewees fell into this category, it was not possible to explore this issue in further depth, but it seems likely that it could change the experience of proofreading for such students. Therefore, it would be worthwhile in future work to consider the effects of the type and strength of the student–proofreader relationship on specific learning outcomes, general academic success, and the task of proofreading itself.

With regard to academic writerly identity, the interviewees’ descriptions of their writing and proofreading practices provide support for one of the foundational concepts of academic literacies: that

engagement in writing practices both shapes and is shaped by the identity of the writer (Ivanič, 1998). It appears that for many of the participants, especially the graduate student interviewees, proofreading played an integral role in their conceptions of themselves as academic writers. The practice helped them to achieve writtenness in their work and to reap the subsequent rewards. It also served as a means of demonstrating their aims and values to their readers—primarily their instructors and supervisors. For instance, Nora’s pursuit of proofreading showed her supervisor that she was serious about finishing her master’s thesis, and Tracy’s use of proofreading was one of several efforts she exerted to show how much she cared about her undergraduate education, which was especially important to her because of her nontraditional trajectory to higher education. These students and others described writing as hard work, which they named as one of the attributes of a good student; even though some of them did not consider themselves “good writers,” their self-identification as good students was still based in part on the effort they devoted to their writing, including their use of proofreading.

In relation to the fourth research question, the purpose of which was to explore how students perceive the effects of proofreading services in terms of their academic outcomes, development of language and writing skills, and identity, the participants in this study generally believed that they learned from proofreading and that it had a positive effect on their grades and other academic outcomes, such as access to grant funding and the ability to publish their work. It is unclear, however, whether these outcomes were a direct effect of the proofreading itself, the students’ learning, or a combination of both. Thus more longitudinal research is needed to determine how proofreading may affect students’ writing development. Such work would complement ongoing research on the effects of written corrective feedback on students’ learning outcomes (e.g., Liu & Brown, 2015) as well as research on the transfer of learning across time and in different contexts (e.g., James, 2014).

7.5 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to synthesize the findings of this study with previous research and scholarship in efforts to make meaning of the findings and identify avenues for future research. Overall,

in alignment with research based on the theoretical framework of academic literacies (and other theoretical orientations), this study suggests that students' use of proofreading constitutes a social practice in which the institutional context plays no small role. In general, students in the sample resorted to proofreading to improve both their written texts and their writing ability (which together constitute writtenness), and this practice in turn appears to have contributed to their identities as students and writers. Whereas certain student populations have sometimes been framed as deficient based in part on an assumption that they are the predominant users of proofreading, the student participants in this study were heterogeneous in terms of their language and educational backgrounds, providing support for the argument that dichotomies based on language or enrollment status mischaracterize students and their linguistic resources. Finally, this study joins many others in describing a discursive separation of writing from content in postsecondary education, which seems to incentivize the use of proofreading while simultaneously devaluing the labor involved in achieving writtenness (Turner, 2012). The implications of these findings and suggestions for future work are presented in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The findings of this study have implications for the institutional setting in which it was conducted and others like it in North America. In this chapter I consider how the research findings and related literature could be used to inform policies on the use of proofreading among students at the university. I then provide suggestions for future research on students' use of proofreading and recommended directions for the field of second language writing in general. Finally, I conclude the study by offering a few final thoughts on the research project from my perspective as both a master's student and a professional proofreader.

8.1 Policy Implications

The findings of this study reveal a lack of clear institutional guidelines on proofreading of student writing for assessment. To complement the existing policy on thesis editing, it is recommended that clearer, more comprehensive institutional guidelines be made available on the use of proofreading for other types of student writing, particularly graded coursework. Given this study's findings on the diversity of academic programs and types of documents for which students at the university are using proofreading, it would be advisable for academic units to develop their own guidelines on proofreading with a view to what is most appropriate for socializing students into their respective disciplines. This might require these academic units to further investigate the writing and proofreading practices of their own students, as well as to promote writing instruction that demystifies disciplinary conventions and how they can be achieved in various discursive contexts.

In the development of clearer policies on proofreading, administrators and/or academic units should take into account not just research on students' use of proofreading, but also related scholarship on how the benchmark of standard written English and the "myth of linguistic homogeneity" (the idea that the typical university student is a native speaker of a privileged variety of English; Matsuda, 2006) serve to privilege certain students in postsecondary institutions (see also Lillis, 2001; Turner, 2018). Researchers in this area have advocated the development of more inclusive language policies that

recognize and value students' multilingual resources, including "nonstandard" varieties of English (e.g., Tardy, 2011). Turner (2018) even suggested that the need for proofreading of theses and dissertations could be avoided if readers (especially supervisors) could give up what she called the "smooth read ideology" and were willing to cope with a "rougher ride" (p. 13) through a text. Although Turner's proposal may sound extreme, it is worth giving more thought to the extent to which writtleness should be expected for students in various contexts of academic writing. At the same time, Turner's stance invites further contemplation of which expectations of student writing cannot be compromised. It is important to recognize that even seemingly simple "surface features" of a text (such as choice of articles, passive or active voice, etc.) serve ideational and interpersonal as well as textual purposes (e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004). This partly explains the difficulty of drawing the line between proofreading and rewriting of a text (Scott, 1998; Turner, 2012). It would be pertinent for academic units to take these issues into account when planning writing instruction and drafting policies on students' use of proofreading. In addition, it is incumbent upon instructors and supervisors to familiarize themselves with the relevant institutional policies on proofreading, develop their own classroom policies where necessary, and communicate those policies clearly to students.

8.2 Suggestions for Future Research

This study addresses a gap in the literature in relation to student populations who use proofreading. Despite the relatively small sample, the results of the survey show great diversity in terms of students' areas of study, language backgrounds, prior educational experiences, and enrollment status. In light of these findings, future research on academic writing, including but not limited to students' proofreading practices, should involve diverse participants who represent a variety of linguistic resources, levels of writing expertise, and purposes for writing. In addition, the findings of this study point to a need for future research to consider student writers beyond binary terms. Especially given the increasing recognition of academic writing as a fundamentally social practice, it is crucial to allow for more complex characterizations of students' identities and the contexts in which they write as a means of moving beyond

binary considerations. In particular, language should not be the only consideration in research on academic writing practices (Canagarajah, 2013).

It is also my hope that this study will pave the way for further research on proofreading among postsecondary students. To better understand students' challenges with writing and what kinds of instruction might help them, future research should include comparative analyses of written texts to characterize how students' writing and writing ability develop over time in relation to proofreaders' interventions (see Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010, for a similar recommendation). Student characteristics, including linguistic resources, prior education, academic self-efficacy, and career goals, may also interact with proofreading to various extents and should be taken into account in future research.

Based on this study's findings that proofreading can affect students' relationships with others in their social and academic networks, including their instructors and supervisors, there is an additional need for further research on proofreading as a social practice. Such work could include examinations of different types of student–proofreader relationships and whether they lead to different outcomes in terms of students' writing development, general academic performance, and/or academic identity. Proofreaders' qualifications also deserve attention with respect to whether linguistic resources, academic credentials, and writing expertise affect the outcome of proofreading. Finally, with regard to students' use of commercial proofreading services in particular, there has been much speculation but little empirical research; this signals a need for future work to consider this practice in greater depth and with greater attention to questioning commonly held prejudices and assumptions about the students who engage in it. It should be acknowledged that there are potential challenges to conducting research on proofreading practices. For instance, students may be unwilling to share their written work or hesitant to discuss their use of proofreading because of the ethical questions surrounding the practice, as discussed previously. Nevertheless, students' proofreading practices warrant further exploration in light of the increasingly contested role of English in the internationalization of higher education (e.g., Ferris, 2016), particularly in North America.

8.3 Final Thoughts

As Norton (2010) noted, we as “researchers have to understand our own experience and knowledge as well as those of the participants in our studies” (p. 351). For me, this necessitates an acknowledgement that I would not have conducted this research study let alone entered this master’s program were it not for my previous and ongoing employment at a commercial proofreading firm. I applied to this program because working in the field of proofreading had raised many concerns for me, chiefly with respect to the barriers students face when their writing is considered “nonstandard” and whether proofreaders’ interventions help or hinder the learning process. I hoped to make sense of my personal experience of the proofreading industry and its immanent tensions by learning more about the dynamics that support it: the dominance of standard English in global academic text production, the internationalization and commodification of higher education, and the importance of writtenness and variety of sanctioned means of achieving it, including methods of writing instruction as well as literacy brokering practices.

As I moved forward with this research project, I became more conscious of how proofreaders straddle the fence that stands between student writers and whatever it is they aim to achieve through writtenness—perhaps admission to a program, a higher grade, a research grant, or some other outcome. Our role is not to open the gate, but merely to help prepare an author to go through it. This image aligns neatly with Turner’s (2015a) characterization of proofreading as a “Humpty Dumpty experience,” as sitting on this fence is an ethically precarious position. It is also a position of significant and sometimes undeserved power, in that many professional proofreaders have no familiarity with the genres or conventions of their student clients’ fields. It could be argued that as long as the proofreader sticks to correcting “surface errors,” his or her familiarity with the author’s discipline is irrelevant. In many cases, as the data from this study illustrate, instructors and research supervisors seem to be complicit in this assumption. Yet this approach is naïve in its failure to recognize that grammar and content are not separable aspects of writing (e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004) and that there is no clear dividing line between

“correcting” and “rewriting” a text (e.g., Scott, 1998; Turner, 2012, 2015a). My discomfort with these conflicting understandings of writing and the resulting power imbalance between students and proofreaders was one of the driving forces behind this research.

The findings of the study have somewhat satisfied my curiosity, but they have also raised several other questions. It became clear early in the survey window that my own perspective was a narrow one, as the survey responses immediately revealed that relatively few students had paid for proofreading services or found such services through an online search. At the same time, my eyes were opened to a whole different form of proofreading: a supportive, somewhat reciprocal exchange that is embedded within an existing relationship between friends or family members. I became curious about how this type of proofreading might differ from commercial proofreading in terms of practices and outcomes—and whether it might be better for students despite the tension it sometimes introduces to their existing relationships. In contrast, my work as an anonymous employee of a commercial proofreading firm has often been isolating and thankless; such work sometimes makes one feel “like a dispassionate editing robot or a slave chained to a computer” (Matarese, 2016, p. 173). In light of this, I wonder whether building relationships around proofreading might also benefit the proofreader.

My professional experience has shown me that students at all levels of higher education receive proofreading for a variety of written genres and for various purposes. Fortunately, the findings of this study provide confirmation of those personal observations. In exploring students’ reasons for pursuing proofreading and the perceived outcomes of the practice, this study contributes to the growing body of research on academic writing as a social practice, in which the context of writing and the identity of the writer are of essential concern. Going forward, I hope it will pave the way for future research on literacy brokering practices among students in higher education, particularly with attention to the context of increasing internationalization in North American universities and its implications for expectations of writtenness at various levels of students’ academic trajectories.

References

- American Manuscript Editors. (n.d.). About us. Retrieved from https://www.americanmanuscripteditors.com/about_us.aspx
- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Anderson, T. (2015). Seeking internationalization: The state of Canadian higher education. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(4), 166–187.
- Anderson, T. (2016). *Negotiating academic discourse practices, ideologies, and identities: The socialization of Chinese PhD students* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver). Retrieved from UBC Theses and Dissertations database: <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0300652>
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, R. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 7–14). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bazeley, P., & Richards, L. (2000). *The NVIVO qualitative project book*. London, England: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020079>
- Belcher, D. D. (2007). Seeking acceptance in an English-only research world. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2006.12.001>
- Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(1), 4–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2005.10.002>
- Blommaert, J., Street, B., Turner, J., & Scott, M. (2007). Academic literacies: What have we achieved and where to from here? Edited transcript of recorded discussion: February 2007. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 4(1), 137–148. <https://doi.org/10.1558/japl.v4i1.137>
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Language services for authors*. Retrieved April 14, 2018, from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/authors/language-services>

- Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2016). Facts and figures. Retrieved from <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2013). The end of second language writing? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(4), 440–441. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2013.08.007>
- Clark, R., & Ivanič, R. (1997). *The politics of writing*. London, England: Routledge.
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2014). CCCC statement on second language writing and writers. Retrieved from <http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/secondlangwriting>
- Corder, S. P. (1969/1974). The significance of learners' errors. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition* (pp. 19–27). Essex, England: Longman.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Daniels, H. (2008). *Vygotsky and research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Duff, P. A. (2008). Language socialization, participation and identity: Ethnographic approaches. In *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 860–872). Springer.
- Duff, P. (2010). Language socialization. In N. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *New perspectives on language education: Sociolinguistics and language education*. Clevedon, Great Britain: Multilingual Matters.
- Duff, P. (2012). Identity, agency, and second language acquisition. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 410–441). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Editors' Association of Canada. (2006). *Guidelines for editing theses*. Retrieved from http://www.editors.ca/file/461/download?token=_OMIUBoE
- Faez, F. (2011). Reconceptualizing the native/nonnative speaker dichotomy. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 10(4), 231–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2011.598127>

- Fazel, I. (2018). *Emerging scholars' socialization into scholarly publication: Negotiating identities and investments in a neoliberal era* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- Ferris, D. R. (2004). The “grammar correction” debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (and what do we do in the meantime ...?). *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2004.04.005>
- Ferris, D. R. (2016). L2 writers in higher education. In R. Manchón & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Handbook of Second and Foreign Language Writing* (pp. 141–159). Boston, MA: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Flowerdew, J. (2000). Discourse community, legitimate peripheral participation, and the nonnative-English-speaking scholar. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(1), 127. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588099>
- Gerring, J. (2007). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grammarly. (n.d.). Premium plans. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <https://www.grammarly.com/premium>
- Harwood, N., Austin, L., & Macaulay, R. (2009). Proofreading in a UK university: Proofreaders' beliefs, practices, and experiences. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 18(3), 166–190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2009.05.002>
- Harwood, N., Austin, L., & Macaulay, R. (2010). Ethics and integrity in proofreading: Findings from an interview-based study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 29(1), 54–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.08.004>
- Heng Hartse, J., & Kubota, R. (2014). Pluralizing English? Variation in high-stakes academic texts and challenges of copyediting. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 24, 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2014.04.001>
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385–387. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030>
- Hyland, F. (1998). The impact of teacher written feedback on individual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7(3), 255–286.

- Institute of Professional Editors. (n.d.). *Editing research theses*. Retrieved from http://iped-editors.org/About_editing/Editing_theses.aspx
- Ivanič, R. (1994). I is for interpersonal: Discoursal construction of writer identities and the teaching of writing. *Linguistics and Education*, 6(1), 3–15.
- Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and identity*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- James, M. A. (2014). Learning transfer in English-for-academic-purposes contexts: A systematic review of research. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 14, 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2013.10.007>
- Jones, C., Turner, J., & Street, B. (1999). Introduction. In C. Jones, J. Turner, & B. Street (Eds.), *Students writing in the university: Cultural and epistemological issues*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Kobayashi, M., Zappa-Hollman, S., & Duff, P. A. (2017). Academic discourse socialization. In P. A. Duff & S. May (Eds.), *Language socialization* (pp. 239–254). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02255-0_18
- Kettle, M. (2017). *International student engagement in higher education*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Kruger, H., & Bevan-Dye, A. (2010). Guidelines for the editing of dissertations and theses: A survey of editors' perceptions. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 28(2), 153–169. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2010.519110>
- Kubota, R. (1998). An investigation of L1-L2 transfer in writing among Japanese university students: Implications for contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7(1), 69–100.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079812331380364>

- Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (2006). The “academic literacies” model: Theory and applications. *Theory Into Practice*, 45(4), 368–377. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4504_11
- Lee, I. (2007). Feedback in Hong Kong secondary writing classrooms: Assessment for learning or assessment of learning? *Assessing Writing*, 12(3), 180–198.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2008.02.003>
- Li, Y., & Flowerdew, J. (2007). Shaping Chinese novice scientists’ manuscripts for publication. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16(2), 100–117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2007.05.001>
- Lillis, T. (1997). New voices in academia? The regulative nature of academic writing conventions. *Language and Education*, 11(3), 182–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500789708666727>
- Lillis, T. (2001). *Student writing: Access, regulation, desire*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lillis, T., & Curry, M. J. (2006). Professional academic writing by multilingual scholars: Interactions with literacy brokers in the production of English-medium texts. *Written Communication*, 23(1), 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088305283754>
- Lillis, T., & Curry, M. J. (2010). *Academic writing in a global context*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lillis, T., & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 4(1), 5–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/japl.v4i1.5>
- Lines, L. (2016). Substantive editing as a form of plagiarism among postgraduate students in Australia. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(3), 368–383.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1013919>
- Liu, Q., & Brown, D. (2015). Methodological synthesis of research on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 30, 66–81.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2015.08.011>
- Matarese, V. (2016). *Editing research: The author editing approach to providing effective support to writers of research papers*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

- Matsuda, P. K. (2006). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition. *College English*, 68(6), 637–651. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25472180>
- McMartin-Miller, C. (2014). How much feedback is enough?: Instructor practices and student attitudes toward error treatment in second language writing. *Assessing Writing*, 19, 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2013.11.003>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Miller, R. (2011). *Vygotsky in perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morita, N., & Kobayashi, M. (2008). Academic discourse socialization in a second language. In P. A. Duff & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd ed., Vol. 8, pp. 243–255). Springer.
- Murray, N., & Nallaya, S. (2016). Embedding academic literacies in university programme curricula: A case study. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(7), 1296–1312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.981150>
- Norton, B. (2010). Language and identity. In N. Hornberger & S. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 349–369). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Okuda, T. (2017). *The writing center as a global pedagogy: A case study of a Japanese university seeking internationalization* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver). Retrieved from UBC Theses and Dissertations database: <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0355878>
- Rampton, M. B. H. (1990). Displacing the “native speaker”: Expertise, affiliation, and inheritance. *ELT Journal*, 44(2), 97–101.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Scott, M. (1998). The PhD as an apprenticeship in writing. In M. Kiley & G. Mullins (Eds.), *Quality in postgraduate research: Managing the new agenda: Proceedings of the 1998 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference Adelaide* (pp. 215–228). Retrieved from http://www.qpr.edu.au/1998/qpr_1998.pdf
- Scurr, R. (2006, December 15). [Blog post]. *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/ruth-scurr/207185.article>
- Séror, J. (2008). *Socialization in the margins: Second language writers and feedback practices in university content courses* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver). Retrieved from UBC Theses and Dissertations database: <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0066739>
- Shaw, C. (2014, April 9). International students are turning to proofreading agencies to get support [Blog post]. Retrieved from the *Guardian* Higher Education Network blog: <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/apr/09/international-students-proofreading-academic-writing-support>
- Shin, S.-K. (2008). “Fire your proofreader!” Grammar correction in the writing classroom. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 358–365. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm089>
- Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2001). Consensual and individual stereotypic beliefs about international students among American host nationals. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(6), 639–657.
- Starke-Meyerring, D., Paré, A., Sun, K. Y., & El-Bezre, N. (2014). Probing normalized institutional discourses about writing: The case of the doctoral thesis. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 8(2), A13–A27.
- Tardy, C. M. (2011). Enacting and transforming local language policies. *College Composition and Communication*, 62(4), 634–661.

- Tardy, C. M. (2015). Discourses of internationalization and diversity in US universities and writing programs. In D. S. Martins (Ed.), *Transnational writing program administration* (pp. 243–262). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7330/9780874219623.c010>
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Tuck, J. (2016). “That ain’t going to get you a professorship”: Discourses of writing and the positioning of academics’ work with student writers in UK higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *41*(9), 1612–1626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.999320>
- Turner, J. (2012). Academic literacies: Providing a space for the socio-political dynamics of EAP. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *11*(1), 17–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.11.007>
- Turner, J. (2015a). Academic literacies of the institutional interface: A prickly conversation around thorny issues. In T. Lillis, K. Harrington, M. R. Lea, & S. Mitchell (Eds.), *Working with academic literacies: Case studies towards transformative practice* (pp. 375–381). Fort Collins, CO: WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press. Retrieved from <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/lillis/chapter28.pdf>
- Turner, J. (2015b). The symbolic economy of research literacies: The role of “writteness” in the PhD thesis. In C. Badenhorst & C. Guerin (Eds.), *Research literacies and writing pedagogies for masters and doctoral writers* (pp. 205–220). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Turner, J. (2018). *On writteness: The cultural politics of academic writing*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- University of British Columbia. (2017). *2016/17 annual report on enrolment*. Retrieved from <http://pair2016.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2017/01/UBC-Enrolment-Report.pdf>
- University of British Columbia Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. (n.d.). Editing your thesis. Retrieved April 15, 2018, from <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/editing-your-thesis>

- University of British Columbia Information Technology. (n.d.). Survey tool. Retrieved from <https://it.ubc.ca/services/teaching-learning-tools/survey-tool>
- University of British Columbia Library. (n.d.). Academic integrity & plagiarism. Retrieved August 20, 2017, from <http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>
- University of British Columbia Student Services. (2017). Enrolment statistics 2017/18. Retrieved March 18, 2018, from the Vancouver Academic Calendar 2018/19 website: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?page=appendix1>
- University of British Columbia Student Services. (2018a). Academic misconduct. Retrieved April 28, 2018, from the Vancouver Academic Calendar 2018/19 website: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>
- University of British Columbia Student Services. (2018b). Grading practices. Retrieved May 9, 2018, from the Vancouver Academic Calendar 2018/19 website: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0>
- University of British Columbia Student Services. (2018c). Policies on fees. Retrieved March 18, 2018, from the Vancouver Academic Calendar 2018/19 website: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=14,265,0,0#24329>
- University of Chicago Press. (2010). *The Chicago manual of style* (16th ed.). Chicago, IL: Author.
- Van Aswegen, E. S. (2007). Postgraduate supervision: The role of the (language) editor: Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes? (Juvenal, Satire 6, 346-348). *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21(1), 1142–1154.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language* (E. Hanfmann & G. Vakar, Eds.). MIT Press.
- Wang, T., & Li, L. Y. (2008). Understanding international postgraduate research students' challenges and pedagogical needs in thesis writing. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 4(3), 88–96. <https://doi.org/10.5172/ijpl.4.3.88>

- Woodward-Kron, R. (2007). Negotiating meanings and scaffolding learning: Writing support for non-English speaking background postgraduate students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 26(3), 253–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360701494286>
- Zappa, S. (2007). *The academic literacy socialization of Mexican exchange students at a Canadian university* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Document ID 304705812)
- Zhao, H. (2010). Investigating learners' use and understanding of peer and teacher feedback on writing: A comparative study in a Chinese English writing classroom. *Assessing Writing*, 15(1), 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2010.01.002>

Appendices

Appendix A Invitation to Departments (Distributed to Program Administrators via Email)

Subject Line: Seeking Students for a Survey About Proofreading

Hello,

My name is Nina Conrad, and I am a master's student in the Teaching English as a Second Language program at UBC. I am looking for students to participate in an online survey as part of my research project titled "Exploring Postsecondary Students' Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University." I am writing to inquire whether you would be willing to forward an invitation to participate to students in your department. (If I have reached you in error, I would appreciate if you could redirect this message to the person in your department who is best equipped to handle this type of request.)

The aim of this study is to describe the use of proofreading among students enrolled in any capacity at UBC. The research questions are: (1) Who uses proofreading services and what is the nature of services they receive? (2) Why do students engage proofreading services? and (3) How do students perceive the effects of proofreading services in terms of their academic outcomes, development of language and writing skills, and identity?

Any current UBC student who has ever used a proofreader or commercial proofreading service is eligible to participate in the survey. Students who complete the survey and indicate willingness may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. The information participants provide will be stored on a secure server and kept confidential. The results of the survey will be reported in combination with other people's responses, and participants' personal data will not be shared with anyone. The results of the research will be described in my MA thesis and may also be published in scholarly publications in the future. Participation in this study may cause some emotional discomfort to students. There is no other risk associated with participation.

Please respond to this email to indicate whether you are willing to distribute the invitation to participate in this study to students in your department. Participation in this study is optional, and there will be no consequences to students who do not participate. The invitation to participate will describe all risks and benefits of participation in the study, and students will be informed that completion of the survey indicates consent to participate in the research.

If you indicate willingness to distribute the invitation to participate, I will respond with an email that can be forwarded to student listservs. The survey window will be open from 11/8/2017 to 11/29/2017.

This research project is being supervised by primary investigator Ryuko Kubota (ryuko.kubota@ubc.ca) and co-supervised by Sandra Zappa-Hollman (sandra.zappa@ubc.ca). If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or contact either of my supervisors.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this project!

Sincerely,
Nina Conrad

Appendix B Invitation to Participate (Distributed to Program Administrators via Email)

Subject Line: Take a Survey about Proofreading and Enter to Win \$25

Hi,

Thank you very much for your response and for your help with this project. Here is the invitation to forward to students:

—

Have you ever asked someone to edit or proofread your writing outside of class? Have you ever paid someone to edit or proofread your writing? If you answered yes to either one of those questions, you are invited to participate in a survey about who uses proofreading services and why.

My name is Nina Conrad, and I am a master's student in the Teaching English as a Second Language program at UBC. I am surveying students as part of my research project titled "Exploring Postsecondary Students' Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University." The research questions are: (1) Who uses proofreading services and what is the nature of services they receive? (2) Why do students engage proofreading services? and (3) How do students perceive the effects of proofreading services in terms of their academic outcomes, development of language and writing skills, and identity?

The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. The information you provide will be stored on a secure server and kept private and confidential. The results of the survey will be reported in combination with other people's responses, and your personal data will not be shared with anyone. The research findings will be described in my MA thesis and may also be published in scholarly publications in the future.

Participation in the survey is optional, and there will be no consequence to you if you do not participate. At the end of the survey, you will be invited to indicate whether you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Participation in the follow-up interview is also optional. Your participation in this study may result in some emotional discomfort. There is a small risk of social consequences, such as loss of status or reputation, as a result of participation in this study. There is no other risk associated with participation in this study.

All students who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Visa gift card.

To take the survey, please click the link below to begin. By taking the survey, you are consenting to participate in this research. You may skip a question or withdraw from the survey at any time.

The survey is available at: <https://survey.ubc.ca/s/proofreading>.

My research project is being supervised by primary investigator Ryuko Kubota (ryuko.kubota@ubc.ca) and co-supervised by Sandra Zappa-Hollman (sandra.zappa@ubc.ca). If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or contact either of my supervisors.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Thank you,
Nina Conrad

Appendix C Invitation to Follow-Up Interview (Sent Via Email to Students)

Subject Line: Are you available for an interview?

Hello,

Thank you for your participation in the online survey for the research project “Exploring Postsecondary Students’ Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University.” You are receiving this email because you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

My name is Nina Conrad, and I am the student researcher who will be conducting the interviews. If you agree to an interview, I will arrange to meet you in a meeting room in Ponderosa Commons where you can speak privately and confidentially. Interviews are expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form, and the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. All recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a secure server and kept private and confidential.

If you participate in an interview, you will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that will be used in reporting the results of the study. The research findings will be described in my MA thesis and may also be published in scholarly publications in the future.

Participation in the interview is optional, and there will be no consequence to you if you do not participate. Participation in this study may result in some emotional discomfort. There is a small risk of social consequences, such as loss of status or reputation, as a result of participation in this study. There is no other risk associated with participation in this study.

The following times are available for interviews:

[insert times]

If you are willing to schedule an interview, please reply to this email and provide me with a couple of times when you would be available to meet for up to 60 minutes during the week of [dates]. I will then respond to confirm the appointment and to provide you with a consent form that you can read before we meet in person. I understand this is a busy time of year; if none of the times listed above work for you, please let me know when you are free so I can try to offer an alternative. If you would rather meet in [month], that is also an option.

My research project is being supervised by primary investigator Ryuko Kubota (ryuko.kubota@ubc.ca) and co-supervised by Sandra Zappa-Hollman (sandra.zappa@ubc.ca). If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or contact either of my supervisors.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Thank you,
Nina Conrad

Appendix D Interview Scheduling Confirmation (Sent Via Email to Participants)

Subject Line: Follow-Up Interview Confirmation

Hello,

Thank you for your participation in the research project “Exploring Postsecondary Students’ Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University.” You are receiving this email because you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

I have booked a room in [location] at [time] on [date]. If you are unable to meet me then, please let me know as soon as possible so we can reschedule.

I am attaching a copy of the consent form for the study so you will be able to read through it before our meeting. When we meet in person, I will ask you to sign the consent form before the follow-up interview begins. At that time, I will be able to answer any questions you may have before signing. If you have any questions before we meet, feel free to contact me at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or (604) 600-7776.

Participation in the interview is optional, and there will be no consequence to you if you do not participate. You have the right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time.

My research project is being supervised by primary investigator Ryuko Kubota (ryuko.kubota@ubc.ca) and co-supervised by Sandra Zappa-Hollman (sandra.zappa@ubc.ca). If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or contact either of my supervisors.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Thank you,
Nina Conrad

Students needed for a study on Proofreading.

Have you ever asked someone to edit or proofread your writing outside of class?

Have you ever paid someone to edit or proofread your writing?

If you answered yes to one or both of those questions, you are invited to participate in a study about who uses proofreading services and why.

Take a 10-minute survey and enter to win \$25!

Go to: <https://survey.ubc.ca/s/proofreading>

To participate in this study, you must be:

- at least 18 years old
- currently enrolled as a student at UBC

Participants who indicate willingness may be contacted for a follow-up interview.

This survey is being conducted as part of an MA thesis research project. The results will be used solely for research purposes. If you have any questions about this study or how to participate, please contact Nina Conrad at nconrad@alumni.ubc.ca or (604) [REDACTED]

Appendix F Online Survey Instrument

Instructions: Please answer questions honestly to the best of your ability. You may skip a question or withdraw from the survey at any time.

By taking the survey, you are consenting to participate in this research.

[Click to continue.]

Demographic Info

1. Please indicate your age in years:
 - [fill-in-the-blank] (Inclusion criterion: Participants must indicate 18 years or older.)
2. Please indicate your gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to answer
3. What is your year in school? [drill-down question]
 - Undergrad:
 - 1st year
 - 2nd year
 - 3rd year
 - 4th year
 - 5th+ year
 - Post-Baccalaureate/Diploma
 - Master's student
 - 1st year
 - 2nd year
 - 3rd+ year
 - PhD student
 - 1st year
 - 2nd year
 - 3rd year
 - 4th year
 - 5th+ year
 - Not enrolled at UBC (Exclusion criterion)
- 3a. Have you advanced to PhD candidacy? (Appears only for PhD students)
 - Yes/No
4. What is your program of study?
 - [complete list]
5. What is your status at UBC?
 - Domestic student
 - International student
6. (If international) What is your country of origin?
 - [dropdown list of countries]
7. Do you consider yourself to be a native English speaker or have near native English proficiency?
 - Yes/No
8. What is your primary home language?
 - [dropdown list (top languages spoken in Canada) + other: _____]
9. Where did you attend high school?
 - [dropdown list of countries]
10. What was your primary language of instruction in high school?
 - [dropdown list + other: _____]

11. Did you have a bachelor's degree prior to enrolling in your current program?
 - Yes/No
12. (If yes to #8) Where was the college/university where you earned your bachelor's degree?
 - [dropdown list of countries]
13. (If yes to #8) What was the primary language of instruction at that college/university?
 - [dropdown list + other: _____]
14. Did you have a graduate-level degree prior to enrolling in your current program?
 - Yes/No
15. (If yes to #11) Where was the college/university where you earned your master's degree?
 - [dropdown list of countries]
16. (If yes to #11) What was the primary language of instruction at that college/university?
 - [dropdown list + other: _____]
17. Have you been diagnosed with a learning disability?
 - Yes/No
 - Prefer not to answer

Use of Proofreading

A *proofreader* is a person who corrects and/or gives feedback on another person's writing. A proofreader may be paid or unpaid. For the purposes of this study, instructors and classmates do not count as proofreaders.

1. Have you ever used a proofreader or commercial proofreading service to correct a document you wrote in English? (Inclusion criterion)
 - Yes/No
 - 1a. Did you pay the proofreader?
 - Yes/No
2. How often have you used a proofreader or commercial proofreading service?
 - 1 time
 - 2-5 times
 - 6-10 times
 - More than 10 times
3. What was your primary reason for using a proofreader or proofreading service? (check all that apply)
 - My instructor/advisor asked me to get my work edited.
 - I wanted higher grades.
 - A journal editor or reviewer asked me to get my work edited.
 - I wanted to avoid plagiarism.
 - I wanted to improve my writing skills.
 - Other: _____.
4. How did you find a proofreader or proofreading service? (check all that apply)
 - the proofreader is a friend or family member
 - recommendation from a friend
 - recommendation from a fellow student
 - recommendation from an instructor
 - recommendation from my academic advisor
 - recommendation from my research supervisor
 - internet search
 - message board/flyer on campus
 - other: _____.
5. What factors did you consider in choosing a proofreader or proofreading service? (Check all that apply)
 - price
 - location
 - internet rating (e.g., Yelp or Google ratings)
 - personal recommendation from someone I trust
 - the proofreader's qualifications

- the proofreader's reputation
 - the proofreader's familiarity with my discipline or type of document
 - the proofreader should be a native English speaker
 - the proofreader should speak another language besides English (specify which: _____)
6. What types of documents have you had edited since you came to UBC? (Check all that apply)
- resume/cover letter for a job application
 - email correspondence
 - course assignment/term paper
 - take-home exam
 - honors thesis
 - research proposal
 - comprehensive exam (comps)
 - grant application
 - MA thesis
 - PhD dissertation
 - manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
 - PowerPoint or multimedia presentation
 - other: _____.
7. Was your application for admission to your current program at UBC edited by a proofreader or proofreading service?
- Yes/No

For questions 8–18, answer with regard to the proofreader or proofreading service you have used most often.

8. What type of contact have you had with the proofreader or proofreading service?
- We met in person.
 - We talked on the phone.
 - We had direct email contact.
 - I communicated with a customer service representative.
 - I have not had any contact with the proofreader.
9. What types of changes did the proofreader or proofreading service make? (Check all that apply)
- spelling
 - grammar
 - punctuation
 - word choice
 - sentence structure/flow
 - rephrasing information
 - summarizing/paraphrasing information
 - citation/reference list formatting
 - plagiarism checking
 - discipline-specific conventions
 - implemented instructor's or reviewer's feedback
 - other: _____.
10. How was the document edited?
- The proofreader tracked changes using computer software.
 - The proofreader highlighted changes in a different color.
 - The proofreader made changes on a paper copy of the document.
 - The proofreader did not indicate where he/she made changes.
 - other: _____.
11. How many of the proofreader's changes did you accept/implement?
- all of the changes
 - most of the changes
 - some of the changes (about half)
 - a small number of changes

- none of the changes
12. How did you decide whether to accept/implement the proofreader's changes?
 - I accepted or rejected each change one at a time.
 - I automatically accepted all of the proofreader's changes.
 13. Did the proofreader leave comments with explanations or suggestions?
 - Yes/No
 14. (If yes) Did the explanations or suggestions help you to improve your writing?
 - Yes/No
 15. Do you think the proofreader made your writing sound more academic?
 - Yes/No
 16. Do you think the proofreader made your writing sound more like a native speaker's writing?
 - Yes/No
 17. Did you learn from the proofreader's changes and/or feedback?
 - Yes/No
 18. (If yes) What did you learn? (Check all that apply)
 - new vocabulary
 - grammar rule(s)
 - punctuation rule(s)
 - how to organize sentences and/or paragraphs
 - how to support an argument
 - how to cite sources
 - how to avoid plagiarism
 - other: _____
 19. What other types of resources do you use to improve your writing? (Check all that apply)
 - spell check/grammar check in word processing software
 - dictionary/thesaurus
 - books about writing
 - style manuals (e.g., *APA*, *MLA*, *Chicago Manual of Style*)
 - online plagiarism checker
 - automated grammar checker (e.g., Grammarly)
 - writing centre
 - peer writing group
 - instructor's office hours
 - other: _____
 20. Are you familiar with the university's policy on academic integrity?
 - Yes/No
 21. (For grad students): Are you familiar with the university's Guidelines for Editing Theses?
 - Yes/No
 22. In your opinion, does UBC provide sufficient writing support services for students?
 - Yes/No

Thank you for your participation!

If you want to participate in a random drawing for a \$25 Visa gift card, please enter your email address. Your email address will be kept private and confidential and will be visible only to the researcher.

- [Blank]

If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please put a checkmark in the box below. If you are selected to participate in a follow-up interview, the researcher will contact you by email to schedule an interview time and location. Follow-up interviews are expected to last 30 to 60 minutes. Your email address will be kept private and confidential and will be visible only to the researcher.

- [] Yes, I am willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

Appendix G Consent Form



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education

Department of Language & Literacy Education
6445 University Boulevard
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-5788
Fax: (604) 822-3154
Email: lled.educ@ubc.ca

Consent Form for Follow-Up Interviews **Exploring Postsecondary Students' Use of Proofreading Services at a Canadian University**

Who is conducting this study?

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Ryuko Kubota, Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC, [phone number]

Co-Investigators:

Dr. Sandra Zappa-Hollman, Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC, [phone number]

Nina Conrad, MA student, Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC, [phone number]
(This study will serve as the basis for Nina Conrad's MA thesis.)

Why are we doing this study?

- We are conducting this study to learn more about students' use of proofreaders and proofreading services.
- We want to learn who uses proofreading services, what types of services they receive, why they use proofreading services, and what they perceive to be the effects of this practice.

How is this study being conducted?

- This study is based on an online survey and follow-up interviews.
- If you agree to participate in an interview, you will meet with the student researcher (Nina Conrad) in a study room at the library.
- The interview will last 30 to 60 minutes.
- The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed.

How will the results be shared?

- Only the three researchers listed on the first page of this form will have access to the data. All information collected will be used solely for research purposes.
- The results of analysis and anonymized excerpts from the interview transcripts may be presented at conferences and/or in journal articles.
- You may request a summary of the research findings from the student researcher. If you request to see the findings, they will be shared with you after the study is completed.

Are there any negative consequences of participating in this study?

- Some of the questions may seem sensitive or personal. You may skip any question that you are not comfortable answering.
- Some of the questions are about behaviors that may violate university policies. Therefore, there is a small risk of damage to your reputation if other people find out you have been involved in this study.

Are there any benefits of participating in this study?

- There are no direct benefits of participation in the study. However, your contribution and the results of the study may help to benefit other students and/or the university in the future.

How will your privacy be protected?

- We will make every possible effort to protect your identity.
- The audio recording and transcript of the interview will not be labeled with your name. The audio and transcript files will be stored on the student researcher's password-protected laptop and backed up on an external hard drive that only the student researcher can access.
- You will have the opportunity to select a pseudonym that will be used whenever we write about the findings. (If you do not want to choose a pseudonym, we will randomly choose one for you.)

Will you be paid for taking part in this study?

- We will not pay you for taking part in this study.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?

- If you have any questions about the study, you can contact the student researcher, Nina Conrad, or either of her co-supervisors. Their contact information is listed on the first page of this form.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Signatures

You have the choice whether or not to participate in this study. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any consequences.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature
(or Parent or Guardian Signature)

Date

Printed Name of the Participant (or Parent or Guardian) signing above

If you would like to receive a summary of the research findings, enter your email address:

Appendix H Semistructured Follow-Up Interview Protocol

1. What languages do you speak?
Do you consider yourself to be a native or near-native speaker of English?
2. Could you tell me about your education before enrolling in your current program at UBC?
3. Could you tell me about what you are studying at UBC?
What types of writing do you need to do for your program at UBC?
How important is writing ability in your program?
4. Do you consider yourself a good student? Why/why not?
5. Do you consider yourself a good writer? Why/why not?
 - a. (If applicable:) Do you consider yourself a good writer in [other language]?
6. Do you think your writing ability meets the demands of your program? Why/why not?
Did you feel adequately prepared for the writing demands when you entered the program?
Why/why not?
What kinds of writing instruction and/or writing support does your program offer?
7. Why did you first look for a proofreader or proofreading service?
Who is the proofreader or proofreading service?
How did you find the proofreader or proofreading service?
Did you work with the proofreader before entering your current program?
8. Do you pay the proofreader or proofreading service?
If so, how much does it cost? How do you get the money to pay for it?
9. What types of writing have you had proofread?
10. Could you describe the steps you take when writing:
How do you decide whether to submit a piece of writing to a proofreader?
At what point in the writing process do you make that decision?
At what point do you send your writing to the proofreader?
11. What types of changes does the proofreader make? Do you agree with the proofreader's changes?
Please explain. Do you learn from the proofreader's changes? If so, what do you learn?
12. Do you think your ability to write has improved as a result of working with the proofreader?
Please explain.
13. Do you think that using a proofreader has affected your grades and/or academic reputation?
Please explain.
14. Do other people know that you submit writing to a proofreader? Why/why not?
15. What do you like about the proofreader's work?
16. Have you ever had a negative experience or outcome from working with a proofreader? If so, please describe what happened.
17. Will you continue to use a proofreader after you graduate from your current program? Why/why not?
18. What other types of resources have you used to improve your writing?
19. (If applicable:) After a proofreader makes changes to your work, do you still consider it *your* writing? Why/why not?
20. (If applicable:) Do you give credit to the proofreader in your acknowledgements? Why/why not?

Appendix I Transcription Conventions

<i>word</i>	indicates the speaker's emphasis on a word through intonation
word–	indicates a cut-off word or phrase
. . .	indicates an eliminated word or phrase
[word]	indicates a clarification of a missing word or unclear referent
(sound)	indicates an audible nonverbal utterance