THE ROLE OF WRITING IN INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

STUDENTS’ LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation in
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by
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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the role of writing in undergraduate education students’ learning experiences in the United States. It focuses on how writing about previously significant experiences in the forms of narratives and journal entries transforms international education students’ perceptions and identities and provides them with the space for changed course of actions through imagined future teaching.

The participants in this study are three female undergraduate students from the College of Education in a large university in the Northeastern United States who are majoring in either early childhood education or educational policy. Two of the participants are from South Korea, and one is from China. All of them completed their K–12 education in their home countries where English-language writing is mostly exam-oriented “fake writing” (interviewee #1, April 27, 2017)) and fundamentally different from the extensive writing they have experienced in their undergraduate academic programs.

In analyzing these students’ experiences, I adopt Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (1991), paying special attention to the changes the students have experienced due to the act of writing. Drawing upon this theory, I consider how writing facilitates or hinders changes in participants’ learning and whether these changes are transformative. More specifically, I answer three questions: (a) What is the role of writing in the learning experiences of Asian international education students who are pursuing undergraduate degrees in the United States? (b) What, if any, changes do these preservice teachers experience due to the practice of writing? and (c) How, if at all, are journal writing and the writing of narratives particularly important to the changes described in the second question?

Afterwards, the three research questions are briefly explained to the participants, and then they are invited to share the writings they have done during the academic years. Ultimately, I collect 39 pieces of writing: 18 from the first student, 20 from the second, and 11 from the third. The pieces of writing cover major courses they took in their specific areas from their sophomore to senior years. Following the email, each participant is invited for a half-hour interview. The foci of the interviews are the students’ histories of English-language writing, the changes they have perceived, and their perceptions of themselves as writers.

Given the uniqueness of each participant’s educational background, the present study adopts the case-study method. One advantage of this method is that it captures the rich background information that each participant brings to the study and thus allows me to treat each participant as an independent case. Another advantage is that this method enables me to make cross-references and draw conclusions by comparing and contrasting the three independent cases. Therefore, I first investigate the changes
each participant has experienced due to the act of writing, then discuss whether these changes count as transformative learning, and finally consider the similarities and differences among the three cases through a cross-analysis.

In analyzing these cases, I adopt reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019) to search for emerging themes. Braun and Clarke used the method of looking for minimum meaning clusters while looking for emerging themes. I find this method particularly useful for my study because it enables me to capture each writer’s original intention but avoid redundancy. I adapt this method by using Nvivo for Mac to search for nodes rather than manually writing them down. While using Nvivo, I first use the minimum meaning cluster method to mark nodes; I then look for meaning clusters that contain similar nodes. Finally, I put these clusters into different patterns under the guidance of transformative learning theory.

The most significant finding is that transformative learning mainly happens when writing stimulated the writers to critically reflect on significant past experiences and allowed them space to imagine changed course of actions in their future teaching. Another important finding is that writing assignments, particularly those that led to negative feedback from instructors, had a traumatic effect on the writers. While the writers publicly identified these writing assignments as “difficult,” the writers lost confidence in their writing, erode their hidden wish for changed, and eventually they might reflect such desire for change in their imagined future teaching.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Rational of the Study

As an international student studying in the United States (US), I always felt that the complexity of my learning experience was underestimated and underrepresented in research.

I was a true believer in the transformative power of writing. It always changed part of me every time when I put pen to paper. It might be a shifted perspective, a new idea on teaching, or a feeling aroused by the writing. Some of the changes didn’t go anywhere, but a lot of them eventually resulted in changed courses of actions in me. Yet it always remains mysterious for me to predict which writings would work and which not.

Later I was introduced to transformative learning (TL) theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2003, 2009). Part of my puzzles was solved because this theory elaborated how transformative learning, a theory specifically focused on adult learning, could lead to changes of actions. I realized that critical reflections, one basic concept of this theory (Mezirow, 1990), was a pre-requisite for the happening of transformative learning. For example, only when I critically reflected on how my previous learning experience had shaped my current teaching that I had the opportunities to make changes in my future teaching.

TL theory could explain and predict which types of writing could lead to changed actions and which not. I am mostly convinced, but there was something missing. As TL theory could explain most of the cases in which writing eventually lead to changed courses of actions, it never answered a question that had bothered me ever since I began to focus on writing study. The question stemmed from my experience of writing without any expectation or critical reflection, yet it eventually led to unexpected transformation. My suspect was that some unexplained factors in writing could also lead to transformative learning, and this guessing became stronger when I looked back at my grant writing experience.
The grant writing was a response to the requirement of inserting ideology and political education into all university courses, which were advocated by the Ministry of Education in China [HTTP://WWW.MOE.GOV.CN/S78/A13/TONGZHI/202006/T20200622_467552.HTML]. For me, the application was an unpleasant task, because it was assigned to me just to improve the participation ratio of our research center. I didn’t have any motivation to write, nor did I know anything about how to integrate political education into my English writing class.

Despite the lack of incentives, I started to write anyway. My initial purpose was to fill in all starred areas (compulsory) swiftly, leave all unstarred areas (optional) blank, and hand it in perfunctorily so that the team leader would stop bugging me. But there was a compulsory question, which required me to imagine how my teaching would look like if adding ideology and political education to my class. Of course, I didn’t have any idea, so I made up three things that came to my mind, and wrote that I would promote local culture, cultivate students’ critical thinking ability and nurturing their group-cooperation ability. And then I wrote about my imagination of how these three aspects would be embodies in my class.

I didn’t realize the power of writing about imagined teaching until coming back to my class. All of a sudden, I found myself arranging writing activities according to the three aspects I made up, promoting local culture, cultivating students’ critical thinking, and nurturing their group-cooperation ability. For example, I asked students to investigate one prominent aspect of their hometown culture, wrote some brief scripts, and made a five minutes video to introduce the culture. I also grouped students and invited them to conduct interviews, do presentations, and write up short research report. Students were very much engaged in these activities. As time went by, I found my writing class were more and more interesting, although my grant application didn’t go anywhere. Later that semester, my writing course was voted as “the most interesting and meaningful courses” in my university, and myself as innovative teacher of the year in my department.

Experienced the transformative power of writing about imagined teaching, I wanted to know how it functioned, and began to search in google scholar. To my disappointment, there were very few research on this topic. There were studies about how writing about teachings could enhance reflection(Boud, 2001), how writing about imagined community could promote student learning(Norton & Pavlenko, 2019), even how writing with imagined readers or context could improve the final products...
(Shepherd, 2018), but very few research on what effects writing about imagined teaching could have.

Although I couldn’t find enough literature to support my experience, my own experience as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, as well as international student, told me that the writing of imagined teaching was particularly important in both teachers and education students’ learning experience.

This was particularly true for international students. Coming from another country, they had very limited resources to experience and enact all the learnings about teaching they were taught, nor did they have rich immersive experience in K-12 educational settings in the US as their native growing-up peers did. Imagination about future teaching would be an important complementary for the lack of chances to put learning into practice. Writing, particularly course assignments, would be a very important site for international students to negotiate their understanding about teaching with their instructors and peers, and to accelerate the transition from learning to practice when they wrote about how they would teach in the future.

As such, one important purpose of the current research was to testify the hypothesis that writing about imagined teaching is an important part in international education students’ learning experience. Specifically, I want to explore what role writing plays when international educational students write about their imagined teaching, and whether this type of writing have transformative power. If yes, what aspects facilitated the transformation?

As an educator, I would certainly be happy if my research could explore the untouched area of writing about imagined teaching and international education students’ transformative learning experience. Yet a problem that had bothered me for years were that how to bring the same experience to students, and help them realize the transformation they could have through the act of writing.

During the past five years of teaching both native and international students, I tried various activities, wanted my students to experience transformative learning through the act of writing, but few of these efforts worked out. I chose real-life topics, made the procedure of idea generation tangible, held writing conferences with each group, and provided various types of feedback to them. I told them we were not only learning to write in English, but also writing to develop into a comprehensive person. Students’ reaction made me very frustrated, as they showed blank faces as if I were talking nonsense. When I invited them to comment on those activities deliberated designed to facilitate their transformative
learning, their response was the same frustrating. “interesting” and “refreshing” were the words they used most frequently. Other than that, I never heard them mentioned anything about the changes they had experienced due to the act of writing.

I even once had a female student who wrote about how she was labeled as “dark skin”, how she was hurt by that nickname, and how she learnt to reconcile with these people as she learnt in our writing class that tanned skin was very popular in other parts of the world, and that we should respect each person for who they were, including their skin color. She read aloud of the writing in front of the whole class. I could see her tears, and feel her nervous yet proud little trembling, and sense her determination to say farewell to the past. “This is transformative learning”, I told myself.

Later when I talked with her about her writing, the braveness of sharing and the transformation I saw in her, she didn’t think anything happened that day counted as formal learning. She proudly stated that she grew though writing about and sharing her story.

I was sent into deep thinking while sensing her distinction between formal learning and transformation as growth. I sensed that she might have deeply rooted beliefs in what formal learning should look like, and clearly, transformative learning wasn’t on her list. One possible reason was that she was never introduced to the concept of transformative learning, nor was she familiar with the technique of using writing to facilitate transformation.

This hypothesis inspired me to explore the less covered area of using writing as an effective way to promote transformative learning. More specifically, I wanted to explore several frequently-used genres, like journals, narratives, and field observations, and their role in students’ learning experience.

In general, the purpose of this research is to explore the role of writing in international undergraduates who major in education and their learning experience in teacher education programs in the US context. The research questions are as follows:

• Question 1: What’s the role of writing in international education students’ learning experience while pursuing educational undergraduate degrees in the USA?

• Questions 2: What, if any, changes do these preservice teachers experience due to the practice of writing?

• Questions 3: How, if at all, are journals and the writing of narratives particularly important in the
Theoretical Framework

Reflective journaling and narrative writing are two frequently used methods in teacher education pedagogy, yet they have been studied less intensively in international undergraduate education students. Connecting these pedagogies of writing in teacher education programs is the idea of critical analysis of one’s own experience, facilitated through writing. As such, critical incident analysis is one important move in education students’ reflective writings (Francis, 1995). It provides a starting point for learners to reflect critically on and close the gap between theory and practice, and thus enhance professional teaching and learning (Hiemstra et al., 2001). Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (1991), which emphasizes the role of critical incident in facilitating critical reflection, will be employed in the current research to frame the role of writing in undergraduate education students’ learning experiences.

Transformative learning is defined as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000). The term “frame of reference” refers to “the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (Mezirow, 1997). Further more, frame of reference is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view. Habits of mind are broad and abstract. They are gradually yet solidly cultivated by social, cultural, and educational contexts an individual is in. A point of view is a particular interpretation of certain aspects of habits of mind in a specific context, and it is prone to the influence of the immediate context. The relationship between the two is that habits of mind are articulated and reflected by specific points of view. Changes in habits of mind will lead to fundamental changes in actions while points of view won’t have such power.

The transformation of habits of mind, which is also known as the reconstruction of frame of reference, is essential for transformative learning to happen. Mezirow (1990) explained the process as that critical reflection on critical incidents could change frame of reference and eventually lead to changed course of actions. In essence, transformative learning happens through the collision of triggers and thus leading to critical reflections on frame of reference by validating competing beliefs, taking action on these reflective insights, and critically assessing these changed actions.

Discourse is another important concept to understand the transformation of habits of mind. It is
a dialogue, implicit or explicit, devoted to the assessment of reasons when competing interpretations are presented in a specific context (Mezirow, 1997, 2000). Discourses are tools as well as carriers for adult learners to critically examine evidences, arguments, and alternative points of view, enabling them to scrutinize the otherwise unconscious habits of mind and eventually leading to changed behaviors (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor, 2007). Put together, transformative learning theory explains how adult learners’ frames of reference can be transformed by critical reflection through discourses on unconscious assumptions and beliefs, and how the transformation of habits of mind can eventually lead to changed behaviors.

Transformative learning theory has been considerably extended to educational research during the past decades (Belbase & Luitel, 2008; Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1997; Whitelaw, Sears, & Campbell, 2004). Whitney et al. (2008) used it to investigate the role of writing in a national summer writing camp and proposed some modifications to better capture the changes these teachers have displayed. In her modified version, she used “triggers” rather than the original term “critical incident” to capture the indicative nature of issues teachers wrote about and stated that triggers worked as sites of changes for participants’ perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991; Whitney et al., 2008).

I found her adaptation particularly useful for this study, as it explains how the difficulties and a sense of needing change could trigger participants’ reflection on the meaning perspectives they held. The other important implication for the current study is her argumentation of looking beyond classroom practices to seek sufficient criterion of transformation. The shift of focus from changed behaviors to the understanding of intentions and reasons of making change is particularly beneficial for the current research, as some of the participants don’t have student teaching experience yet in this study. Does the absence of student teaching prevent them from experiencing transformative learning? Can writing be a sufficient indicator of transformative learning if they display changes of habits of mind? The current study will explore these topics under the guidance of the modified framework from Whitney (Whitney, 2007; Whitney et al., 2008). Specifically, the study will investigate what discourses are accepted or declined by participants in the various writings they have experienced, how the writing of certain issues serves as triggering for critical reflection, whether the reflection is changes of habits of mind or simply views of points, how participants reframe and resolve to reorient through writing, and whether and how they try new roles.

As discussed in the literature review part, international undergraduate education students’
writing is a dual process of writing reflectively as well as writing in another language. The application of transformative learning theory provides a framework to explore the role of writing when it’s used as a tool for reflection, but it still remains largely unknown about how writing in another language influence writers’ meaning making process. The key questions to ask here are whether and how writing in another language influences writing reflectively.

Canagarajah’s translingual theory (S. Canagarajah, 2011a; A. S. Canagarajah, 2013, 2015) provides insight into how international writers construct and negotiate meaning in their English writing through strategic use of native language and home culture. His framework is from a post-colonial perspective, which is beyond the discussion of the current study, but it takes front stage of the otherwise hidden roles of the cultural and linguistic knowledge international students posses and helps researchers understand how this knowledge help or hinder the meaning making process while writing in English. Therefore the current study will employ the four strategies he depicts: envoicing, recontextualization, interaction, and encontextualization(S. Canagarajah, 2011b; Canagarajah, 2013). He defines the four strategies as follows:

“Envoicing strategies set the conditions for negotiation,...; recontextualization strategies prepare the ground for negotiation; interactional strategies are adopted to co-construct meaning; and entextualization strategies reveal the temporal and spatial shaping of the text to facilitate and respond to these negotiations” (Canagarajah, 2013).

The four types of strategies reflect on four levels of constructs in communication: personal, contextual, social, and textual. The current study will use these strategies as indexes to analyze how international undergraduate education students negotiate meaning through the integration of their unique cultural and linguistic background to their English writing.

In sum, I find the combination of the two researchers’ frameworks particularly useful in explaining how international students make meaning through writing in a context which is socially, contextually, personally and textually different with the one they originally came from. As Connelly and Clandinin(1990) stated, we all live storied lives, and we seek meaning through the reconstruction and retelling of our stories. For these international student teachers, writing is also a process of reconstruction, rethinking and rebuilding of their lived experience in in two cultures as well as a strategic process of writing in another language.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this section is to establish a rationale for the current study. I connect the study with transformative learning and analyze it in relation to new theoretical findings and practices in research on international students’ writing.

Purpose and Focus of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore how writing shapes the learning experiences of Asian international undergraduates who major in education and are enrolled in teacher-education programs in the United States. The research questions are as follows:

• Question 1: What is the role of writing in the learning experiences of Asian international education students who are pursuing undergraduate degrees in the United States?

• Questions 2: What, if any, changes do these preservice teachers experience due to the practice of writing?

• Questions 3: How, if at all, are journaling and the writing of narratives particularly important to the changes described in the second question?

International Undergraduate Education Students in the US

Universities in the United States have witnessed a steady increase in international student enrollment in recent years. According to statistics from Project Atlas at the Institute of International Education, the number of international students was 886,052 in 2013–2014; 974,926 in 2014–2015; and 1,043,839 in 2015–2016. Data from the same institution also shows that students from Asia are the largest
and fastest-growing group of international students (Data source: http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/United-States/International-Students-In-US#.WDwio6IrJ6A).

Despite the increasing number of international undergraduate students in the United States, few choose to major in education. Take the 2015–2016 school year as an example: that year, only 19,483 out of 1,043,839 students (1.9% of the total international undergraduate population) were enrolled in education programs. (Data source: http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/United-States/International-Students-In-US#.WDwio6IrJ6A). Given this relatively small percentage of education students, there is very little research on the students’ learning experiences in the United States. There is even less research on Asian international undergraduate education students, despite the fact that they are the largest and fastest-growing group of international undergraduates.

We can obtain only a limited understanding of these students’ social and academic lives through studies that focus on international students in general. From these articles, it is clear that international undergraduate students are vulnerable in their host countries because of the social, cultural, and language barriers they face (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). They often report feelings of loneliness, isolation, insecurity, and a sense of strangerhood due to their lack of social, cultural, and emotional support systems in the new context (Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012; Starr-Glass, 2016).

In their academic lives, international undergraduate students face challenges such as language barriers, differences in learning styles, and instructor expectations in the host country. Writing is reported as the most challenging part of their learning experiences (Andrade, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). This is likely true for those who major in education since writing is a common component of teacher-education programs. It is unclear how international undergraduate education students learn to adjust to writing-intensive programs and what role writing plays in the process of learning to become a teacher.

Generally speaking, for international undergraduate students, studying in the United States is not all about challenges and difficulties. It is also rewarding. Most of the students eventually acclimate to the new context, and some of them describe the learning experience as transformative and worthwhile (Andrade, 2006; Valdez, 2015; Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong, & Pace, 2014). As they adjust to the new context, they also facilitate learning opportunities for other students in their programs, particularly
their native English-speaking (NES) peers. Previous research has shown that NES students gain a deeper understanding of cultural differences, diversity, and inclusion when they interact with their international peers (Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013).

The idea of mutual learning and its benefits is particularly important for international undergraduate education students and their NES peers because of the increasing demand for teachers with multicultural competence. For example, multiple researchers have found that NES student-teachers with experience collaborating with their international peers tend to display significant progress in multicultural teaching competence (Faiez, 2012; a. Garmon, 2005; Gorski, 2009). Yet it is still unknown how international students learn from their NES peers, how they adjust to writing-intensive education programs, and what role writing plays in their journeys of learning to become teachers in the United States.

Writing and Its Role in Undergraduate Teacher Education

Writing is an important part of international students’ academic lives, and to write well is also one of the most challenging skills to acquire. This is particularly true for international undergraduate education students. Writing exercises commonly have been used in teacher-education programs to foster reflective teaching and learning (Hatton & Smith, 1994; K. M. Zeichner, 1987). Given the centrality of writing for international students in teacher-education programs, it is necessary to explore the role of writing, usually in the form of journaling and narrative writing, in the process of learning to become a teacher.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a reflective kind of writing often seen in teacher education. Its purpose is to help student-teachers build the habit of reflection, become conscious of their choices in teaching, identify the assumptions behind their choices, examine alternatives, and construct new knowledge about teaching and learning (Al-karasneh, 2014; Ho & Richards, 1993; Hoover, 1994). Due to its effectiveness in facilitating teaching and learning, journal writing has been used in preservice teacher education for many years (a. Langer & Applebee, 1986; K. M. Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Reflection is at the heart of journal writing studies (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Yinger & Clark, 1981). Existing research on journal
writing mainly focuses on the following four aspects of reflection: what they reflect (the content of reflection), how they reflect (the process of reflection), what has been changed because of the reflection (the result of reflection), and what counts as effective reflection (the principle of reflection).

In considering the content of reflection, previous studies have found that student-teachers tend to write frequently about the difficulties and self-doubts they have when teaching (Güven, Sülün, & Çam, 2014; Ho & Richards, 1993; Hoover, 1994). These topics provide starting points for critical reflection (Mena-marcos, Garcia-Rodriguez, & Tillema, 2013). However, it is unclear what topics international students tend to reflect on and what roles these topics play in facilitating their critical reflection. This question is particularly interesting when considering the fact that for these students, journal writing is a dual process of both writing in another language and writing reflectively.

Researchers generally agree that the process of reflective writing entails the recognition of a problem, examination of the situation, and reflection on the implications of one’s knowledge, experience, beliefs, attitudes, and values in specific contexts (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; K. M. Zeichner & Liston, 1987). It is through this complicated integrative process that writers reconstruct the meaning of their past experiences in order to create new knowledge (Yinger & Clark, 1981).

Empirical research furthermore reveals that there are stages of developmental concern in reflective writing in teacher education. Preservice teachers tend to move from a recording of their frustrations to reflections on teaching and learning in light of theory, practice, and contextual factors. The focus of their reflection also moves beyond themselves to include interactions with students and the environment (Francis, 1995; Hoover, 1994). Yet the depth of reflection is not significantly related to how often or how long they write. It depends on each writer’s personal background, learning and teaching contexts, and the mode of feedback they receive (Lee, 2005; Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002).

One aspect of reflective writing research that stands out is that participants in these studies are mainly NES student-teachers. For these students’ non-NES peers, journal writing is a dual process of both writing in another language and writing reflectively. Do these two aspects mutually influence each other and eventually result in a different reflection process? What role do international education students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds play in the process of reflective writing? How do students make meaning of teaching and learning when engaging in reflective writing in another language? These questions are explored in this study.
Researchers have found that journal writing is an effective way to cultivate the habit of critical reflection, facilitate epistemological reconstruction, and create new knowledge about teaching and learning (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Lai & Calandra, 2010; Ward & McCotter, 2004). Journal writing is also a useful tool to concretize the otherwise invisible thinking process, revealing belief changes and recording progress in reflection (Al-karasneh, 2014; Güven et al., 2014). Some research even shows that student-teachers experience transformative belief changes through critical written reflection (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Lee, 2005).

Criteria for reflective writing first appeared in the early 1980s when researchers began to offer specific guidance regarding how educators can use journals effectively to foster reflective teaching and learning among their students (Yinger & Clark, 1981; K. M. Zeichner, 1987; K. Zeichner, 1992). Other researchers have argued that although journal writing is an effective way to promote reflective teaching and learning, writing in and of itself does not necessarily guarantee progress without proper guidance and feedback (Kaasila, 2007; Knight, 2011; K. M. Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Among the rules and suggestions they have offered, researchers have found that participants benefit most when they receive constructive guidance or personalized feedback (Spalding & Wilson, n.d.; Ward & McCotter, 2004). For example, scaffolding can significantly improve student-teachers’ quality of reflection as it conveys specific requirements in writing, provides a structure, and directs writers’ attention to the use of critical incidents in writing (Lai & Calandra, 2010).

Feedback is another important factor facilitating the effectiveness of journal writing. Feedback addresses the level of reflection achieved in student writing and is more effective in improving journal writing and promoting reflection than those that address specific difficulties or concerns (Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2002). Ho and Richards (1993) found in their empirical study that only three out of ten Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) student-teachers displayed critical reflection in their journal writing; the rest of them largely wrote in a non-reflective mode and did not display any significant changes in reflective learning or teaching. Lindroth (2015) similarly found that preservice teachers may not know how to reflect and may differ in their ability to analyze situations.

Ultimately, journal writing is effective in cultivating students’ critical reflection faculties, eliminating the gap between theory and practice, and creating new knowledge. Previous research has explored what student-teachers tend to reflect on, how they reflect, what role reflection plays in their
teaching and learning, and what factors contribute to effective journal writing. Yet it is unclear if journaling works as effectively for international undergraduate student-teachers as it does for NES student-teachers. For the former group, journal writing is a dualistic process of writing reflectively as well as managing the difficulties of writing in another language. The purpose of this study is to investigate the dual process of journal writing and its effects on international student-teachers’ teaching and learning.

The Writing of Narratives

Similar to journaling, the writing of narratives has been used widely in teacher-education courses. The epistemology behind the use of narratives in teacher education is that we, as human beings, live storied lives and make meaning through the imposition and reconstruction of story structures (Bell, 2002; Juzwik, Whitney, Bell, & Smith, 2014). It is through stories and the construction of stories that we come to make sense of the world and our assumptions embedded in these stories.

Research in undergraduate teacher education has addressed both theoretically and empirically how the writing of narratives influences student-teachers’ learning. The fundamental assumption underlying this use is that we all live storied lives, selecting plots to construct and reconstruct our stories. The process of selection, construction, and reconstruction reflects who individuals are and what they believe in (Bell, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Thus, in teacher-education programs, student-teachers are often required to write stories about their own teaching and learning. The purpose is to help them become conscious of the storytelling process and cultivate the habit of making sense of their experiences by making connections between educational theory and their practices of teaching and learning (Rossiter, 2002).

Researchers studying the writing of narratives in teacher-education programs from a theoretical perspective mainly discuss the epistemological issues involved in the writing of narratives, reflective thinking, and knowledge building (Bell, 2002; Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Olson, 1995). The purpose of these theoretical discussions is to clarify the definition of stories, map the intellectual terrain of narrative writing, and cast light on major issues related to the use of stories in teacher education. Key conclusions from these theoretical discussions are that the writing of narratives has the potential to facilitate critical reflection, connect theory to practice, and eventually enable student-teachers to
examine and clarify their beliefs and values in teaching and learning (Dolk & den Hertog, 2008; Rossiter, 2002). Research also shows that the writing of narratives provides a safe space, and that sense of safety is particularly important for student-teachers to explore honestly and deeply what they believe about teaching (Olson, 1995).

There are three main branches in the empirical exploration of narrative writing in preservice teacher education. One branch addresses how narrative facilitates learning, and it reveals the cognitive process from narrative writing to professional learning. The second branch explores the effects of narrative writing for student-teachers’ professional development. The third branch proposes and tests principles and rubrics of effective narrative writing.

The first branch of studies, which focuses on the cognitive process from the writing of narratives to learning, is best captured in a four-year longitudinal study conducted by Parker (2010). His study showed that narrative writing helps students gradually develop a relational connection and a sense of belonging within their writing group. As they continue to write, they come to display a deeper level of reflection by sharing critical events such as traumatic learning experiences and thus collaboratively make meaning and develop new knowledge. Other studies have revealed that narratives provide a safe place for student-teachers to make new meaning each time in the construction and reconstruction process (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Nicolini, 1994; Parr, Bulfin, Castaldi, Griffiths, & Manuel, 2014). In addition to offering student-teachers a safe place, storytelling provides them with the cognitive mechanisms needed to develop new insight into their experience and construct new meanings (Balslev, Vanhulle, & Dieci, 2015; Polansky et al., 2010).

The second branch of studies focuses on the effects of narrative writing for student-teachers’ professional development. One of the most salient effects is narrative writing’s transformative power in facilitating student-teachers’ thinking and self-reflection, changing their beliefs and learning habits, and eventually leading to changed behaviors in teaching and learning (mei Chan, 2012; Kyles & Olafson, 2008). One example is the use of narratives to help white student-teachers develop a sense of multicultural teaching through the writing of life-based stories to develop empathy with their learners (Phillion & He, 2004).

The first two branches of studies explain the mechanism and effects of using narratives in teacher education, yet this does not necessarily mean that student-teachers learn automatically when they
start to write their stories. The third branch of research thus explores principles of effective narrative writing and develops rubrics of narrative writing for teacher-educators to use to foster teaching and learning. Researchers have found that constructive guidance, individualized feedback, and a supportive environment are the three most important factors for effective narrative writing (Dolk & den Hertog, 2008; Pulvermacher & Lefstein, 2016).

Frisch’s comparative study (2010) proves the importance of instructor guidance and peer collaboration for learning scientific concepts. In his study, participants in both the experimental and control groups were required to write narratives. Participants in the experimental group received instructor guidance and collaborated with their peers, while those in the control group did not. The results showed that students in the experimental group displayed critical reflection abilities and developed new knowledge in their writing and teaching, while students in the control group tended to dwell on storytelling and did not show signs of critical reflection or knowledge construction.

While the future of narrative writing in teacher-education programs is promising, little is known about whether and if so, how, it works for international undergraduate education students in the United States given their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Cortazzi and Jin (2006) explain this concern as how a researcher from a different cultural background can understand and interpret international student-teachers’ narratives. Compared with the prolific research on student-teachers in general, the research on the role of narratives for international undergraduate education students is limited.

In sum, the writing of narratives provides a safe place for student-teachers to reflect on what they believe about teaching, capture the richness and indeterminacy of their understanding of teaching, and consider how they will teach in the future. Researchers who advocate for the writing of narratives in teacher education acknowledge the importance of the life stories students bring with them and the use of narratives to improve student-teachers’ experiences.

In order to extend our knowledge of teacher education for the much-neglected Asian international student-teacher group, we need to investigate how the heavily used mechanism of narrative writing works for them, particularly in terms of the reconstruction of their past experiences with current learning.
Writing research from the perspective of transformative learning and translingual theory

As shown in the preceding literature review, reflective journaling and narrative writing are two frequently used methods in teacher-education pedagogy, yet they have been studied in less depth for international undergraduate education students.

Connecting these pedagogies of writing in teacher-education programs is the idea of critically analyzing one’s own experiences through writing. Indeed, critical incident analysis is one important move in education students’ reflective writings (Francis, 1995). It provides a starting point for learners to reflect critically on and close the gap between theory and practice and thus enhance their professional teaching and learning (Hiemstra et al., 2001). Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (1991), which emphasizes the role of critical incidents in facilitating critical reflection, is employed in the current study to frame the role of writing in undergraduate education students’ learning experiences.

Transformative learning is defined as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000). The term “frame of reference” refers to “the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (Mezirow, 1997). A frame of reference is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view. Habits of mind are broad and abstract. They are gradually yet solidly cultivated by an individual’s social, cultural, and educational contexts. A point of view is a particular interpretation of certain aspects of habits of mind in a specific context, and it is liable to influenced by the immediate context. The relationship between the two is that habits of mind are articulated and reflected by specific points of view. Changes in habits of mind lead to fundamental changes in actions, while points of view do not have such power.

The transformation of habits of mind, which is also known as the reconstruction of a frame of reference, is essential for transformative learning to happen. Mezirow (1990) explained the process by indicating that critical reflection on critical incidents can change one’s frame of reference and eventually lead to changed course of actions. In essence, transformative learning happens through the collision of triggers and thus leads to critical reflections on one’s frame of reference by validating competing beliefs, taking action on these reflective insights, and critically assessing these changed actions.

Discourse is another important concept to understand when considering the transformation of habits of mind. Discourse is a dialogue, whether implicit or explicit, devoted to the assessment of reasons when competing interpretations are presented in a specific context (Mezirow, 1997, 2000). Discourses
are tools as well as carriers for adult learners to critically examine evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view, enabling them to scrutinize otherwise unconscious habits of mind and eventually leading to changed behaviors (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor, 2007). Taken in its entirety, transformative learning theory explains how adult learners’ frames of reference can be transformed by critical reflection through discourses on unconscious assumptions and beliefs; it likewise explains how the transformation of habits of mind can lead to changed behaviors.

Transformative learning theory has been extended considerably in educational research over the past decades (Belbase & Luitel, 2008; Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1997; Whitelaw et al., 2004). Focusing on a national summer writing camp, Whitney (2008) used it to investigate the role of writing and proposed some modifications to better capture the changes the teachers at the camp displayed. In her modified version of the theory, she used “trigger” rather than the original term “critical incident” to capture the issues teachers wrote about and stated that triggers functioned as sites of changes for the participants’ transformations in perspective (Mezirow, 1991; Whitney et al., 2008). This adaptation is particularly useful for this study, as it explains how the difficulties and a sense of needing change can trigger individuals’ reflection on the meaning of the perspectives they hold. The other important application of Whitney’s work to the current study is her argument for looking beyond classroom practices to seek sufficient criteria of transformation. The shift of focus from changed behaviors to the intentions and reasons for making a change is particularly beneficial for the current research, as some of the participants in this study do not have student teaching experience yet. Does the lack of student teaching prevent them from experiencing transformative learning? Can writing be a sufficient indicator of transformative learning if individuals display changes in their habits of mind? The current study explores these topics under the guidance of the modified framework from Whitney (2007; 2008).

Specifically, the study investigates what discourses are accepted or rejected by participants in the various writings they do, how writing about certain issues triggers critical reflection, whether the reflection is changes of habits of mind or simply points of view, how participants reframe issues and resolve to reorient themselves through writing, and whether and if so, how, they try out new roles.

As discussed in the literature review, international undergraduate education students’ writing is a dual process of writing reflectively as well as writing in another language. The application of transformative learning theory to these students’ experiences helps elucidate how writing functions as
a tool for reflection. However, it remains largely unknown how writing in another language influences writers’ meaning-making process. The key questions to ask here are whether and if so, how, writing in another language influences reflective writing.

Canagarajah’s translingual theory (2011a; 2013, 2015) provides insight into how international writers construct and negotiate meaning in their English-language writing through the strategic use of their native languages and home cultures. His framework is postcolonial in its perspective, an aspect of the framework that is beyond the scope of the current study, but it foregrounds the otherwise hidden roles of the cultural and linguistic knowledge international students possess and helps researchers understand how this knowledge helps or hinders students’ meaning-making process when writing in English. Therefore, the current study employs the four strategies he depicts: envoicing, recontextualization, interaction, and entextualization (S. Canagarajah, 2011a; A. S. Canagarajah, 2013). He defines the four strategies as follows:

Envoicing strategies set the conditions for negotiation . . . recontextualization strategies prepare the ground for negociation; interactional strategies are adopted to co-construct meaning; and entextualization strategies reveal the temporal and spatial shaping of the text to facilitate and respond to these negotiations (S. Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011, p.49).

The four strategies reflect four levels of constructs in communication: personal, contextual, social, and textual. The current study uses these strategies as indexes to analyze how international undergraduate education students negotiate meaning by integrating their unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their English-language writing.

In sum, I find the combination of the two researchers’ frameworks particularly useful in explaining how international students make meaning while writing in a context that is socially, contextually, personally, and textually different from their home context. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated, we all live storied lives, and we seek meaning through the reconstruction and retelling of our stories. For these international student-teachers, writing is a process of reconstruction, rethinking, and rebuilding of their lived experiences in two cultures. It is also a strategic process of writing in another language.
Writing research through case study method

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of writing in international student-teachers’ learning experiences in the United States. This study is designed as a case study, which allows for an in-depth investigation and holistic understanding of the complex role of writing.

A case study focuses on concurrent incidents in which contexts and phenomenon are not strictly distinguished from one another. It enables researchers to explore these incidents directly using multiple sources of data. This design is appropriate for my study because my focus is on the concurrent role of writing in a context in which a distinction between the context and phenomenon of writing activities is hard to make in certain situations (e.g., the writing of a language-learning autoethnography in a content course). Yin (2013) defines a case study from two angles: its scope and features. In terms of the scope of a case study, a case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2013, p.17). The current study is an exploration of the role of writing among a group of international education students attending a university in the northeastern United States. For these students, the context and the phenomenon constantly function together to facilitate the participants’ learning.

In term of the features of case study, a case study “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2013).

The current research falls into the category of a case study because it focuses on a group of Asian undergraduate students in a teacher-education program in the United States. Each individual is treated as an independent data source; however, I consider the students’ data in its entirety to identify recurring themes that emerged in their writing. The aim of the current study is to explore, describe, and explain the role of writing in Asian education students’ learning experiences. The focus of the study is contemporary events that are happening to them rather than retrospection or prediction. Therefore, the case-study design best matches the purpose of this study.

The current study is a multiple-case study, and it follows the procedure illustrated in Figure 2-1.
Figure 2-1 Multiple-case study procedure
(Yin, 2013, p.60)

Figure 2-1 shows the three steps of conducting a multi-case study: the definition and design of the case study; the preparation, collection, and analysis of each case; and finally, the analysis and cross-case conclusions. There are different areas emphasized in each step. In the first step, the researcher must identify their theoretical assumptions and define the rules for case selection and specific measures before beginning actual data collection. The second and third steps are closely related to each other. The second step is the foundation for the third one. In these two steps, the researcher must consider each individual case study as a “whole” study and then cross-examine each case’s conclusions with the results of the other cases so that convergent evidence can be identified. In the current study, conclusions about the role of writing for each participant are treated as evidence to be replicated by other individual cases. Within each case, I focus on explaining how and why writing facilitated participants’ transformative learning experiences. Across cases, I focus on the replication logic and why certain cases are predicted to support the transformative learning results.

**Context and participants**

Asian undergraduate education students in the College of Education at a northeastern U.S. university will be recruited to participate in this study. International students comprise 10.5% of the university’s 47,402-person student body. This percentage of international students is generally on par
with the national level of 9.1%. The participants will be content-specific international undergraduate education students rather than TESOL ones.

The total number of cases is unknown since the enrollment of eligible participants has not been completed, but I estimate that there will be three or four. Ideally, the participants would have diverse countries of origin and cultural backgrounds, but the eligible pool is too small for this to be likely. Participants will be recruited through email and by faculty referral. Adjustments to participant size will be made according to the number of responses I receive.

**Data collection**

Data collection will occur during the spring 2017 semester. Sources of data will include writing samples taken from participants’ education-related coursework and semi-structured interviews to investigate the participants’ understanding of the role of writing in their learning.

**Data analysis**

All data collected will be stored in Nvivo. I will begin conducting content data analysis as soon as the participants’ sample writings have been collected, and I will complete this analysis after conducting the semi-structured interviews at the end of the spring semester. The analysis will focus on two aspects of writing simultaneously: writing as reflection and writing in a second language. The first aspect will be guided by the following key elements: triggering events in the students’ writings, courses that enable the possibility of critical reflection, signs of changes in the students’ habits of mind, and indications of behavior changes. The second aspect will be guided by the four strategies participants employ in their writing: envoicing, recontextualization, interaction, and entextualization. As a result of the two types of analysis, I will be able to determine if writing facilitates international undergraduate student-teachers’ transformative learning and if so, how their linguistic and cultural backgrounds propel or hinder the process of transformation.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations to the case-study method. Some of the possible limitations are as follows:
Rigor is the greatest concern for this study because of the relatively limited amount of data collected from participants (i.e., writings and interviews). One possible solution is to follow a systematic procedure, and in particular, to read extensively from previous case studies to avoid sloppiness, the lack of a systematic design, or biased conclusions drawn from equivocal evidence.

Generalization is another potential threat, as there might be only four participants. How can I make the conclusions applicable to other contexts rather than providing a summative report of four students’ experiences in this particular teacher-education program? One counterargument is that these cases can be generalized to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. The goal of the current research is to expand and generalize from theories (i.e., analytic generalizations) rather than to extrapolate probabilities (i.e., statistical generalizations).
Chapter 3
Theoretical Framework

As shown in the preceding literature review, reflection, journaling, and narrative writing are frequently used methods in teacher education. Connecting these pedagogies of writing is the idea that reflection facilitates learning. To be specific, writing critically and reflectively is a process to facilitate conscious reflection on and critical discourse of one’s experience, which are crucial to learning. Meanwhile, writing can be viewed as a solid product of learning, exhibiting leaners’ beliefs, views, writing styles, and so on. Such a product enables further discussions and reflections.

As such, critical incident analysis is one important move in education students’ reflective writing, and it provides a starting point for learners to reflect critically on their actions. It is, however, still a much-debated area as to how critical reflection eventually leads to learning. Does learning happen automatically after critical reflection? What happens in-between critical reflection and learning?

Mezirow created transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 2000) to describe a unique type of learning: adult learning. This theory suggests that learning is ultimately a meaning making process, in which adults’ previous life experiences play an important role. How they make meaning of these previous experiences will eventually influence the final products of the new learning. During the meaning making process, several factors work together to finally lead to adults’ transformation. The first factor is triggers, which is invented by Mezirow and later adopted by a bunch of researches (Mezirow, 2009; Whitney et al., 2008) to explain why an adult leaner realizes the problems of his or her previous beliefs, becomes critical of it, and explores ways to change it and makes it truer to the new context. The second factor is frames of references (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor, 2018), which mainly refer to a person’s beliefs and attitudes. Frames of reference “are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). A persona’s frames of reference are prone to change when the immediate context around him or her is changed. For example, a person who comes from a
test-oriented educational system might value grammatical correctness over meaning and clarity when he or she writes, but this same person will become critic of such beliefs when he or she is in a new context, and realize ideas and meanings of his or her writing are appreciated and emphasized. The third factor is critical reflection(Fleming, 2018; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1998). Critical reflection is the core concept in transformative learning, and it’s also the basis of frames of reference transformation. The third factor is critical discourse(Mezirow, 1997). The term discourse is originally defined as “a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of views” (p.6). From Mezirow’s understanding, discourse is an important approach that leaners employ to validate their beliefs and to arrive at a truer and more suitable explanation of the immediate context. Discourse is central to meaning making, but such a definition lacks significant features to distinguish discourse from other terms such as conversations and talking. Later Kucukaydin and Cranton(2013) adds the critical elements of this type of discourse that can eventually lead to transformation, and thus the term “critical discourse” is employed in the current research to imply that participants took deliberate effort to criticize problematic belief systems and looking for new and more capable ones to fit into the new context they were in. I explain these factors in the order of triggers, critical reflection, frames of reference and critical discourse.

**Transformative learning theory**

Adult learning is a heavily researched topic in higher education. Theorists from different schools of thoughts have elaborated what it is and how it can be facilitated in various ways(Brockett & Hiemstra, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Foley, 2020). For example, Brockett and Hiemstra perceived adult learning as self-directed activities while Taylor believed true adult learning was transformative. What we can conclude from these varying theories is that adult learning can be approached in contrastingly different ways when defined differently, and that a theory works most effectively when it has a good match with the focus of one’s study. As the focus of the current study is to explore changes a group of three international undergraduate students go through due to the experience of studying in the US, I deliberately employ’s transformative learning theory(Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2007) in order to track changes my participants have experienced and to explore factors contributed to these changes.

Transformative learning is receiving more and more attention in recent years(Fleming, 2018;
Some researchers (Regie & Roatman, 2005; Romano, 2018; Sharoff, 2008) followed Mezirow’s original definition and extends it through exploration of key elements such as critical incidences and assessment of transformation. Other researchers (Klein, 2005; Nogueiras, Iborra, & Kunnen, 2019) see the limitations of transformative learning theory in cognitive aspects and proposes to explore leaners’ transformation through cognition-related terms such as identity shifts or emotions. There are many definitions of transformative learning, but the one originally proposed by Mezirow is more suitable for the current research as it perceives transformative learning as “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 1991, p27). I adopt this definition not because it’s uniquely adult and exclusively transformative, but also because it depicts how changes happen to leaners when they take the initiation to do so. From the perspective of leaners’ active initiation, learning is “the process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to action” (Mezirow, 1994, p53).

At core of this theory is several key elements: triggers, critical reflection on significant previous learning experiences, problematic frames of reference and reflective discourse. I explain each element in great detail the following part, but their relationship can be briefly summarized as this: leaners need triggers to problemize their existing frames of reference, critically reflect on these frames of reference through reflective discourse with others or themselves, and finally form new sets of frames of reference that are more just to the new context. Specific explanation of each key element is presented as follows.

**Triggers**

A trigger in transformative learning refers to a significant event or a series of events that make the learner realize the disconnection between the existing frames of reference and the communication they had (Mezirow, 2009). Although Mezirow suggested that rational factors such as the need to have a better score or start a new career were the main sources that triggered learners to reflect, other researchers also found that other factors also contributed to leaners’ critical reflection and eventually led to transformative learning. For example, emotional factors such as crises (Laros, 2017) and disorienting dilemmas (Dirkx, 2001). Among these adult-learning studies, Siklander et al. (2017) found that
significant triggers among higher education students were mainly writing assignments, collaborations, and feedbacks from course instructors.

The finding that writing assignments and feedbacks are significant triggers is particularly meaningful for the current research because my participants are international undergraduate students, and the main data I collected is their writing assignments. To begin with, studying in a foreign context itself is alien enough, and the alienness itself has great potential to trigger critical reflections on previous experiences. For example, researchers (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014) found that the early international experience had the power to trigger transformational learning and thus significantly improve international students’ intercultural competence. For my participants, the fact of being in a totally new context is already foreign enough and has the potential to trigger critical reflection. Secondly, educational programs are writing-intensive. International students in this program have to complete weekly readings and writings for various courses on a weekly basis. They might be surprised at the frequent use of various types of writings such as online posts and virtual debates to communicate with peers and instructors. Such surprise will further trigger their critical reflections on the writing activities they had experienced before going abroad, and force them to make adaptations in order to survive in the new context.

To summarize how triggers work, I cite Mezirow’s (Mezirow, 1990, p53) words “… anomalies and dilemmas of which old ways of knowing cannot make sense become catalysts or ‘trigger events’ that precipitate critical reflection and transformations”. For the participants in the current research, when their old ways of knowing, particularly knowing about writing, can’t suit the new context and become hinders for them to make progress, they begin to critically reflect on these previously held beliefs, adjust them and make them more suitable in the new context.

**Critical Reflection**

Critical reflection is the core concept in transformative learning (Lundgren & Poell, 2016; Mezirow, 1998). It refers to critical analysis of previous hold assumptions, and is usually triggered by problematic beliefs that failed to work in a new context. A critical reflection often takes the form of a disorienting dilemma, a life crisis such as divorce, illness and death. But for international undergraduate students, critical reflection usually takes the form of challenging their previously hold beliefs in life and learning (Glass, 2018; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008) as the foreign context
is already salient enough for them, negative feelings such as loneliness, lack of support in shifting to new learning environment, and the sense of inferiority, all compelling them to re-examine their existing frames of reference.

But the habit of being critical of one’s belief systems is very challenging for international students, particularly those who come from Confucianism-influenced countries. This is because they come from a collectivism-oriented cultural background where obedience to the authority, including teachers and parents, is a big part of their daily life (Paton, 2011; Rear, 2017). Growing up and getting used to be obedient, they are often viewed as timid and even prejudiced as lacking the critical thinking ability (Moosavi, 2020).

Critical reflection can be examined from many aspects. Given the potential challenges for Asian international undergraduate students to develop this type of ability, I borrow the concept of critical thinking to approach to my participants’ critical reflections in their writings. Critical reflection and critical thinking are closely related and interchangeably when it comes to critically examine one’s previous experiences and explain it in the light of new perspectives (Bezanilla, Fernández-Nogueira, Poblete, & Galindo-Dominguez, 2019). Ideally, learners will acquire the ability of critical thinking through critical reflection, and that critical thinking would normally result in knowledge transformation. In order to capture the results of critical reflection reflected in my participants writing and interview data, I introduce the instrument of the traditional Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (Zulmaulida, Dahlan, et al., 2018) to measure critical thinking ability in my data collection. Based on Ma’s and Li’s (Ma & Li, 2022) research on critical thinking ability of education students in argumentative essay writings, they found that critical thinking was mainly reflected in the following four aspects: be able to make correct inferences, to recognize assumptions, to make deductions and to come to conclusions.

I adopt these four aspects to examine critical reflections my participants expressed in their writings, particularly when they reinterpret their home country learning experiences and elaborate their understanding about new knowledge learnt in the US contexts.

**Reflective Discourse**

Discourse is another important concept to facilitate transformative learning, mainly the transformation of habits of mind. It is a dialogue, implicit or explicit, devoted to the assessment and reasoning of
the capacity of one’s beliefs to explain new phenomenon and challenges when competing interpretations are presented in a specific context (Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow & Associates, 2013). Discourses are tools as well as carriers for adult learners to critically examine evidences, arguments, and alternative points of view, enabling them to scrutinize the otherwise unconscious habits of mind and eventually leading to changed behaviors (Mezirow, 2003; Taylor, 2007). But the definition of discourse is criticized by many researchers (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013) for its lack of operationality. Hyde (2021) presented reflective discourse to incorporate individual efforts to identity and challenge one’s existing assumptions and look for alternatives through rational thinking such as reasoning and deductions. It is through this process that disorienting dilemmas take place. This stage can be an emotionally confusing and difficult time for international students particularly when they are in a context where they often feel lonely, stressed and lack of support.

I employ the term reflective discourse to emphasize the rational thinking process my participants went through and expressed in their writings, and looked for signs of reflective discourse through participants’ writings in making inferences, recognizing assumptions, making deductions and drawing conclusions.

**Asian faces to the Mazak of transformative learning theory**

Transformative learning theory explains how adult leaners’ frames of reference can be transformed by critical reflection and reflective discourses on unconscious assumptions and beliefs, and how the transformation can eventually lead to changed behaviors. The theory originated in Mezirow’s observation of women coming back to community college to study, and later was expanded considerably to other areas such as educational research during the past decades (Belbase & Luitel, 2008; Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 1997; Whitelaw et al., 2004). Whitney (2008) used it to investigate the role of writing in a national summer writing camp and proposed some modifications to better capture the changes the teachers have displayed. In her modified version, she used “triggers” rather than the original term “critical incident” to capture the indicative nature of issues teachers wrote about and stated that triggers worked as sites of changes for participants’ perspective transformation (Whitney et al., 2008). I found Whitney’s adaptation particularly useful for this study since it explained how the difficulties and a sense of needing change could trigger participants’ reflection on the meaning perspectives they held.
The other important implication for the current study was Whitney’s (2008) argumentation of looking beyond classroom practices to seek sufficient criterion to evaluate transformation. The shift of focus from changed behaviors to the understanding of intentions and reasons of making changes is particularly beneficial for the current research since some of the participants don’t have student teaching experience yet in this study, and they were unable to display their changes in real classroom teachings. Does the absence of student teaching prevent them from experiencing transformative learning? Can writing be a sufficient indicator of transformative learning if they display changes of habits of mind? The current study will explore these topics under the guidance of the modified framework from Whitney (Whitney, 2007; Whitney et al., 2008). Specifically, the study will investigate what discourses are accepted or declined by participants in the various writings they have experienced, how the writing of certain issues serves as trigger for critical reflection, how participants reframe and resolve to reorient through writing and whether the reflection eventually leads to behavioral changes.

Conclusion

The application of transformative learning theory provides a suitable framework to explore the role of writing when it is used as a tool for reflection, but it still remains largely unknown about how writing in another language influences writers’ meaning making process. The key questions to ask here are whether and how writing in another language influences writing reflectively.
The purpose of this study is to explore the role of writing in international education students’ learning experience in the US while they are pursuing their undergraduate study. Given the diverse language and rich cultural background of each potential participant, I adopted the case study method as it was capable to capture as much unique information as possible in the data analysis process. Therefore, I first introduced the rational of the case study method in this chapter.

Following that, I moved to the case study designs, in which I explained the context of the study, procedure of participant recruitment, and participants’ general cultural background and English learning history. The main purpose of this part was to introduce the rich cultural and writing background these Asian international students brought with them, highlight how participants had experienced English writing back into their home countries, and explore how such experiences influenced the way they perceive and approach writing while studying in the US.

Afterwards, I moved to the introduction of the data collection part. Despite the fact that the three of my participants were shy, they generously sent me plenty of writings that they had produced during the two or three years of study, and that they believed personally significant for them. Corresponding to my three research questions, particularly my focus on the role of journals and narratives in participants’ learning experience, I further categorized the writings into different genres, assigned different values to journals (particularly reflections) and narratives while storing them into a database called Nvivo. The purpose of the categorization and value assignment was to run quick query among journal and narratives in Nvivo to see if the two contributed in particularly to participants’ transformative learning experience, and if yes, how they contributed.

Following data collection, I explained in detail the process of data analysis so that the whole procedure could be as transparent as possible. I particularly explained my understanding about thematic
analysis, and how it helped me to explore the three research questions. During the exploration, I employed plenty of screenshots from Nvivo for Mac in order to display how I got to the final conclusions. The ultimate purpose of this part was to leave to my readers’ judgement about the reliability and validity of the analysis through detailed description and enough transparency.

Finally, I presented a brief summary for my readers to quickly recap key elements in this chapter.

Rationale of Choosing Case Study Method

Case study is one of many methodologies in qualitative educational study, and has different branches and variations even within itself. Among the many different types of case study methods, I chose to stick to Yin’s approach for my current study (Yin, 2013). I chose so mainly because two reason, which I explained in the following text.

Firstly, my personal experience in the doctoral program had taught me that case study was the most suitable methods for capturing details while exploring the role of writing in AIUES’ learning experience. I conducted an autoethnographic study while doing my comprehensive exam in order to find out how writing facilitated my transformation while studying abroad. It was through this reflection that I found case study enabled me to notice details in my writing, and further find out the huge impact they had on my teaching. For example, it was through the autobiographic analysis that I came to realize how I was unconsciously repeating the pattern of teaching which I vowed to avoid. I didn’t realize that until doing a thematic analysis to my previous writings, and how they said about the huge influence my course instructor on me, even though I was trying to avoid that type of teaching.

Later, when I came back to China and taught college writing in a university, I was able to recognize important themes in my students’ writings, and give them guidance accordingly. In this sense, case study not only enabled me to find how I was influenced, but also impacted my teaching in a positive way.

Secondly, this method was chosen because it was particularly friendly for small-number participants. Unlike TESOL or STEM major international undergraduates, who were relatively well studied both within the educational world and beyond, AIUES were relatively under-investigated in academic writing.
In sum, the three cases themselves were of general public interest for College of Education as they are facing an increasing number of international students each year, and of significant personal interest, as it better positioned myself with the teaching and researching of writing. They were revelatory cases, and studying them would help myself as well as the academia world to understand the myth of “being transformed by study abroad”.

**Case Study Designs**

Yin defines case study from two aspects: the scope and features of a case study (Yin, 2013). In terms of the scope of a case study, it’s defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p17). The current study is an exploration of the role of writing in a group of international education students in a Northeast university in the US, in which case the context and the phenomenon are constantly functioning together to facilitate the participants’ learning.

In terms of the features of case study, it’s defined as “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.”

The methodology of case study focuses on the concurrent incidents and enables researchers to explore explicitly through multiple sources of data where contexts and phenomenon aren’t strictly distinguished. This is appropriate for my study because the focus of the current research was on the concurrent role of writing in a certain context, where the distinction between the context and phenomenon of writing activities was hard to define in certain situations. For example, it is hard to draw a line between the writing of a language learning autoethnography in a content course.

The current research questions fall into the category of case study because it focuses on a group of Asian undergraduate students in a teacher education program in the US. Each individual is treated as an independent data source and collectively they will provide information about the recurring themes that emerged in their writing. The aim of the current study is to explore, describe, and explain the role of
writing in Asian education students’ learning experience. The focus of the study is on contemporary events that are happening to them rather than retrospection or prediction. Therefore, case study is the best match with the purpose of this study.

The current study is a multiple-case study, and it follows the procedure as follows:

The Fig 4-1 shows the three steps of conducting a multi-case study: the definition and design of the case study, the preparation, collection and analysis of each case, and finally the analysis and conclusion cross cases. There are different emphasized areas in each step. In the first step, it’s important to start with a theoretical assumption, rules of the case selections and definition of specific measures before the actual data collection. The second and third steps are closely related with each other. The second step is the base of the third one. In these two steps, it’s important to treat each individual case study as a “whole” study, and then cross-examine each case’s conclusions by the results of other cases so that convergent evidences could be found out. In the current study, conclusions of the role of writing for each participant will be treated as evidences to be replicated by other individual cases. Within each case, I will focus on the explanation of how and why writing facilitated participants’ transformative learning experience. Across cases, I will focus on the replication logic and why certain cases are predicted to support the transformative learning results.

Figure 4-1  Multiple-case study procedure
(Yin, 2013, p.60)
Context of the Study

The study was conducted in a large state-owned public university in the Northeast part of the United States. Although I couldn’t find the specific ratio of Asian international students within College of Education, I found from the university website that international students counted as 9.36% of its total 40,639 undergraduate students on the main campus as in the 2018-2019 academic year (https://admissions.psu.edu/apply/statistics/). From this statistic, we could safely draw the conclusion that international students were the minority groups on campus. The relatively small number also partially explained why the struggles they had experienced in writing up course assignments were often interpreted as a sign of incapability or the fact that they often felt intimated or inferior to their peers (Faez, 2012; Sherry et al., 2010).

My five-year teaching assistant (TA) experience with undergraduate students in College of Education told me that international undergraduate education students were rare in this program, and previous studies on writing showed that majority of them had encounter various problems in writing-intensive cross-curium courses in their specific field.

Moreover, my personal experience of studying in College of Education and talking with other international students in the same cohort taught me that this program, ranging from undergraduate courses all the way up to doctoral ones, were writing-intensive, and that the high demand of writing had profound impact on us. We learnt a lot from the writing experiences, but also was heavily influenced.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited from College of Education. My specific targets were international undergraduate education students, because they were quite often the very mild group and seldom voice the struggles they encountered in academic writing. I asked the Secretary of College of Education to help distribute a recruitment email to the undergraduate students. Initially, four Asian female international students contacted me, but one participant dropped out while I was collecting writings from their previous courses. Eventually I had three participants.
Participant profile

Finally, three Asian international education students agreed to take part in the research. Before collecting data from them, I emailed them, scheduled with each a 15-minute informal coffee conversation in order to explain the purpose of the study as well as got an understanding about their cultural and writing background.

Table 4-1 Participant profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>PK-4 Teaching option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline Inquiry (DI) Block (PK-4);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Path through the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruan</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>PK-4 Teaching option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline Inquiry (DI) Block (PK-4);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Path through the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Public Policy Teaching option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internship experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three participants were from College of Education in a Northeast university. They were recruited at the beginning of the Spring semester of 2017. Two were from South Korea and one from mainland China. This is in line with the national college of education data which states international students mainly from China and South Korea (https://ed.psu.edu/prospective-students/prospective-undergraduate-students).

The first participant, Kim (pseudonym), was a junior with an emphasis on Early Childhood Education PK-4. She was from South Korea. What was interesting about this participant was that she said she was thinking about transferring to psychology.

The second participant, Ruan (pseudonym), was a senior in Early Childhood Education PK-4. She is from China. She had strong intent to talk in Chinese during the interview, because she was from
the same country with the researcher. But eventually she chose English. Her intent and how home
country culture influenced her writing will be discussed in the data analysis part.

The third participant, Lee (pseudonym), was a sophomore in Education and Public Policy. She
was from South Korea and talked extensively about political events happened in her home country in
a later interview. Later the researcher found that Lee also wrote extensively about political scandals
in South Korea. Therefore, the role of home country political news on her professional learning as a
student teacher will be discussed in detail in the data analysis part.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the Spring 2017 semester. Sources of data included writings
from education-related coursework and a one-hour semi-structured interview with each participant.

After getting their consent, I invited the three participants to send their course work writings to
my email. The two selecting criteria I shared with them were that the writings were personally important
or meaningful ones for them, and that they feel comfortable to share. At the end of the data collection
period, I got eighteen writings from Kim, twenty from Ruan and eleven from Lee. These writings were
saved in NVivo for Mac for further analysis.

I also asked the participant to briefly noted what department they were from and which year they
were in. After getting those basic information, I then went to the official website of each participant’s
program, downloaded relevant documents which explained the disciplines briefly, goal of education,
course design and a few other official documentaries from the official departmental website of the
participants.

After the first round of coding, the author went through the xx codes one by one and checked
their logical orders. Similar codes were merged to one item and codes that were the inferior/superior of
the other codes were upgraded or degraded accordingly. After the first round of analysis, four themes
emerged from the data: writing as construction of professional knowledge; writing as a site of belief
construction and writing as a site of identity-construction.

While getting familiar with departmental requirements and course design, the researcher went
through the writings she got, highlighted signature writings such as drawings and autoethnography,
and designed semi-structured interview questions for each participant. Eventually the author had three
interview question sheet for the three participants, respectively.

schedule time with each participant to do an interview, respectively. The interview was unstructured, and ranged from one hour to one and a half hours. All the three interviews were recorded, saved to Nvivo and waited to be transcribed during the data analysis process.

As the focus of the research was on the whole college experience writing generally produced on them, the interview with each participant was mainly retrospective. I would ask questions such as “could you tell me a bit more about this paper” or “what do you mean by this sentence or paragraph” while pointing at the writings they shared with me.

Types of data

After storing all the data in Nvivo, the author went through the data one by one and categorized them into different types. Each participant emailed the author journals, narratives, reading or writing comments, and a few other types of writing as the author required. But interestingly they also sent the author writings that represent their ideas about learning and teaching. Their signature writings, including others, are listed in the Table 4-2.

Table 4-2 Data collected from three participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Journals</th>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Signature writings</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Drawing-based writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Autoethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Home country education critics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents were also collected from the official website of the three participants with the purpose of making comparisons and contrasts in terms of whether participants feel they have meet these goals or not. Specific documents were listed in the following table.

Database constructio

After collecting all these data, the researcher began to sort and store data under different files for further analysis. Firstly, recordings of interviews were stored as audio file under the name “interviews” for further transcription. The auto transcription, together with the transcription of key questions by the researcher, will significantly improve the reliability of transcribing.
Secondly, the writing samples from the three participants will be stored in the file named “writing samples”. The purpose is for the convenience of intense analysis and heavy cross reference. Based on this, the author further categorized the writing samples into signature writings, journals, narratives and others, as shown in Table 4-2.

Finally, the official documents were stored in a third file named “official documents”. the purpose is to cross reference with what was expected from students and what the students feel they had achieved.

Data Analysis

As explained in the data collection part, I used Nvivo for data storage and analysis. Specifically, I used thematic analysis during the first round of data analysis in Nvivo to search for emerging themes and patterns.

The analysis will focus on two aspects simultaneously: the analysis of writing as reflection and writing in a second language. The first aspect will be guided by the following key elements: triggering events in their writings, courses that enables the possibility of critical reflection, signs of changes in habits of mind, and indications of behavior changes. The second aspect will be guided by the four strategies participants employed in their writing, that is, envoicing, recontextualization, interaction, and en-textualization. As a result of the two types of analysis, we will be able to determine if writing facilitates international undergraduate student teachers’ transformative learning and, if yes, how their linguistic and cultural background foster or hinder the transforming process.

Being that explained, I used thematic analysis to guide my analysis while focusing on the first aspect, and content analysis while focusing on the second aspect.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The concept of reflexive thematic analysis (Reflexive TA) originated from the early works of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2019), and was an adaptation to better capture their beliefs in the role of researcher’s subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Originally, thematic analysis was defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) of data” (p79). In the latter-refined version, Reflexive TA was no longer one method, rather, it was defined as, in Braun and Clarke’s words,
“approaches that fully embrace qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process” (p. 330). Changes in its definition demarcated its emphasis on the important of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity as a valuable analytic resource in data interpretation.

Given the above mention shifts, Reflective TA was the most suitable method for my current research. For one thing, I didn’t have predictions for the research results, but did have similar experience with my participants in terms of writing, both of which made Reflexive TA an ideal tool for my data, because it left enough room for my subjectivity and reflexivity on possible results, and it also made explicit the effects of my own experience as an international student on the interpretation of the data. For another, the writings I collected ranged from freshman to sophomore years, and contained various genres from each participant. In face of the four years long time span and rich and nuanced data set, I needed a comprehensive tool to help me capture as much emerging themes as possible, whose goal could be served by Reflexive TA as it was merely one method, but approaches that could walk a researcher through all the phases. Lastly, it was embarrassing to admit, but I only re-visited the dissertation draft five years later, terrified for the amount of data I had stored, and horrified by not remembering anything about the dissertation results. What had left deeply in me was updated understanding about the role of writing in a student’s learning process due to the five-year teaching of ESL writing. As such, Reflexive TA empowered me to accommodate my teaching experiences and beliefs originated from these practices into the analysis and interpretation process. In sum, TA re-opened a window for me to visit the set of data collected five years ago, and allowed me the chance to integrated my experience of teaching ESL writing to international students into the interpretation of the dataset. In the following part, I explained with examples how I adopted the revised six phases of Reflexive TA to guide my analysis, and how each phase was connected with my research questions. The general procedure and how it specifically led my data analysis was presented in the following Figures 4-2.

The Figure 4-2 demonstrates the six phases I adopted to guide my reflexive thematic analysis. The first phase is to familiarize myself with the data and write notes in Nvivo in order to prepare for data collection. The second phase is systematic coding in Nvivo. This is the first round of coding, and I simply code whatever emerged from the writings. During the coding, I constantly ask myself what this code say about my experience of studying in College of Education, compare mine with the code generated from the writings, and try to use as many original words from participants’ writings
as possible. The third phase is to generate emerging themes from coded data. Theme generating is a complex process, during which I first put codes that contain similar meanings together. For example, I put the code “belief in teaching” and “belief in learning” under the same theme “beliefs”. After putting codes that have similar meanings into clusters and give a name to each cluster, I then move to check the relationship between the umbrella name and the content of the writing. Take the theme “beliefs” as an example, I find Kim, the first participant, wrote about her belief changes in what was good writing, and explained how she shifted her perception about a good writing in the interview. I then take what she wrote and what she said in the interview in mind, synthesize her writings, the interview data and the emerging theme of “belief changes” into the general theme of “narrative writing as a safe house to reveal her belief changes”. The fourth phase is developing and reviewing themes with Nvivo, and phase five is to refine, define and name themes. I combined the two phases together, develop a them and then name it immediately. As the data analysis process goes on, I come back to refine and re-name the previously
developed themes to make them more capable to explain all the data. The last phase is to write up the report. This phase is also recursive because I constantly come back to check my data and the themes emerged from the data while writing up the report. Specifics of each step are explained as follows:

**Phase One Data Familiarization and Writing Familiarization Notes with Nvivo.**

I first read through the writings collected from my participants, wrote down notes, which is called memos in Nvivo, and listened to the three interviews I did with each of them. While getting myself familiar with the data, I constantly integrated my own experience as an international student in College of Education, and asked myself questions such as “what would my experience say about this part?”, or “was my experience in line with what the participant was saying here”. I also used annotations, memos, Nvivo transcripts and mind maps to get myself ready for data coding.

Table 4-3 Data Familiarization with Nvivo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive TA</th>
<th>Nvivo for Mac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active reading</td>
<td>Annotations: comments on highlight parts of a text. The annotated parts of a text remain highlighted in the text, indicating texts behind that text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data immersion</td>
<td>Memos: longer version of comments. I used memos to record my thoughts and views on certain documents while analyzing the data. Each memo in my analysis were stored in a separate file named “Memos”, and linked back to the specific writing I commented on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active listening to the interviews</td>
<td>Nvivo transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective audio transcripts</td>
<td>Mind map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The action of getting myself familiar with my data was a basic step for further analysis. I took the strategy of active reading while immersing myself in the writings collected, and constantly asked myself two questions, which were listed in the following paragraph.

Q1: What does this writing say, and
Q2: Does what the writer said in this writing/ the interview sound familiar for me, based on my own experience as an Asian international education student?

With these two questions in mind, I wrote about memos and annotations in Nvivo in order to record my thought process. During the active reading and data immersion process, I use node to code
emerging minimum themes, and annotation to comment on highlighted parts in the text where I believe there is hidden themes above the sentence level. I also write memos in Nvivo to record my thoughts on certain writings. One distinction between annotations and memos is that annotations are short notes for my thoughts on the writings. They can be direct comment on words, sentences or beyond the sentence levels. Memos are longer notes I write to record my thoughts on a particular writing in general. I only use memos to comment on a particular writing in general. For example, I write annotations to help me clarify certain points in Kim’s belief paper such as her beliefs in the standards of a good essay, but I write memos to comment on Kim’s belief paper in general.

**Phase Two Systematic Data Coding.**

After data immersion, I got myself familiar with the data set, and had a general impression about how my research questions might be shaped. Through the first round of reading and listening to the interviews, I conducted briefly that Kim and Ruan, the first two participant, showed strong signs of transformative learning both in their writings and interviews. Lee, the third participant, didn’t show much sign of transformative learning in all aspects except the way she learnt to convey her opinions in final projects. Specific information was presented in the Chapter 5.
Before moving to systematic data coding, I distinguished three important terms: themes, codes, and nodes. I adopted the definition of themes as “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I adopted this definition because it captured the underlying assumption about my researcher questions: I was open to any possible conclusions in terms of the role of writing in international undergraduate education students’ learning experience. By sticking to it, I was able to capture possible relationships and build links between the data and my three research questions.

As for the term codes, I used it in this study to refer to the action as well as the result of looking for what was in the data. There were usually two ways to do so: an inductive approach and a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). The former was a bottom-up method to look for what was in the data. Usually what was generated from the coding were directly related with the content of the data. In contrast, the later was a top-down approach, where theories or concepts were brought up and used as a guidance for the coding process. As a result, what were generated from the coding were not necessarily closely related with the semantic data themselves. Given the explorative nature of my research, I would mainly use the inductive approach while conducting systematic data coding. But this didn’t mean that the deductive method would be redundant. I would also use this method to check my initial data coding and to make sure the codes stayed on track.

Table 4-4  Phase three: generating initial themes from coded data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nodes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teaching with imagines</td>
<td>&quot;Drawing is a very important part in teaching young kids&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to teach</td>
<td>&quot;teach though project approach&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third phase is to general initial themes from coded data. I present the above table as a brief explanation of how this step happened. The principle I adopted in the coding process is to stick to writers’ original words as much as possible. Therefore, I code Kim’s writing “drawing is very important part in teaching young kids” as “teaching with drawings”. Later as the data coding processes, I find that she also uses “pictures” and “photos” to illustrate how she believed teaching should involve in visual aspects, and therefore I then generalize the codes drawings and pictures into imagines.

The fourth phase is to develop and review themes with Nivove. I use the above table to briefly display how I approach the developing and reviewing process. After phase three of generating initial...
Table 4-5  Phase three: generating initial themes from coded data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Nodes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>what teaching means</td>
<td>&quot;Real teaching happens when teachers are able to connect with students, and give them chances for practice&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teaching with imagines</td>
<td>&quot;Drawing is a very important part in teaching young kids&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how to teach</td>
<td>&quot;teach through project approach&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase Five is developing and reviewing themes. It's also a process of looking for patterns within similar themes. I use figure 4-3 as an example to illustrate how I come across the process of developing themes and looking for patterns. Take the nodes of belief as an example, I first put all the nodes with beliefs in one document, and then look up the genres of writings from which each node was generated. After looking up their origins, I found they mainly come from Kim’s journal writings. At this point, a pattern of belief writings through narratives emerges in my analysis, and then I move to interviews with
Kim to look for any information about the writing of narratives in order to explore why she wrote so much about her beliefs in teaching and learning in this particular genre. Through the interview I found she was given the space to do so because she trusted her instructor and believed that her efforts and honesty in writing would be appreciated by this instructor. Based on the nodes and interview data, I get the conclusion that narrative writing provided Kim a safe house to reveal her beliefs in writing.

**Limitations of Case Study Method**

A major concern of case study research was its rigor, because of the relatively limited data set (only their writings and interviews). In order to improve its rigorist, I stuck to systematic procedures, particularly read extensively from previous case study to avoid sloppiness, lack of systematic design, or biased conclusions by equivocal evidence.

Over-generalization was another potential threat, as I had only three participants. How could I make conclusions applicable to other contexts rather than a summative report of the tale of three Asian international students in a particular teacher education programs? One counter argument is that these cases can be generalized to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. The goal of the current research is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations).
The purpose of the current research is to explore the role of writing in international undergraduate education students’ learning experiences while they are studying at a large public university in the Northeastern part of the US. The rationale of the research is to unveil the often-neglected and under-represented rich educational and cultural background knowledge they bring with them, to explore the transformative power of writing about such experience, to enhance international students’ learning outcomes in general, and to eventually advocate in teacher preparation programs for pedagogical approaches which use writing to connect students with where they come from and who they are. I approach the above-mentioned goals from three perspectives: what is expressed in the writings, what is said in the interviews, and how writing facilitates each participant’s transformative writing similarly or differently. After the exploration of data analysis from these three aspects, I then explain the process as transparently as possible, synthesize each research question, and make sure the results are as reliable as possible. The results of the analysis are listed in the order of Kim, Ruan, and Lee. In order to make the analytical process as transparent as possible, I use tables and figures to present the results of coding, then move to explain emerging themes with quotes from original writings, and finally summarize each case briefly. In Chapter Six, I conduct a cross-case analysis, present conclusions and discussions, and finally discuss some limitations of the current research. Before I dive into details, I want to briefly re-introduce my research questions in order to keep my readers refreshed with the focus of the study:

- **Question 1:** What is the role of writing in Asian international education students’ learning experience while pursuing educational undergraduate degrees in the USA?

- **Question 2:** What, if any, changes do these preservice teachers experience due to the practice of writing?
• Question 3: How, if at all, are journals and the writing of narratives particularly important in the changes described in the second question?

A quick answer to the first research question was that writing facilitated international education students’ transformative learning experience mainly through critical reflections on their home country learning experience, strategic integration of new knowledge into existing knowledge structures, and imagination of changed course of actions. The writing about imagined future teachings provided the three participants with imagined sites of practice, where they could imagine how they would teach and elaborate on the legitimacy of such teaching behaviors through making connections between what was learned and what was observed in real life. During such a process, individual interpretation and re-interpretation of the real-life situation played a very important role and could potentially impact whether the learning was transformative or not. As for the second research question, participants experienced changes in beliefs, identities, and writing habits during the process of transformation. They stopped to view their home country learning experience as a burden, and began to appreciate the broader views such experience brought to them. They evolved from less-confident education students to relatively more-confident future teachers who could make use of their own ESL learning experience to connect with ELL kids in their future classrooms. They also experienced significant changes in writing habits, particularly the purpose of writing and the way to show objectivity. For example, Kim explained how she shifted from test-oriented writing to writings that used various tricks “to fool her (the course instructor)” and finally to write to negotiate with the course instructors about her thoughts and perspectives. She also learned to stop the habit of constantly comparing herself with others, never being satisfied with herself. As for the third research question, a quick answer was that the writing of journals and narratives were especially important in stimulating and facilitating these changes. The former functioned as both a catalog and an assessment tool of transformative learning, while the latter mainly provided a safe house for the writer to reflect, evolve, and transform.

Those findings were drawn from a thorough analysis of the three cases. For each case, my analysis was categorized into the analysis of journals, of narratives, of field observations, and of templated essays. Each genre contributed differently to the transformative learning experience of the participants. For example, the writing of field experience was particularly important for Ruan, the second participant, as it elicited critical reflection and strong emotions, both of which urged her to
change the unsatisfying reality she observed and grow into a competent teacher to protect her future students. Besides, she learned to embrace her identity as an English language learner (ELL) through critical reflection, outgrew the secret sense of inferiority to her native-speaking peers as her belief shifted from rigid language tests to culture-situated language learning, and finally constructed her identity as a confident ELL teacher through the construction of imagined future classroom setting and teaching.

**Case Report # 1 Kim’s Writings**

**A Brief Description of Kim’s English Learning Experience in South Korea**

Before a formal interview with Kim, I had a casual fifteen-minute talk with her. The purpose of the causal talk was to get her familiar with the purpose of my research and gain a glimpse into her language learning experience in her home country. As the conversation was casual, I tried to keep my notetaking to the minimum, and I didn’t record at all. The following was a brief description of Kim’s learning experience based on the information she provided and my notes.

Kim was born in an upper-middle class family. As the first child in her family, her parents had very high expectations for her, and her mother was particularly strict with her study. She started to learn English as a second language (ESL) at the age of three in a private kindergarten. After entering primary school, and from there upon, her English learning experience was mainly divided into two parts: at-school and after-school (shadow school) learning. She learned English grammar in school, and got extensive practice and feedback from shadow schools. The main purpose of language learning, including writing, was to gain high scores in various exams. And after entering high school, she went to shadow schools more frequently. Her parents paid a great deal of extra money for those extra hours of study, because they believed that was the only way for Kim to remain a top student in her class. Her language learning was further broken down into four different parts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which corresponded to the College Academic Aptitude Tests. Writing was mainly for the purpose of passing exams, and Kim was particularly good at argumentative writing as it was the major genre tested in college entrance test. She memorized a lot of templates in order to write in a limited time and gain high scores in tests.

I found she rarely mentioned anything related with inquiry-based teaching in her language learning experience. Her memory about language learning was mainly on teacher-centered grammar
learning, mechanical vocabulary memorization, and extensive practices on argumentative writing for tests. Despite the boring language learning experience, Kim had hidden favorite feelings over memorization, and believed such a method had its advantage in language learning.

I found she rarely mentioned anything related with inquiry-based teaching in her language learning experience. Her memory about language learning was mainly on teacher-centered grammar learning, mechanical vocabulary memorization, and extensive practice on argumentative writing for tests. Despite the boring language learning experience, Kim secretly favored memorization and believed such a method had its advantage in language learning. Based on my own English learning experience in China, which was similar to Kim’s, I doubt that diversity and learner identity were also beyond the picture, as students were evaluated by the high scores they could gain on tests. Therefore, I took note of Kim’s original words when describing her experience, and presented it here as follows: “You are your scores.” She also talked about the absolute authority teachers held in South Korea in general, and how parents and students would respect that authority. She even mentioned teachers could physically punish students when she was a student in high school, although it is now forbidden. Under the context of teacher authority, student leadership was basically neglected.

In general, Kim’s language learning experience in her home country contrasted strongly with that in the United States. She was particularly good at argumentative writing, but surely would face the challenge of encountering more genres in her undergraduate study. Besides, she barely experienced teachings which promoted diversity, leadership, or inquiry; how, then could she learn these concepts? The following is a thorough analysis of themes reflected in her writing, and, if possible, how she acquired these themes, and whether she could apply them in her imagined future teaching.

Analysis of Program Goals and Descriptions

In the following part, I first explained emerging themes from the program goals of Kim’s department. With the guidance of the emerging themes as well as transformative theory, I would look for emerging themes from Kim’s writing, and make constant comparisons between the two.

Emerging Themes from Program Goals

The reason why I analyzed the program goals were twofold. On one hand, all the writings Kim presented to me ranged from the freshman to sophomore years, and covered various courses
recommended by her program advisor. Those courses served the ultimate purpose to help Kim growing into an excellent teacher, as described in the program goals. On the other hand, some of the writings she sent me were from core courses, which directly related with the specific sub-goals listed in the program description.

Given the five-year time gap between data collection and the final round of dissertation revision, I decided to use the screenshot of the official websites captured in 2017 at the time of data collection. The PDF version is also attached in the Appendix (Appendix A to E). Emerging themes from program goals and course requirements are listed in the following table in the order of general statement, program goals, citizenship, diversity, and leadership:

Table 5-1  Emerging themes from Kim’s program descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key information conveyed</th>
<th>Emerging Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“... helps students develop into educators, professionals who care for and connect with ... students”</td>
<td>1. Professional identity construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Caring for future students, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Connecting with future students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“to support ... understanding of teaching and learning”</td>
<td>4. Facilitating understanding of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Facilitating understanding of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“views education as much larger than any set of standards or performance-based measures”</td>
<td>6. Larger view of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“... to amplify the voices of students and teachers”</td>
<td>7. Amplify voices of students and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Amplify voices of teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“engage in a range of teaching approaches that empower students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>“… to promote students’ academic learning and their emotional and social development”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“learn ways to regard diversity . . . as a resource that . . . enriches the school experience and learning of everyone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“work together to . . . nurture an appreciation for . . . diversities”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>“… becoming teacher leaders”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“learn to seek challenge . . . , take risks, ask questions, reflect and act”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Table 5-1 was an extraction from Kim’s departmental descriptions, the program goals, and general statements, all of which were screenshots and saved as PDF documents on my computer from the official website back in May of 2017.

The first column is a summary of the general description of the early childhood education program’s goal. It stated that this program helped to develop students’ identities as educators and professionals. The terms “educator” and “professional” would receive particular attention in the later theme analysis of Kim’s writings. The program also stated that it would help students grow into teachers that “care for and connect with their future students.” In this statement, “care for students” and “connect with students” were two important themes guiding my later analysis.

Following this general statement was a specific elaboration of program goals, and the document stated it pursued a higher goal that “views education as much larger than any set of standards or performance-based measures.” This was a high standard for Kim, particularly given her educational background in which test scores were equated with students’ dignity and the respect they could earn from their teachers and peers. To what extent could Kim be assimilated into this idea and accept the concept that education was much larger than standards or tests? Specific analysis on this question is presented in the section of emerging themes in Kim’s writings.

Another theme that emerged from the program goals was that the program stated that it “seeks to amplify the voices of students and teachers . . . in school classrooms and daily life around the U.S. and the world.” This goal posed an even greater challenge for Kim. Coming from a Confucian-influenced country in which teachers were highly respected and regarded as authorities, could Kim walk out of her comfort zone and have a voice as a student, or offer her future students’ chances to amplify their voices? The answer to these questions would be provided in the analysis of her field notes.

Furthermore, the program embodies four core values, which were citizenship, diversity, inquiry, and leadership. As for the description of the citizenship part, the programs depicted a picture of how
their future teachers would “explore theories of teaching and learning . . . not only to take tests but to ask questions and work to solve problems they perceive.” In this statement, it presented an underlying logic chain: “exploring theories of teaching and learning,” and the purpose of that exploration was to encourage students to ask questions and solve real-world problems. Given the fact that citizenship and inquiry were expressed in a similar way as “inquiry-based teaching” and that of “empowering students,” the two themes were combined and analyzed as “inquiry” when analyzing Kim’s writings.

Diversity is of particular interest of this research. Given the fact that international undergraduate students often have secret senses of inferiority toward their English-speaking peers (Dovchin, 2020), was Kim able to overcome this by feeling appreciated because of her diversity? On one hand, Kim herself represents a kind of diversity in the courses she took. On the other hand, she would play an important role in promoting diversity in her own future classroom. Did she mention anything about her own diversity in her writing assignment, and if yes, how did she write about it? On the other hand, how would she write about diversity in her future classroom, and what would these writings say about her belief on this topic? All these questions would be explored in the latter part when analyzing emerging themes from her writings.

Leadership, one of the most heavily-emphasized areas in teacher preparation programs, didn’t always yield to student teachers’ full comprehension, or to how they as student teachers displayed leadership qualities (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2019). This is particularly true for Asian international education students, as they were educated in an environment where collectivism and obedience were advocated, but individual leadership wasn’t focused on as much. Coming from such a culture, could Kim acquire the concept of leadership and then reflect on her learning through the practice of writing? The theme of leadership was also be paid special attention during coding.

In summary, there were 21 sub-themes which emerged in the blueprint of the program description, and they ranged from professional identity construction to teaching methods, beliefs, and relationship building. After a careful examination of the 23 themes, I found they actually fell into five categories. Each category had an emphasis on different aspects of teaching and learning. Specifics are listed in the Table 5-2.

All the courses Kim had taken in the US, including the ones from which she shared writings with me, should follow a similar direction as the above listed program goals. Table 5-2 was used for two
fundamentals: first it functioned as general guidance while looking for emerging themes from Kim’s writing. Secondly, it worked as a source for comparison with themes emerging from Kim’s writing assignments so that I could find out whether the writings had helped her to meet those goals or not.

**Genres of Kim’s writings**

Genre has been defined in various ways from different disciplines. Each definition reflected beliefs in how genre functions in learning or communication. For the purpose of exploring the role of writing in students’ learning experience, I chose to approach genre as a way of language usage for the purpose of communication in certain contexts; therefore, I adopted the definition of genre as an “abstract, socially recognized ways of using language” (Hyland, 2007, p.149). As such, genre encompassed certain discourses used in the context of coursework writing. In this way, the 18 writings from Kim (all were coursework assignments she took in the Department of Education during the period of Spring 2016 to Fall 2017) were categorized briefly into journals, narratives, reflections, field observations, and templated essays.

Generally speaking, the term essay was very broad and included all the writings students had produced for course purposes, but here I narrow it down to writings that followed certain templates
to meet course instructors’ requirements, and labelled it as “templated essays. Therefore, the term “templated essays” was used in the current research to record Kim’s answers to certain questions in the courses she took. As for the difference between journals and templated essays, I used the former to categorize writings that recorded Kim’s thought process and the latter to recognize Kim’s answers to meet certain requirements. Specific writings and the categories they belonged to are listed in the Table 5-3.

Table 5-3  Kim’s writings and genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of the Writing</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KaokaoTalk 76</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>KaokaoTalk 45</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CI 405</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Musical journal 2</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>APLNG 484 final paper</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Readingresponse</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CI295A Literacy project</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>critical reflection. LLED 400</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>cupe.intro.</td>
<td>Templatied essays</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ECE 451 Field notes 2</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>HIST116.final paper</td>
<td>Templated essays</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>LDT 100.final paper</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Music 241. bennett ob1.</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>MUSIC 241.reflection journal 1.</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>TeacherObservationForm483</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The power of play for children</td>
<td>Templated essays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>writing analysis part2</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>writingworkshop-LLED401</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The genres of Kim’s writings ranged evenly among journals, reflections, field observations, and essays, except for the two narratives. As such, the lack of sufficient narrative writings would pose a threat to the third research question, the role of narratives in the changes Kim had experienced, if not handled carefully. I decided to use the second part of the interview as a chance to explore more information about her experience with the writing of narratives, including the two she presented, and to unveil the changes, if she had any, due to the act of writing narratives. Several open-ended questions were designed to help my understanding about the role of narratives in her learning experience.

As shown in the Table 5-3, there were four journals in Kim’s writings. One was a weekly report.
of her thoughts on the readings. What was special about this journal was that it was a weekly record of her thoughts on the readings or discussions over the course of six weeks. The second was a belief journal, in which she wrote about the beliefs in evaluation. The third and fourth were two music journals, and they recorded her belief changes in a music course and her imagination of how to use music in her future classroom.

The Table 5-3 also showed the genres Kim produced: journals, narratives, reflections, and field observations. It was safe to conclude that she had experience in the writing of major academic papers as a sophomore majoring in Early Childhood Education at the time of the interview. However, as introduced in Kim’s early learning experience back in South Korea, she was particularly confident with argumentative writing for test purposes. As previous research had shown, the academic genres of writing international students had to experience expand considerably, given her Asian cultural background (Zhang, 2018). Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that these six types of writings in the current research reasonably represented major genres she had experienced in an academic context.

The analysis of emerging themes from her writing was based on the genres, but also followed the emerging themes from her program descriptions. Specific analysis is as follows:

Analysis of Kim’s journals

This part is an explanation of the specific process of analysis. The writings were coded under the guidance of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2019). One essential process involving reflexivity was that I constantly drew upon my own experiences, including previous experience of learning how to write in China and pre-existing knowledge about the role of writing in my learning experience. I then critically integrated these aspects into data coding. For example, I would constantly ask myself questions like “what did my experience say about the topic Kim mentioned in the writing”? For example, when Kim wrote about her understanding of diversity and methods to promote it in her future classroom, I would ask myself where I learned the concept of diversity, what contributed to my learning of this concept, and how it was similar to or different from Kim’s learning process. If my perceptions resonated with those of Kim’s, I then went on to explore emerging themes from these writings and looked for patterns in these themes. If my understanding was different than that of Kim’s, I then went back to the data, read and analyzed them again, and examined where the differences were, and
what these differences implied. In sum, I used this reflexive process as an important tool to stimulate my coding and theme-searching.

As I read through each piece of writing sentence by sentence, I used open code to record themes within or across sentences. A sentence was coded when it mentioned anything related with teaching, learning, identity, leadership, or diversity, which were emerging themes from the program goals. I labeled the codes using terms directly derived from the original dataset. For example, I coded the sentence “I would make learning available for all children through Project Approach” with two nodes, one as “equal access to learning” and the other as “project approach.” Meanwhile, I also wrote down annotations of nodes in order to record important information that couldn’t be included in the node. For example, I wrote an annotation to explain that I observed an emerging theme of equity through imagined future teaching from a previously mentioned label “equal access to learning,” and made a connection between the annotation and this particular node. For example, I wrote an annotation like “Kim’s understanding about justice in education” under the node labeled as “justice.”

**Nodes from Kim’s Writings**

I briefly explain the node-seeking process in this section, list major nodes from Kim’s writing in the following table, and then use the analysis of Kim’s journal writing as an example to illustrate how I got these nodes. I selected journal writing as an illustrative example because on the one hand there were 18 writings I collected from Kim, which made it impossible to display for all how I approached each analysis specifically, and on the other hand my research questions specifically explored the role of journals in international students’ transformative learning experience. I first listed nodes from Kim’s writings in the Table 5-4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Nodes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>what teaching means</td>
<td>&quot;Real teaching happens when teachers are able to connect with students, and give them chances for practice&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teaching with imagines</td>
<td>&quot;Drawing is a very important part in teaching young kids&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-4  Nodes from Kim’s Writings
| how to teach | "teach through project approach" |
| teacher modeling | "teacher models . . . tasks" |
| visual arts/drawings in teaching | "visual arts to represent their cultural experience" |
| **Learning** | |
| listening to what the children say | "making learning visible for all children through project approach" |
| learning from multiple resources | "real learning come from a variety of sources" |
| citation of course reading materials | citation of horizontal and vertical identities and one’s acceptance |
| searching internet as a resource | "I used Nava, a Korean version of Google, to help me better understand the issue" |
| **Diversity** | |
| learner diversity | "differentiation for different learners . . . for teaching materials" |
| **Reflection** | |
| personal previous experience | "previous experience in learning music" |
| reflection of struggles as a non-native | "I feel inferior to my peers. I can never write as good as they do" |
| **Reinterpretation** | |
| reinterpretating previous learning experience & new knowledge | "My perspectives are more wider than others, because I always take in perspectives from other countries" |
| **Identity** | |
| reflection on newly learned knowledge | Reflection of ECE history theory and practice |
| social status of teachers | "Teachers in the US have a relatively lower social status compared with South Korea" |
| Self as an ESL learner | "As an ESL learner myself" |
| **Assessment** | |
| significance of authentic assessment | "Authentive assessment promote real learning" |
The Table 5-4 is a brief summary of the major nodes deriving from Kim’s writings. The categories on the left represented the synthesized labels of the statement and goals listed on the official website of Kim’s department, which is presented in Table 5-3, and they cover all areas except leadership. The missing of nodes in leadership are a reflection upon the fact that Kim doesn’t pay too much attention to this area in her writing. The reason might be that she was still a sophomore majoring in early childhood education and hadn’t learned much about leadership knowledge at that time period. It also helps to prove that international students face more hurdles and are less likely to develop the sense of teacher leadership in educational programs (Glass, 2018). The lack of leadership among education students, particularly international students, is a very significant topic (Alegado, 2018). However, it’s beyond the scope of my current research, and I hereby frame my discussion from the perspective of transformative learning theory. Therefore, I turn to the explanation of key terms such as node, case, and themes in the following part, and use the analysis of Kim’s narratives as an example to display how the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagination</th>
<th>imagination of classroom environment</th>
<th>&quot;I want to create a welcoming classroom atmosphere for all learners&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imagination of future teaching</td>
<td>&quot;I would invite students to bring their family photos in my future classroom&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>beliefs in teaching</td>
<td>&quot;I believe teachers should model frequently in teaching&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beliefs in learning</td>
<td>&quot;I believe thinking driven by questions&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beliefs in assessment</td>
<td>&quot;questions should be valued over answers&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>belief in ESL learner’s ability</td>
<td>&quot;they are equally capable of learning, and sometimes more sensitive to signs in the environment&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>beliefs in classroom atmosphere</td>
<td>&quot;I believe in the importance of creating and sustaining classroom learning environments&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>surprise and frustration</td>
<td>&quot;I was very much frustrated . . . and surprised . . . &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sympathy to ESL leaners</td>
<td>&quot;I have strong sympathy to ELL kids&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inferiority of ESL learners</td>
<td>&quot;inferiority of diverse leaners caused by school settings&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above diagram displayed all the codes from Kim’s four journals. The grey circles in the diagram represent nodes, and suitcase symbols represent cases. The standards for deciding whether it was a node or a case were that a node contained a minimum of meaning, while a case represented at least one logical relationship or unit of observation. In other words, when two nodes contained similar meanings, they would be clustered into one case. For example, when I coded the sentence “I was determined to learn it (the musical goal) well,” I decided it was a node because it conveyed the single meaning of wanting to learn well. As for the name of the node, I tried to adopt the original words as much as possible. Therefore, the sentence was coded as “determination to learn.” Each node would be
used in Kim’s case, as well as applied to the other two participants’ analysis as appropriate. Other nodes were summary terms to cover similar meanings but with different terminology, such as “I was frustrated” and “anxious about the course.” They were coded as “feelings,” and the terms were applied to cover the same nodes emerging from Ruan and Lee’s cases when suitable.

The term “case” represented my observation of at least one unit of relationship during the initial coding, although cases would be a final product after analyzing emerging themes in my plan. For example, when I read the sentence “I would try my best to incorporate visual arts into my teaching, and make it available to all children,” I labeled it as a case with the name “how to teach” because it contained two units of relationship: using visual arts in teaching, and equity in teaching. Therefore, this sentence was labeled as a case, which would be analyzed together with emerging themes to look for patterns in Kim’s learning and thinking in the later part.

Emerging themes in Kim’s journal writing contained traditional topics, such as her worries when registered in a new course, her determination to learn it well, and her belief changes before and after taking the course. There were also less-covered topics in education students’ writing, such as the observation of problems in teaching from an international perspective and her concern about the relatively low social status of teachers in the US compared with that of her own country, where teachers were highly respected and considered the absolute authority.

What was prominent in the nodes in her journal writing was her understanding about the cultural nature of human development and how she could promote each student’s home-country culture in her own future classroom in order to create a “sustaining classroom learning environment.” The terms “culture” and “diversity” seemingly were intertwined in Kim’s journal writing. She wrote about diversity mainly from the perspective of respecting and promoting each student’s culture. Diversity, in her writing, played a very important role in “highly effective classroom.”

Altogether, there are 18 nodes and three cases. All fell into the categories of teaching, learning, diversity, and identity construction as a future teacher. When compared with emerging themes from Table 5-2, it was easy to find that Kim didn’t talk much about leadership in her journal writing, but she did mention cultural aspects in teaching, and creating a welcoming classroom atmosphere several times. What’s more, she also wrote about her beliefs in the role of assessment in teaching and learning. When wrote about assessment, she made comparisons with her own previous language learning experience in
South Korea. What do these nodes imply for her learning experience? The following section explores emerging themes from Kim’s writings.

**Process of Looking for Themes**

I first explain my stance on the definition of themes, and then move to display some of the basic procedures I used to look for themes from the nodes listed in Table 5-4. Meanwhile, I also make connections between the emerging themes and transformative learning theory to explore the role of writing in Kim’s learning experience.

To begin with, theme is one of the most frequently-used terms in qualitative research, particularly reflexive thematic analysis. As I took the stance of reflexive thematic analysis, I adopted the widely-cited thematic development protocols (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016) and held that the definition of theme should at least satisfy the following three categories: first, it should be descriptive, attributing, or conceptual in order to connect and explain nodes and cases. Second, a specific theme should be able to organize a group of ideas implicitly. Third, which is also the most important, it should enable me to answer part or all of the three research questions.

Besides the three principles, I also constantly took the following three steps: labelling, comparing, and relating themes to established knowledge. The three steps were mutually inclusive, they happened in any order and at any time, all depending on the results of analysis. After these three steps, I got the first round of very primitive themes. I then immersed myself in the data again and read through the nodes and cases to make sure they were properly covered by the themes. After several rounds of labelling and modification, I finally related them with the established themes, and explored the story line behind these themes. Based on these principles and procedures, I drew three themes from the codes and listed them as follows:

**Theme One: Journal Writing for Perspective Elaboration and Plan of Actions**

The journals Ruan produced were mainly reflections on course reading materials. In her writing, she usually started by commenting on certain point(s) of the reading material and then elaborated on her perspective. After that, she again made connections with previous learning experience, in which she expressed strong beliefs in what teachers must do. Meanwhile, Kim’s plan of action was completed mainly through imagined integration of the elaboration perspective into teaching and learning. For
example, Kim wrote about the most important action she took to complete changed course of actions from a transformative learning perspective. It was through this imagination that Kim became an ideal teacher, and thus completed the construction of her new identity as a future teacher.

To conclude, emerging themes from the four journals are closely related with the readings Kim had done. There was a lack of traces of transformative learning, but strangely, most of her belief elaboration fell into the themes expected and expressed in the departmental goals.

**Theme Two: Journal Writing for Critical Reflection on Home Country Learning Experience**

Kim wrote about her previous learning experience in South Korea, her unpleasant music learning experience when little, and her experience as a teaching assistant in English classes in a training school in South Korea. The writing about those previous experiences either shows her chances to reflect on previous beliefs, examine the adequateness of these beliefs, or finally, to elaborate on new beliefs.

Kim also wrote extensively about her reflections on previous readings. She used heavy citation when commenting on a reading material. The basic pattern went like this: she first cited a writer, then commented on the citation, and finally provided an example or explanation to support her comment. For example, she wrote about what she believed to be important in children’s writing, learning, classroom environment, and the teaching of writing to young children, discussed the original of that belief, testified to it through observational experience in daily life, and finally re-stated the enhanced belief in the integrated development of young child. In this way, the journals worked as a window into the belief changes she had experienced through critical reflections.

Kim used journals to reveal her ability to critically compare and contrast the differences and similarities between what she observed in her immediate learning context and her previous learning experience back in South Korea. Her critical analysis ability was mainly reflected in the observation and analysis of cultural aspects of teaching and the social status of teachers in her writing.

There were 35 nodes from the five narratives, among which they were three prominent clusters. The first was the node related to “visual arts.” She wrote about visual arts as pedagogy, as an intense social activity, as a way to represent ESL learners’ cultural experiences, as a means of understanding contemporary culture, and as a necessary part of literacy. The second prominent node was “non-native identity,” in which she wrote about her own identity as a non-native writer, her sympathy for ESL
learners, the inferiority of diverse learners caused by school settings, and the unfortunate common fate of diverse learners. The third prominent one was the node cluster “innovative perspective enabled by non-native identity,” which included a comparison of the home country education system, her unique understanding when it came to teaching ESL children, a non-native children needs-analysis, a method of teaching appropriate to ESL learner identity, and teaching ESL leaners how to convey meaning.

Besides these three prominent clusters of nodes, there were also belief nodes, including belief in teaching, ESL learner ability, classroom environment, and integrated development. There were also a series of nodes about past significant experience, re-interpretation of past experience, and importance of children’s past experience. Other nodes included classroom environment building and imagination of the self as a teacher.

**Theme Three: Narratives as a Safe House to Reveal Vulnerability as an ESL Learner**

Kim wrote about her educational experiences in South Korea, reflected on how she started to learn English, analyzed how that way has influenced her future study, and admitted the difficulties she had encountered as an ESL learner until today.

When she wrote about her own experiences with English writing, she labelled herself as an ESL student and a non-native learner. It seemed to Kim that the difficulties she encountered in English writing were often caused by her non-native learner identity. For example, she mentioned how she learned the connotation (direct meaning) and denotation (implied meaning) of a word through making mistakes in terms of word choice. One example she gave in the writing was her choice of the phrase “make up the classroom to celebrate Christmas;” but she didn’t learn “decorate” was the correct word to use until much later. In a later interview, she talked about the traumatic experience in one course, where her writings were labelled as “alien-like,” and how horrified she was by that comment. Such experiences inspired her to design curriculum that would teach L2 students how to choose words accurately and how to convey meaning in a non “alien-like” way when she wrote about imagined teaching in the future.

Because of the realization of her L2 learner identity, Kim was sympathetic to other ESL students. She wrote about how she observed school environments made diverse students feel inferior and how she wanted to change that in her future classroom environment setting. She approached this conclusion by pointing out the importance of a positive classroom environment, sharing her idea on how to make
young children feel welcome at school, and some of the ways to promote the culture students bring with them in her future classroom.

**Theme Four: Narratives as a Window to the Emergence of the Writer’s Unique Writing and Teaching Ideologies**

One of the most distinctive features of Kim’s narratives was her use of visual arts (drawings) in her writings. She used the drawings to explain her understanding of certain phenomena in kids’ learning and in her understanding about classroom settings. Taking into consideration her admission of L2 learner identity, and how this identity had made writing difficult for her, visual arts offered Kim a relatively easy, yet tangible tool to convey her thoughts. She no longer needed to consider how to choose words accurately or convey meaning technically. All she needed to do in drawing-aided writing was to use drawings and simple sentences to convey her meaning.

On the one hand, narrative writing was a window for Kim to explain how she believed visual arts should be integrated into literacy learning. On the other hand, narratives helped the writer to admit her identity as an EFL learner, showed her sympathy to EFL learners, and expressed her dislike of the current school setting, in which she believed diverse learners were made to feel inferior to their peers. Kim also admitted in the writing that she not only embraced her identity as an ESL learner, but also made efforts to come up with solutions to overcome the difficulties brought up by this identity in composing course papers.

**Theme Five: Reflection for Strategic Knowledge Integration**

The two reflections were mainly about what Kim had learned from two courses she had taken. Her description started with the value of the course, important knowledge she had learned from the course, uniqueness of the course, and realizations after taking the courses. For example, she wrote about her shifted in-depth insights on reading fluency through readings and discussion from the course, and working with her pen pal. During such a process, belief evolvement was revealed if examined carefully. She described how she thought about fluent reading before, during, and after taking the courses.

Meanwhile, templated field observation also functioned as knowledge reintegration, but Kim stopped at making connections with newly-learned knowledge. The four field observations Kim produced were more like a description of what she observed in the classroom, the justification of these observed
behaviors, why it as a positive reinforcement for the kids, and how the interaction between teachers and leaners smoothly moved forward. The focus of the observations was more on the explanation of the adequateness of these actions, justifying what the writer observed as effective teaching and/or learning in that context. For example, the writer stated how teachers used a drum and the retheme “hello, how are you” to teach children to follow every bite of the music. At the end of the observation the writer re-stated the significance of music in children’s learning and also stated her belief of the facilitating role of music in promoting children’s learning. What was missing in the four observations were Kim’s real thoughts and her observation of where she disagreed or felt things could be improved.

**Theme Six: Reflect to Imagine Changed Course of Actions**

This was a minor part, but it had important implications in the internalization of the knowledge she had gained from the course. She mentioned the application of knowledge in her courses, the usage of certain reading materials in her understanding of the real word, and re-interpretation of reading materials and her previous experiences. She also wrote about how she would react differently after taking the course. Those were important signs of knowledge application.

**Theme Seven: Strategic Internalization of Newly-learned Knowledge**

The Figure 5-2 showed two major pathways Kim display in her writing in terms of knowledge internalization. What was apparently missing in the above tree-shaped nodes was the absence of making
connections. Although Kim briefly elaborated upon or explained her understanding of each category of play in one or two sentences, she did not further explore the relationship between the clarification and its application in reality. There was a lack of making connections with its application. Besides, there was also a lack of deep-level epistemological changes described, rather than the assimilation of certain definition.

In the later interview, when asked about her understanding of play in Early Childhood Education, Kim could still recall the importance of play for children. Part of the interview transcription is presented here to illustrate the point.

- Me: “how do you understand the role of play in kindergarten?”
- Kim: “It’s very important. While, I actually think play is the most important way children learn.”
- Me: “can you imagine how you will organize play in your future classroom in a kindergarten”? 
- Kim: “That’s a very complicated question. I will try to give kids a lot of opportunities to play.”
- Me: “are there different types of play in your eyes?”
- Kim: “Yes, different types of play serve different purposes”.
- Me: “Like what?”
- Kim: “… like children will play by themselves when they are very young. They are not interested in playing with each other. So I will give them different toys. As they grow older, they probably will observe how other kids play, and mimic that. I will teach them to set up good orders by then”.

From the short transcript we could infer that Kim understood the significance of play, and also recognized that different age groups played at different paces. The younger tended to play parallel while the older cooperatively. She also explained in the interview that she would provide different types of guidance to different age groups in her future classroom, which was an indication of her readiness of applying knowledge about different types of play into her future classroom. Therefore, we could also conclude that Kim internalized the knowledge successfully, and was able to make a difference when it came to her own future classroom, which was an important indication of transformative learning.
In sum, the above-mentioned process was one way of knowledge internalization, in which the writer cited definitions of certain terms from her course readings and elaborated upon or explained them briefly. Although the writer didn’t mention further how she would use that knowledge in her future teaching, she did display the ability to do so in a later interview.

The second meaning cluster from the writing is shown in Figure 5-3:

The most significant part of this essay (essay #5) was the sign of transformative learning. The writer used the following order: first she cited an article, then interpreted the article from the perspective of adults as conductors, claiming that some adults were facilitators while others were neglectors. After the interpretation from an adult’s perspective, Kim finally turned to comment on the impact of lack of recess, too much homework, or standardized tests, and eventually provided solution to incorporate play in kindergarten.

In this essay, she was able to elaborate on the citation from a specific perspective, and she talked about the lack of play and its destructive effect on children’s growth. Eventually she was able to provide a solution to incorporate play in kindergartens through imagination. In this sense, writing provided her a space to elaborate upon her understanding from a certain perspective, and to imagine how to solve the problem in her imagination.

Later in the interview, when asked about roleplay, she mentioned that she got very little time to play in her childhood, which she deemed as “not right” when looking back retrospectively.
Overview of the findings

The role of writing for Kim has been found in the following four areas: writing as a way for knowledge construction, a window to re-examine her belief system, and a space for identity construction, both as language learners and future teachers. Besides these roles, her writing also displayed several distinctive linguistic features. The following section will explain each role in detail.

![Emerging themes diagram](image)

Figure 5-4 Summary of emerging themes

The above figure was a brief summary of emerging themes in all of Kim’s writing. I briefly summarize each column in the following section:

As most of Kim’s writings were course assignments, teaching and learning were two important components. She explored how she viewed teaching, learning, and literacy development, particularly that of ESLs. It was from various descriptions, such as citation of course readings, elaboration of her understanding and application, that we as readers got a chance to understand how she internalized the knowledge.

Writing functioned as an apparatus for Kim to compare and contrast the similarities and
differences between the U.S. and her home country in education. As an international student, her previous learning experience was contrastingly different to that in the U.S., and thus always posed a challenge to her understanding of and assimilation to the new environment. Kim didn’t mention the advantages such an ESL identity brought to her, but she did benefit through such an experience. Contrastingly, Kim wrote about the difficulties she encountered because of the reality of being a non-native speaker. Discussion on the recognition of such an identity from course instructors is presented in Chapter Six.

Writing provided Kim a platform to re-interpret her previous experience, mainly through critical reflections. Some of her traumatic experiences were healed in the new environment through the reflection and realization of what was important in writing. For example, she was judged as a poor English writer back in her home country because she couldn’t gain high scores in exam writing, but the label of “poor writer” no longer existed in the new learning environment when the course instructor emphasized ideas and efforts put into writing rather than the grammatical correctness.

Writing to imagine future teaching was the most salient feature for Ruan. She went through belief changes, re-interpreted her previous learning experience, and believed she could be a competent future teacher. The imagination of details of future teaching enhanced that confidence and made the belief seem very much true. The technique of imagining teaching was also the most important aspect of Kim’s transformative learning experience, as she completed the process of action liberation and became a new person in an imagined classroom.

The theme of writing to reveal her vulnerability as an ESL student was a window into her thought process about how to view her previous learning experiences. It was hard to be an international student. It was harder to admit the traumatic experiences such an identity brought with her, but she outgrew this, embraced such an identity, and even saw the advantages of becoming an ESL teacher in the future. It was also through this process that Kim grew stronger and more confident with herself.

Finally, writing was both a window and a tool to a unique teaching and writing style. She loved drawings, believed in the power of drawing in teaching, and used a lot of drawings in her writing. Three out of the 16 pieces of her writing were drawing-related. She used drawing as a way to provide detailed information, to describe the situation more vividly, and to express her imagined teaching.
A Brief Description of Ruan’s Learning Experience in China

My original plan was to begin this part by presenting Ruan’s English learning experience first, but I found that she was very shy at the time of casual talk before the formal interview. She talked in a very low voice and very tenderly. As the casual conversation went on, I also found that she was less confident in her major. I could sense scars of being labelled as not excellent in the early years of study as she talked about the struggles she had in elementary school. As an international student myself, I have strong sympathy with her experience and decided to share her learning experience, including English learning, in China. The purpose of this background information was to reveal the long-lasting effects score-based student evaluation could have.

Ruan came from an upper-middle class family in Shanghai. Her father was the principal of a local primary school, and her mother was an elementary school teacher. She started to read board books at a very early age. Before attending kindergarten, she had read hundreds of picture books with her mother. However, the extensive access to picture books cultivated her habit of capturing information from pictures, as she called herself a “visual leaner” when having casual talk before the interview.

The habit of relying on pictures to grasp meaning caused her much trouble when she entered into elementary school. She didn’t have a smooth transition because the reading materials had many fewer pictures and more words. Difficulties in reading hindered her learning, and she began to realize that she was a slow reader and a pupil with poor memory skills. Her slow reading hindered her performance in school, and thus her scores on tests.

Later she figured out a way to solve her problem with the help of her mother and began to imagine all the information in picture forms. The technique of putting everything in imagined pictures was a unique learning style to her, and it did help her to make progress. It was only that the progress was not fast enough. She still labelled herself as a slow learner and poor at memorizing information.

In a system where students were evaluated by their scores, Ruan was naturally labelled as “poor.” She was unwilling to talk too much about her English learning experience, but her timid behaviors and hushed tone in talking explained the long-lasting effect of being negatively labelled during the early years of her school life. She only shared that she started to learn the language in elementary school, and
studied it only in class. She had difficulties learning English well because of the same problem caused by reading.

Later, she transferred to an international middle school, where she spent six years before coming to the US to study Education. English was the primary language in her international school, and all courses were taught in English. The total-English immersion environment challenged her a lot at the beginning. She described how she used a dictionary to look up new words while completing her chemistry homework, how she got used to the all-English model, and how she was able to complete her homework faster and faster. Her English was greatly improved during these six years, but unfortunately, her confidence in herself did not improve.

Coming from a similar environment, where students were judged by their test scores, I felt deeply sympathetic to Ruan’s early learning experience. I really hoped studying in the U.S., particularly when learning about education, could heal the scars left by that unpleasant period. When I started to analyze her writings, I paid particularly attention to her re-interpretation of previous learning experience and her identity construction.

**Genres of Ruan’s writings**

Ruan was from China, and she was a senior education student with an emphasis on early childhood education at the time of data collection. As she was in the same program with the first participant, Kim, the program goal analysis is omitted because they are the same. The basic structure of Ruan’s case analysis followed a similar structure to that of Kim’s.

Ruan sent me 20 writings altogether; 13 were directly sent to my email address and the remaining seven were downloaded from the website she created for a placement project. The specific genres are listed in the following table.

As the above table shows, nine of the writings were field observations, and they counted as almost half of the total writings Ruan shared with me. Given the fact that I asked her to send me writings that were important to her, the absolute dominance of field observations indicated the importance of these writings to her. Although previous research had found that international students could experience transformative learning on out-of-classroom sites as a result of the international experience (e.g. Nada et al., 2018), it remained unclear what the mechanism between out-of-classroom
### Table 5-5 Genres of Ruan’s writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of the Writing</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Doake quiz</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>autobiographical portrait</td>
<td>Autobiographical narrative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EDTHP 497 memo</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EDTHP497wal-mart</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EDTHP497 memo2</td>
<td>Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>field notes #2</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>field notes #1</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>LLED400</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>literacy project</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Memo 3</td>
<td>Journal</td>
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<td>autobiography</td>
<td>Autobiographical narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>memo 2</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>memo 1</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>About Bennett</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Experience &amp; learning</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Future classroom</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Iguana Garden</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Philosophy &amp; core values</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>photos</td>
<td>Field observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experience and transformative learning was. My analysis of Ruan’s narratives was an endeavor to study how field observations, an important branch of out-of-classroom experiences, facilitated Ruan’s transformative learning experience.

Following the field observations were seven journal-style writings. Most of Ruan’s journals were memos, in which she wrote about her thought on taking course activities or comments on her reading materials. For example, she wrote about her self-doubts when taking a compulsory course about how to teach ESL learners, her growing confidence as the course went on, and her embracement of the possibility of becoming a good ESL teacher even though she was a non-native speaker. Her emotional evolvement in these journals was in line with research findings that journal writing could have positive effects on students’ learning experience through the ease of negative feelings (Denton, 2018; Zhu, Mena, & Johnson, 2020). Previous research also found that emotional experience was an important indicator of experiencing transformative learning (Nogueiras et al., 2019). In Ruan’s case, these journals might contain important indicators of transformative learning. The focus of my analysis was to find
out whether there was transformative learning in her journal writing, and how she finally embraced her identity as a competent future ESL teacher.

Similar with the impact of journal writing, autobiographic narratives also had positive effect on students’ learning experiences. Autobiography was often composed as identity stories, and thus permitted researchers to use these stories as anchors to explore how the writer placed and re-place these identity stories at the time of writing (Ropo, 2019). It was through the repositioning that the writer completed new identity formation, and the researcher gained a glimpse to this process. Specific to Ruan’s case, she wrote about her English language learning experience in China and her learning experience both in China and the US. What was salient in her stories was the self-identification as an ESL learner from the beginning of language study all the way to her senior years of undergraduate education in the US. Why did she still identify herself as an ESL learner even when she could imagine herself as a competent ESL teacher? In order to answer that questions, I focused my analysis of autobiographies on Ruan’s belief in language learning, and her view of the self as an ESL learner and a future teacher.

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The writing of narratives worked similarly with autobiography, and it had always been an important area of study in teacher preparation. Previous research had proved the influences of narratives on teachers’ teaching practices (Altan & Lane, 2018), student teachers’ identity formation (Villegas, Varona, & Sánchez, 2020; Gallchóir, O’Flaherty, & Hinchion, 2018; Yazan, 2018), and ESL student teachers’ language ideologies formation (Taylor, 2018). Unlike those findings, what was salient in Ruan’s
narratives was her imagination of how she would teach. For example, she analyzed the reading problems of a four-year-old boy in one of her writings, backed her analysis with reading development theories, and then described how she would teach if she were the teacher of that little boy.

There were signs of dilemma in her description. Besides, there was also imagined future teaching. What did it imply from the perspective of transformative learning? As previous research has proved that disorienting dilemma, self-reflection, and liberatory actions were the three prominent aspects resonating with transformative learning (Searle, Ahn, Fels, & Carbone, 2021), I paid particular attention to explore whether Ruan’s narratives fell into the range of these categories if there was transformative learning in her narrative writing.

In general, there were four types of genres that Ruan shared with me, and each had different meanings for the current study. For field observations and journals, I looked for patterns of transformative learning and identity formation. For autobiography, I mainly explored her embracement of different identities. For narratives, I mainly investigated essential elements of transformative learning. Specific analysis was present in the following section in the order of journals, narratives, field observations, and autobiography, as indicated by my three research questions.

**Ruan’s journals:**

As discussed in the genre analysis section, the focus of Ruan’s journal analysis was on her transformative learning experience and identity formation. Table 5-6 shows the results of the nodes from Ruan’s journals. On the left of the column is the name of the nodes, and in the right column is a typical example of each node. To be clear, the displayed quotes were only a small part of the coded area, and there were many other coded areas for the same node. For those omitted examples, they could be traced back in the original text through the “visualizing” function or the “view” button in Nvivo for Mac. Together, the quotes and omitted examples construct a unique picture of Ruan’s transformative learning and offered me a glimpse of her professional identity construction.

The two most distinctive features of Ruan’s journal writing were the constant comparisons between China and the U.S., and her strong sympathy to English language learners (ELL). Ruan made constant comparisons with her experience in China in her journal writing. For example, she also showed her strong sympathy to ELLs. She often labelled herself as an ELL, believing that she was still in the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Coding</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive feelings</td>
<td>&quot;the story as heartbreaking and inspiring&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative feelings</td>
<td>&quot;I felt really panic and worried&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge learnt</td>
<td>&quot;I learned about the politics and history of bilingualism&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirations</td>
<td>&quot;it dawned on me that . . . teaching ELLs . . . about learning the culture&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration of placement program</td>
<td>&quot;eye-opening experience ...brought a third element to the reading&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decisions made</td>
<td>&quot;I read 'Can’t you sleep, Dotty’&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative actions taken</td>
<td>bring in third elements, a toy Dotty and stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plan of future course</td>
<td>&quot;I plan to use uppet birds, rabbit and tortoise to act the story out vividly to my friends&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciation to homecountry</td>
<td>&quot;freedom to access to education regardless of genders&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing between the US and in China</td>
<td>&quot;When I first came to the U.S, I was very confused . . . differences in China&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical analysis</td>
<td>&quot;I do not appreciate Phil’s teacher very much&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-identification as an ELL</td>
<td>&quot;myself is also a ELL&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sympathy to ELLs</td>
<td>&quot;my heart was broken&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective interpretation</td>
<td>&quot;langauge as . . . social identity&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making connections with previous learning experience</td>
<td>&quot;I knew how to do math but ... could not understand the English&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined teaching activities as a future ELL teacher</td>
<td>&quot;When the students who speak dialects understand the necessity of using Standard English, I will use the grading rubric for normal students to grade their assignments&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerns as a future ESL teacher</td>
<td>I also concern about how to teach a preschool kids standard grammar since they cannot read or write yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined corrective actions as a future teacher</td>
<td>&quot;I will try my best to memorize all the 18 kids’ names in one day&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feelings after taking the course</td>
<td>&quot;I feel myself care more about ELLs because I am an ELL as well&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes for ELLs in the US</td>
<td>&quot;I hope other ELLS in the U.S . . . without any discrimination&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

process of learning about English and its culture.

**Theme One: Journal Writing as a Catalyst for Identity Embracement and Development**

ELL identity was one of the most important identities Ruan assumed, but also the most alien one to me, because she referred herself as an ELL constantly. Traditionally, the term ELL refers to a student whose language proficiency is in the beginning to intermediate level. From my general impression of her, Ruan spoke fluent English, and she wrote clearly. This theme was also similar to that of Kim’s, and
Table 5-7  Results of Ruan’s narrative coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Coding</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>identification of problems</td>
<td>&quot;he became an arrhythmic reading-behavior reader&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidences of judgement</td>
<td>&quot;He read fluently ... but ignored words&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theoretical analysis</td>
<td>&quot;3 stages of early reading development-discovery&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined solution</td>
<td>&quot;I would ... set up a very balanced reading curriculum&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasons of imagined solution</td>
<td>&quot;It was what 4-year-old Kia needed&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-8  Results of Ruan’s autobiography coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Coding</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>language literacy history</td>
<td>&quot;(I) started learning English since Elementary school&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading literacy history</td>
<td>&quot;I begin to read in Chinese at the age of 5&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similarities and differences be-</td>
<td>&quot;... the language practices ... similar... they reflect different cultural practices&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tween two languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence of reading</td>
<td>&quot;My way of reading ... shaped and influenced my way of thinking and speaking&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obstacles in reading</td>
<td>&quot;I used to rely on the pictures too much&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-identification</td>
<td>&quot;I reached intermediate fluency&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief in teaching ELLs</td>
<td>&quot;... my experience of a second language will make me a better ELL teacher&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined solution to ELL teaching</td>
<td>&quot;... the teacher should try to think and understand from the student’s perspective&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

therefore was omitted. The only difference was that Ruan embraced her identity as an ESL leaner and said that she was still in the process of learning the language and the culture. For her, the identity as an ESL leaner is a life-long lesson, and she feels comfortable to embrace the notion and learn as much cultural knowledge as much as possible.

**Theme Two: Transformative Learning Through Re-storying of Observed Problems and Imagined Course of Actions as Possible Solutions by Narrative Writing**

In the two autobiographies, Ruan wrote about her language and reading literacy history respectively. Through the description, she self-identified as an intermediate level ELL. She also analyzed the obstacles she encountered in language leaning and reading development. For example, she wrote about her struggles of transiting from picture-books to books that had many more words and far less pictures. She also compared the similarities and differences of the Chinese and English languages. What stood out in her autobiography was her belief that she could be a good ESL teacher because she shared similar
Table 5-9  Results of insider-observation coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Coding</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>observation of the situation</td>
<td>age groups and classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy of the settings</td>
<td>philosophy of building distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of diversity, inquiry and citizenship</td>
<td>On Martin Luther King’s day, Kid talked about what their dreams were and they respected other’s points of view as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspirations by observation</td>
<td>“bring in a third dimension to story reading”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined future teaching</td>
<td>“I will put plentiful books that portray different cultural practices”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a dilemma faced in the situation</td>
<td>“He couldn’t keep the line, and wanted me to hold his hands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recalling readings to analyze the situation</td>
<td>“As in the readings…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>action plan</td>
<td>“I want to integrate it (third-element of story reading) into my teaching pedagogy”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legitimacy of the choice</td>
<td>“…four stages of reading (citation)…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results of changed behaviors</td>
<td>“I now focus more on my ideas when write”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflection on actions</td>
<td>“I thought about my action after she (her mentor) talked with me and realized that…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasis on ELL kids’ language development</td>
<td>If being a preschool teacher, I will pay more attention on ELL kids when they are talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adequateness of taking such actions</td>
<td>“I learnt from the course that…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significance of the actions taken</td>
<td>“Kids will benefit a lot”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imagined changed actions</td>
<td>“I…feel I can connect better with ELLs in my class because I am also an ELL”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-10  Results of love-infused transformative learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results of Coding</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>emotions at farewell</td>
<td>that’s why I love kids and love being with kids because I believe they are always kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innocent love from kids</td>
<td>I am still on the way of understanding myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deeply touched by kids’ love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linking kids’ kindness to previous readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linking readings to the self</td>
<td>warm atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inspiration of the interpretation</td>
<td>I thought it would be a perfect place to observe children’s behaviors and table manners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

experience and identified with ELLs.
Theme Three: Transformative Learning through the Imagination of Alternative Options and Imagined Application to a Future Classroom

Figure 5-5  Emerging Themes from Insider-field Observation

In general, the writing of field notes provides three layers of spaces for the writer to grow professionally.

First of all, such an observation calls for the writer’s conscious observation of certain behaviors, which might be neglected if not for the sake of writing an assignment. Secondly, such an assignment forces the writer to seek explanations behind certain behaviors she observed. Such a purposeful process of seeking explanations involves the writers’ real opinions. Thirdly, the writing of the filed notes encouraged the writer to make connections between her explanations of certain behaviors and the expert opinions from the course reading materials, in order to validate her understanding. In this sense, the writing strategy involves complex cognitive processes for the writer. It starts from calling up the writer’s
awareness of certain things, then moves further to seek explanations behind certain phenomenon, and eventually helps to validate her explanations from authorities’ evidences.

Besides that, her writings in the field notes also move a step further ahead to imagine how things should be as a future teacher and how teachers, including herself in the future, should prepare children to regulate their emotions.

Two very interesting points emerged from her description of the site of observation. The first was her description of the atmosphere of the site of observation. She was aware of the atmosphere of the site, and seems to have paid attention to the effect of such an atmosphere on a little boy’s, one of her students, mental stableness. This echoes back to her belief about the importance of a cozy atmosphere of a classroom in her previous writings. She described how the classroom was arranged in a welcoming way for the kids in her placement program in several different writings, and also stated how she would design her future classroom so that kids would feel welcomed and accepted in her teaching philosophy writing.

The second salient feature of the writing was her emphasis of how cute the little boy was, which reflected her fondness for young children. Again, the writing of this seemingly-minor point reflected one of the most important reasons she chose to be an early childhood educator. And it also echoes her statement in another writing that she believed kids were the most innocent group, and she loved to work with kids.

Another feature emerging from the writing was her observation of how the young mother bent over to talk with her son. Similarly, she described how teachers in her placement program would do similar things when talking with kids. The action of bending over to talk with kids reflects the notion that kids are equal with adults and that adults would take the initiative to offer the chances to have equal conversation with kids.

Despite the common notion that kids are equal with adults, Ruan grew up in an environment where adults, particularly parents and teachers, are considered authorities figures to their kids. Even up to this day, it is still considered embarrassing if kids misbehave in public, but are not punished by their parents. People will give them disapproving looks and probably comment that the parents are spoiling their children.

When analyzing this part, I felt the strong mind-set shifting Ruan had experienced. I had a
three-year-old boy, and I usually explained the inappropriateness of his behavior and offered several choices for him to make when he misbehaved. Such a way of parenting was strongly opposed by his step-grandparents, and they talked with me many times with huge concerns that I was spoiling the little boy and was greatly harming his future development. They believed so because they inherited the widespread idea that parents are authorities to kids, and kids should obey their parents without question. Only in this way is a kid is defined as a “good child,” and only through obedience can she or he be liked by their future kindergarten teachers.

Therefore, it is really interesting to see that Ruan described adults bending over while talking with kids, and how they believed that young kids can reason, at least like adults in some extent. The whole situation becomes intriguing when taking into consideration her childhood experience, how she described that experience, and what she reflected on for possible remediations in the future.

I was deeply touched when reading about the two field observations. On the one hand, I felt I have learned several things from her description of the situation she observed and the possible solutions. I felt I could believe in her solution for the reason that every solution she provided was backed up with research findings. As a mother of a three-year old boy, I feel I can relate so much with what she described.

From the perspective of influencing its readers and helping them to make connections with their own life and to reflect on their own doings, field notes are effective for both the writer and the readers in terms of offering both parties chances to relate with their real life and reflect on their actions.

**Case Report #3: Lee’s Writing**

Lee, the third participant, was from South Korea. She majored in Education and Public Policy in the College of Education and was approaching the end of her third year by the time of our interview. She completed her K-12 education in South Korea, worked two years as a language instructor in an English Institution, and then studied educational policy in the U.S. But Lee didn’t talk much about her early years of English learning experience in South Korea except for sharing that English was a foreign language in her country (EFL), and she learned it every day both in and out of school. When asked about her thoughts on the influence of her family background on her language learning experience, she shared that her mother was very strict with her study, began to send her to shadow schools beginning in
first grade, and continued to do so until after college academic aptitude tests. She was grateful for the
tons of extra money her parents spent on her in order to keep her a top student in class. Unlike the U.S.,
top students in her country went to shadow schools. As a result of years of test-oriented trainings, she
was very confident in templated essay writing. She commented that her writing was at the intermediate
level but didn’t think of herself as a writer.

Lee’s confidence in templated essay writing was also reflected in the writings she was willing
to share with me. When asked to share writings that were significant to her learning, she emailed me
11 writings, all of which were final course essays. Among the them, one was a critical evaluation of a
presidential scandal in her home country. This writing presented me with a good chance to examine how
she conducted critical evaluation in her writing. The second essay was a practical analysis of shadow
education in South Korea and its negative effects on students, teachers, parents, and the community as a
whole. This writing provided me a chance to explore how writing, if at all, was related to cultivating and
expressing her thought. With such a purpose, I designed the first part of my first interview questions
around the theme of critical evaluation on real-world issues and the generation of possible solutions.
The rest of the eight writings were either critical evaluations of current issues in education or a deep
exploration of the educational significance of essential concepts such as equity and citizenship.

In order to better understand the ultimate purpose of these course essay writings, I went to her
program’s official website, downloaded program goals, and summarized emerging themes from the
program. Key information in the original description was briefly quoted as follows:

“… Through the investigation of current policy challenges, EPP students develop skills
in research and analysis”. (https://ed.psu.edu/academics/departments/department-education-policy-
studies/educational-theory-and-policy-program/education-and-public-policy)

“Education and Public Policy is a multidisciplinary program that critically evaluates how soci-
ety fosters equity and excellence through education. Courses explore the deep cultural meanings of con-
cepts such as democracy and citizenship, and our faculty encourage active problem-solving skills by using
real world examples of government-initiated policies and programs. Through readings, case studies and
conversations with your peers, you will uncover the practical effects that policies have on students, teach-
ers, school leaders, families, and the community as a whole. You will also have the opportunity to identify
education policies and practices that matter to you and consider various strategies that could be effective
Emerging themes from the program goals are listed in the Table 5-11:

Table 5-11 Emerging Themes from Program Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem analysis</td>
<td>“Investigation of current policy challenges”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Critical evaluation of real-world examples of educational policies and programs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Exploration of the deep cultural meanings of concepts such as democracy and citizenship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills developed</td>
<td>“Skills in research and analysis”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Active problem-solving skills”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate Purpose</td>
<td>“Uncover the practical effects of policies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Identity personally significant educational policies and practices”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Consider effective strategies in solving emerging problems”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 5-11 contains a summary of the program goals from Lee’s department’s official website. The left column briefly presents the three major categories of the emerging themes in the description and shows them in the order of the content of problem analysis, skills developed, and ultimate purpose. The right column contains specific themes from the original expression. This table worked as a general guideline for my analysis of Lee’s writings, and I tried to depict how she developed the skills needed for analyzing educational policies and whether the problem analysis helped her meet these ultimate goals listed in Table 5-11.

The most significant role of the definition of CIVCM writing is that it compels the writer to think about these very abstract terms such as foundation, community, engagement, and civic. For each term, the writer is able to explain what this term means, from her understanding, and then give either a direct citation from the course reading materials or give examples from the seven episodes. Accompanying the effort of definition, the writer also shows her method of organizing and presenting her thoughts in a structured way. The entire piece of writing is very structured and goes with the pattern of “giving a statement” and then “following evidences from the documents.” The process of writing itself is transformative for the writer because she admitted in the interview that “I don’t really understand these terms until I was required by my professor to watch these documentaries. She asked...”
us to define what is foundation, community, engagement and civic, which unfortunately I didn’t really understand before this assignment. I mean, I still didn’t really understand them, but I would say that I got a clearer idea than before . . .”

In this sense, transformative learning happens during the process of writing.

Theme

Theme One: “I really regret that (write for the teachers), and want to focus more on my thoughts (Interview #3, May 17, 2017)”

In the interview Lee admitted that she was forced to watch the documentaries multiple times to figure out what community is, how people define it, and how to put these different definitions into her own words and create her own understanding. Through the interview it is clear that the assignment, particularly the right questions with the matching materials that learners could find answers to, is the key for Lee to figure out terms that are so distant in her real life or from her background. So what counts as the right types of writing assignment? In Mezirow’s (2000) words, what counts as a useful stimulation/dilemma? This question will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Theme Two: The “sneaky techniques” in Writing: Do They Facilitate or Hinder Transformative Learning

Lee admitted that she used some “sneaky techniques” in her writing. For example, when she writes, she always looks up notes online to see what other people say about a text, compares different sources on the same topic, and then makes use of these notes while integrating online information into her own writing. She didn’t mention how much originality is in her writing, but she did mention that her writing was very “shallow,” as her professors commented.

She also said that her way of writing, the pattern of writing a topic sentence, and then presenting evidence, was because of her lack of experience. Her instructors said her writings were shallow and advised her to read some philosophical books to make her writing deeper. Does this work for her? She said she had planned to read more books, but hadn’t take any actions yet. Herein lies the question: is reading philosophical books a useful way for international education majors to have deeper or better writing? Is it a realistic suggestion? She also mentioned that writing more and writing regularly is one of the most important ways to improve writing. Does this mean she has subtly different ideas about how
to improve her writing?

**Thoughts on the Patterns of Lee’s Writings**

First of all, transformative learning happens when the learner builds a connection with the course instructor. In this way, the writer can better understand the requirements of the course instructor, and feel encouraged when getting feedback. Based on positive feedback, the international student will learn how to master a pattern, how to put it into practice, and how to incorporate it into her own writing. Second, transformative learning happens when a chance is given to incorporate what the learner learns with what’s happening in the learner’s home country, and she has a fair chance to express it. Third, transformative learning happens when patriotic or relevant feelings occur surrounding the subject of the writing, such as being ashamed by a scandal happened in the learner’s home country.

**When Transformative Learning Doesn’t Happen**

Through the analysis of the themes the writer talked about her understanding of equity, foundation, community, engagement, but didn’t show signs of changes due to the fact that she didn’t have much chance to witness or practice these things.

Through the interview, it’s further confirmed that what she called a “shallow” understanding about these themes, never changed fundamentally through the analysis of the evolution of her understanding about these terms in the writing assignments.

To make it clear, this doesn’t necessarily meant that her original understanding was problematic or she has to show signs of changes in understanding these terms, it only means that she didn’t show fundamental viewpoint shifts or changes of meta schema in terms of transformative learning during the course learning period, and the lack of transformation was reflected in the assignments she turned in.

To begin with, her understanding of equity was influenced by her background information, particularly how she was educated and learned. She wrote that “*parents should get more involved in children’s learning* ” and “*parents should get more involved in school work and parental meetings.*” *But meanwhile she also said that “some parents . . . struggle to bring dinner to their table.”* Through these conflicting descriptions she provided, it’s safe to conclude that her understanding about parental involvement and parents’ leadership is heavily influenced by her family background and the way she was educated back in South Korea.
Transformative learning is emerging, but is not completed yet. Thus templated writing presents a good chance for a course instructor to get to know what a student believes in, and how to help her to move forward from what she has previously learned.

To start with, the writer presents a very conflicted thought pattern towards South Korea’s education. She was proud of the world-leading position of her home country’s education system, yet aware of the problems that existed. In this sense, transformative learning is emerging, because she can think outside of the box, admit her country’s achievement in education, and point out the things she feels can be improved. So in this sense, it’s the emerging bud of transformative learning, because it provides the writer a start, or a lead for her to think further about how to improve.

Meanwhile, the writer admitted there were problems in her home country, particularly in terms of shadow schools, test-based curriculum, and teachers’ reputations. For each problem, she mentioned briefly the current situation, the reasons behind it, the harm it did to the schooling system, and possible solutions.

As for the explanation of shadow schools in South Korea, the writer spent the most effort elaborating on why it was so popular. She said it was mainly due to the test-based curriculum and also because parents put too much emphasis on education.

She talked about the problem of inequality caused by shadow education. It’s very rare and valuable for her to realize the problem and analyze it from the perspective of inequality. Educational equality is not a commonly-discussed topic in South Korea because students and schools are hierarchically ranked from the first day of school. Students were regularly tested and ranked, and the rankings were posted so that everyone was clear on their positions in the class, in the school, and even in the district.

She didn’t mention how to solve this problem. But still having the emerging sense of equality and the courage to say that was not right is already transformative enough. Therefore, transformative learning happens when it comes to the analysis of shadow education, because the writer shows fundamentally shifted understanding of this common phenomenon and attempted in her writing to solve it.
Chapter 6
Cross-case Analysis, Findings, Discussions and Future Projections

This chapter is composed of four parts. The first part presents a cross-case analysis of the findings from the three participants. The purpose is to explore similar patterns and different features across the three participants in order to better understand the role of writing in Asian international undergraduate education students’ learning experience. The chapter also examines how each genre of writing differently affected participants’ transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1997; Mezirow & Associates, 2013) and identity construction (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). The cross-case analysis builds on the brief synthesis of emerging themes of each participant provided in Chapter Five. The ultimate purpose of the cross-case analysis is to develop patterns of pathways to transformative learning and identity construction in order to better understand international undergraduate education students’ writing experience.

The second part of the chapter presents the findings of the three research questions, and it is arranged in a way to answer the three research questions as they were originally presented. The three research questions are as follows:

- Question 1: What’s the role of writing in international education students’ learning experience while pursuing educational undergraduate degrees in the USA?

- Questions 2: What, if any, changes do these preservice teachers experience due to the practice of writing?

- Questions 3: How, if at all, are journals and the writing of narratives particularly important in the changes described in the second question?

A brief summary of answers to the three research questions is presented here in order to help my readers grasp the major conclusions of my study and to save my readers some time before diving
into the lengthy details of the discussion section. As for the answer to the first research question, a quick conclusion is that writing facilitates participants’ transformative learning mainly through critical reflections on their international experience (Liu, 2015; Mezirow, 1990), the strategic integration of newly learnt knowledge, and the writing about imagined future teaching. Specific explanations and evidence are organized around the core concepts of critical reflection, strategies of reinterpretation of the international learning experience and of the integration of newly learnt knowledge, and the imagination of changed courses of actions. These key elements are presented in the section “Research question one” under the title of “Findings of the study.” The answers to the second research question varied slightly for each participant. For Kim and Ruan, the major change they went through was their identity evolution (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010) as they learnt to embrace the identity of an ESL (for Kim) or an ELL (for Ruan), critically reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of this identity, and construct new identities as competent future teachers who grew through their shared experience with their future ELL toddler learners. Lee, the third participant, didn’t display signs of such changes. Her changes were mainly reflected by the formation of new writing and thinking habits, which are together known as the habit of mind from the perspective of transformative learning theory (Liu, 2015; Mezirow & Associates, 2013), and her critical thinking ability, through excessive practice of evidence-based writings and constant compare-and-contrasts of opinions on educational policies. As for the answer to research question three, it is similar to the answer to research question two in that both journals and narratives facilitated participants’ transformative learning, but specific pathways to the transformation were different. The differences mainly lay in the following four aspects: how the participants reflected, what the participants reflected on, why they reflected, and what was transformed at the end of the writing. Specific discussions are presented in the “Research question three” section under the title of “Findings of the study.”

The third part of this chapter presents discussions from the perspective of transformative learning theory. Key concepts such as previous significant learning, imagined teaching, and critical writer identity are discussed. It also discusses the necessity of integrating the role of strong emotions into the picture of transformative learning and portrays a possible pathway from strong emotions to changed behaviors. This part also explores the implications and limitations of the current research.

The fourth part of this chapter presents a future projection in order to explore the role of writing
in international student teachers’ learning experience. The project was based on a program designed for the National Social Science Fund Application in China. I present this part in an application-oriented way so that I can take advantage of this rare opportunity of having four experts at the same time and modify my project design so that I can make a successful application in the near future.

Cross-Case Analysis

The previous chapter explored the different effects of the writing of journals, narratives, field observations, templated essays, and reflections on three Asian international education students’ learning experiences. In general, each genre worked differently in terms of facilitating participants’ transformative learning experience and identity construction. To explore the role of different types of writing on the three Asian international students’ learning experiences, I present the cross-case analysis in the order of journals, narratives, field observations, and templated essays. My synthesis is based on the different genres and therefore proceeds as follows: journal writing for Kim and Ruan, narrative writing for Kim and Ruan, field observations for Kim and Ruan, and finally the templated essay for Lee. The reason that Leewas not included in the first three genres was that she only shared with me her templated essays for finals.

Journal writing for Kim: Learning through perspective elaboration and making connections with home country experience

This theme stemmed from the analysis of the nodes and emerging themes of Kim’s journal writing. A basic template she followed in her journal writing was that she first picked out a viewpoint from the authors of the weekly readings, then commented on whether she agreed or disagreed with the viewpoint, then elaborated on her perspective on the viewpoint, after that presented an example, and finally made connections with her previous educational experience in her home country. Such a technique is best exemplified by an excerpt from one of her weekly reflection journals, presented in illicit forms as follows:

“Ayers (2010) argues that teaching should be an interactive practice . . . I also believe that interactive practice is the most important value in education. ... From my previous experience as a teaching assistance in Korea, I saw that children need creative elements of the production and the curricula priorities as an independent person.” (Kim, Week 6 Reflection)
As shown in the above quote, the basic scheme Kim used was that she first picked out a viewpoint for the readings, which was “interactive practice” in this case, then stated her belief on this by stating that “I also believe . . . ” and “I saw that . . .”. This is the technique of perspective elaboration, which also contributes to learning (Mezirow, 1991, 1994). She also made a connection with her previous experience in her home country to support her claim, but the connection was a very simple one-sentence summary of her previous experience. As such, it looked like Kim was making very shallow connections with her previous experience because she simply fit her experience into the points she just made and stopped there. There was no further reflection on why she believed that or how such a belief could influence her future actions. Because of the shallow connection, it was necessary to understand why she stopped there and didn’t reflect further. Part of the interview helps expand our understanding. A transcription of this short conversation is presented here:

- Me: (pointing at the journal) “Do you still remember why you wrote this journal?”

- Kim: (Looked at the journal and thought for a while) “Ugh . . . it’s a weekly reflection. She (the course instructor) asked us to keep a journal. So I wrote about my thoughts. My thoughts on the readings . . . Ugh readings we discussed in class.”

- Me: (Pointing at a sentence in the writing) “What do you mean by this sentence?”

- Kim: (Looking at the sentence, murmured it, and thought for a while) “… ugh . . . what did I mean . . . I mean that . . . (pause) . . . I don’t know, I don’t remember.”

- Me: “Why?”

- Kim: “I don’t know. It’s a while ago. I forgot what I want to say.”

(Interview #1, Mar. 12, 2017)

Kim’s explanation in the interview provided an important clue for me to understand why her journal writing stopped at making comparisons without offering critical reflection on the experience and its influence on her understanding of the current reading material. Journal writing, as she explained, was to record her thoughts and was written for her instructor. Key elements of transformative learning, such as awareness of existing perspectives and the effort to critically reflect on these existing perspectives, were missing in her writings. As the writing was for her instructor, she didn’t have the incentive
Figure 6-1  Four types of learning from the perspective of transformative learning theory

to conduct deep reflections. In order to better understand the role of journal writing in her learning experience, I expanded the frame of learning from transformative learning to types of learning in general, including types of learning that could possibly result in the transformation of one’s frames of reference. I adopted Mezirow’s four types of learning (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) and present them in the Figure 6-1.

The above figure was adopted from Mezirow’s revised perspectives on transformative learning, and it was adopted in this section to explain the stages of Kim’s learning. The term “frames of reference” refer to “the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (Mezirow, 1997). Frames of reference are usually culturally assimilated and heavily influenced by our primary caregivers.

In the third rhombus of the figure, habits of mind refer to “broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Mezirow, 1997). Habits of mind are the articulated form of points of views. The general process of transformative learning suggests, in Mezirow’s words (1991), that we transform our frames of reference “though critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based.”

In Kim’s case, when she elaborated on her agreement with a statement from the course reading, she was repeating what was already there in her existing frames of reference, and no new learning happened. Kim’s elaboration of existing frames of reference, such as agreeing with the point that education should be interactive and then connecting this point with her previous experience, was at a
very shallow level and lingered around the stage of frames of reference elaboration, although she did have opportunities to experience the transformation of her frames of reference if guided properly.

In a brief summary, what Kim’s journal writing displayed was mainly elaboration on existing frames of reference. She used previous experience to prove the adequacy of these frames of reference and thus didn’t show any signs of significant or irreversible changes in her frames of reference, habits of mind, or points of view.

Journal writing for Ruan: Dual identity construction and transformative learning

As explained in Chapter Five, Ruan’s journal writing reflected her identity evolution as an ELL and a future ESL teacher, as well as her transformative learning. The two are intertwined. In order to portray the process, I analyzed Ruan’s identity construction from the perspective of transformative learning and present the reasoning process and results in the following part.

First, identity is a very complex concept and can be approached from the perspective of transformative learning theory. The definition of identity has evolved a lot ever since it was first proposed by Erik and Erikson (1981). Originally, it was understood as “a combination of the personal experience of being the same in all the different situations of life and how we wish to present ourselves to others” (Erikson & Erikson, 1981). Such a definition captures the essence of identity: a combination of our experiences and the way we present ourselves to others, including the context we are in. This definition has been expanded a lot ever since its first publication, and new perspectives and different names have been introduced to better suit different contexts and meet different needs. A brief example is the term “teacher identity,” which is widely used in educational contexts to better understand teaching and learning. Some of the expansions are for a better understanding of identity theory itself, and some are for its application in various areas. Among the efforts to apply identity is a branch of research studying identity from the perspective of transformative learning theory. To meet such a purpose, identity is understood as complex, multidimensional, dynamic, recursive, socio-culturally constructed, and context-dependent. At the heart of this definition is the essence of identity: the “core identity,” which is sometimes referred to as the “self-identity.” The inclination to make changes in identity is largely influenced by our subjective experiences as how close the changes are to the core identity. If our desire to change a certain aspect of our identity is far beyond our core-self, then the chances of transformative
changes are very rare.

Secondly, the ten phases of transformative learning theory provide a blueprint for me to understand the role of journal writing in Ruan’s identity evolution.

Table 6-1 Major phases of identity evolution in Ruan’s transformative learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Identity disorienting dilemma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Critical reflection of identity assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Exploration of options for new identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>Imagined course of actions for the new identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>Reintegration the new identity into one’s life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ruan’s identity construction went through major five phases, as indicated in the above table. To begin with, she evolved from a worried ESL learner to a person who embraced her ESL identity. This is best exemplified by an excerpt from her writings, as shown in the following part:

“I am worried about that because myself is also a(n) English language learner, how could I do a good job on teaching other ELLs?” (Ruan, Memo #1)

She was worried about her identity as an ELL when taking a course and learning to be an ELL teacher. The origin of her worry was that English was not a native language for her. Thus, she faced a dilemma caused by her belief in herself as an ESL and her mistaken assumption that being an ELL was an obstacle to becoming an ESL teacher.

Secondly, she critically reflected on her mistaken assumptions through the course learning and writing her literacy autobiographies. The end result of this critical reflection was shown in her writing:

“After taking this course, I feel myself care more about ELLs because I am an ELL as well.”

(Ruan, Memo #1)

She was particularly grateful she had taken the course and completed the autobiographies.

“I could not stop questioning myself until I had my first and second class. It dawned on me that CI 280 is not only about teaching ELLs but also about learning the culture. I find it is interesting to know the relationship between language and culture, and I wish to learn more about that.”

(Ruan, Memo #1)
“Those are (taking the course and writing the autobiographies) very important for me, because they helped me to rethink myself as a learner and a reader.” (Interview #2, Mar. 15, 2017)

Thirdly, she constructed an ELL teacher identity for herself through writing about imagined future teaching. Journal writing provided a site for her to imagine a future action and to transform from an ELL to an ESL teacher who no longer viewed her non-native identity as an obstacle. Rather, she viewed such experience as “[enabling] me to better understand ELL kids” (Interview #2, Mar. 15, 2017). Such an evolution is best explained in the following script:

“The topic of language development inspires me a lot about my future practice. If being a preschool teacher, I will pay more attention on ELL kids when they are talking. If a child does not have 50 words by the age of 2, I will talk with his or her parents and may suggest bringing the kid to a pathologist.”

(Ruan, Memo #1)

Fourthly and fifthly, Ruan tried to make use of this identity to help ESL students in her imagined future teaching. The theme of being sympathetic to other ELLs and the determination to help them appeared in all of the writings she sent to me and was very explicit in one piece of writing titled “my future teaching,” in which she particularly mentioned how she would integrate her belief about the importance of teaching into her future classroom. As her writing of the integration was so explicit, I just present the evidence in the following part and let it speak for itself.

“If being a preschool teacher, I will pay more attention on ELL kids when they are talking. If a child does not have 50 words by the age of 2, I will talk with his or her parents and may suggest bringing the kid to a pathologist. The reason for this is that it is easy to catch up at age 2. However, after 2, the rate a child falls behind increases drastically while other kids have explosion on vocabularies.”

(Ruan, Future Classroom)

In sum, Ruan evolved into a confident ELL and a future ESL teacher through the writing of journals, as journal writing provided her a site to critically reflect on her assumptions about her ESL identity and to imagine herself as a competent ESL teacher in the future. Such a process started with her worry about her identity as an ESL and her doubt that she could be a good ESL teacher. The assumption underlying her worry was that ESL student teachers are disadvantaged and thus can’t teach
ESL learners. As she took the course and learnt how to teach ESL learners, she became confident in her ability to teach well and began to imagine how she would pay more attention to ESL learners in her future classroom. I use a diagram in the following paragraph to describe her identity development and process of transformative learning.

Narrative writing for Kim: A safe house to reveal her vulnerability as an ELL and form her unique writing and teaching characteristics

The rich information narrative stories provide and their implications for teaching and learning have been extensively researched (S. Canagarajah, 2021; Villegas et al., 2020). From the perspective of transformative learning, the writing of narratives holds the potential to stimulate critical reflection through the reinterpretation of previous experiences (mei Chan, 2012; Taeger, 2019), the re-placement of our stories in a new context at the time of the reinterpretation (Nada, Montgomery, & Araújo, 2018), and eventually the discovery of pathways to transformative learning (Blalock & Akehi, 2018). In other words, narratives enable their writers to reveal their past significant experience, critically analyze such experience, and eventually grow from it. However, there is little research discussing under what circumstance a student decides to open up, how he or she writes differently after opening up, and their specific pathways from the decision to open up to the experience of transformative learning.

In order to better explain Ruan’s experience associated with the above questions, I adopted Canagarajah’s (2004) ideology of safe houses pedagogy. A safe house was originally defined as “social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression” (A. S. Canagarajah, 2004). He then expanded that definition to both in-and-out of classroom sites and found a significant meaning of a safe house for non-native speakers, as they were able to critically reflect on their identities and construct new and more favorable identities for themselves through the pedagogy he created. Following his view, I treated Kim’s writing, particularly her narrative writing, as a safe house, and looked for how her learning had evolved.

The above figure is an attempt to explain how narrative writing functioned as a safe house and enabled Ruan to experience transformative learning. To begin with, the big ellipse in the figure is a safe house created by the writing of narratives. Writers are free from depression or rigid departmental judgement rules in such a safe house and become creative in expressing their meanings.
It was through the writing of previous learning stories that Kim gradually opened up and evolved. Her sense of writing as a safe house was co-constructed by her self-analysis as an ESL, her instructor’s permission to use various means, and the evaluation standard that focused on meaning rather than vocabulary or grammar. A short transcript of our conversation about her narratives is presented here to illustrate this.

- **Me:** (pointing at one of her narratives) “Why did you use drawings here?”

- **Kim:** “She, the teacher wanted us to do, to describe the thing, but you know that, I wasn’t that great to give details and examples. I just wanted to draw. They got the simple knowledge and the idea. That was the best I could do at the time.”

- **Me:** “Where did you see the role of drawings while you did this assignment?”

- **Kim:** “And then, when teachers leave us some options, like ‘if you guys can draw, you can do this’, like that. When they gave that option, I used it immediately because I prefer that way, and then, like, that way is much easier for me. So that I used to, like, to draw.”

- **Me:** “Where do you see the role of drawing in your future teaching?”

- **Kim:** “My future teaching? … I saw teachers use pictures to teach kids their name in my placement program. That’s what I also want to use when I am a teacher.”
The above transcript explains Kim’s analysis of herself as an ESL learner. She knew that she wasn’t good at giving details and examples. She also had difficulties in choosing words accurately and sometimes even used direct Google translation (from Korean to English) while writing in English as discussed in Chapter Five.

“The education system in Korea is like a factory. . . . My experiences from Korea made me constantly compare myself to others and I was never satisfied with the way I was performing in class. . . . I had doubts that my efforts were not enough and that my limited English would hinder me from getting the GPA I desired.”

(Kim, writing workshop)

In sum, the analysis of Ruan’s writing proved that Ruan decide to open up based on her course instructor’s invitation to do so and because she had the opportunity to combine her act of revelation with reflections on her placement program at a local kindergarten. In order to better portrait the process, I adopted Canagarajah’s (A. S. Canagarajah, 2004) ideology of a safe house to explain Ruan’s transformative learning experience, particularly how she decided to reveal her vulnerability as an ELL, what aspects she critically analyzed while reflecting on her ELL experience, how she found a way to integrate this vulnerable experience into her changed beliefs, and eventually how she formed a unique writing and teaching style in this safe house.

**Narrative writing for Ruan: Transformative learning through evidence-based critical reflections, imagination, and strong emotion-infused plans of action**

My investigation of role of narrative writing, including the writing about Ruan’s field observations, was conducted through a combination of the traditional narratives she made as well as the field observations she conducted.

As shown in the Figure 6-3, Ruan’s transformative learning experience started from the identification or observation of a problem in her course readings. For example, she wrote about the problem she observed in a little boy’s writing development, identified the problem by referring back to the theory of writing development, and then wrote about how she would help this student in her future classroom. At the end, Ruan even referred back to evidence from course readings to prove the adequacy of the imagined solution.
I hold the belief that transformative learning can happen through the mask of an imagined solution or imagined teaching, as long as they are imagined as changed courses of actions to solve a problem or improve a situation. Such an opinion was formulated through a thorough examination of the process of transformative learning. To refresh my readers on transformative learning, I present its definition here as “the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action.”

The second line in Figure 6-2 represents another pattern of transformative learning: love-infusing strong emotions. Ruan was motivated by the innocent love children expressed toward her, deeply moved by the love, and was determined to try her best to be a good ESL teacher for future young students. One example of this is taken from her field observation:

“Suddenly, I got tears in my eyes. It was the sweetest thing I have ever heard and it made my day.”
(Ruan, my learning and experience)

“As an English Language learner (ELL), I found myself care a lot about ELL kids with their language development at preschool.”
(Ruan, field classroom)

“I want to try my best . . . because I really love working with children.” (Interview #2, 12’35’’)

Theorists such as Cranton (2016) and Dirkx (2012) see transformative learning as a process of surfacing unconscious knowledge. Working with the symbols and images that arise from the unconscious
can often have transformative outcomes. Various artistic processes including photography, visual arts, creative writing, theater, music, dance, and fictional analysis are explored as pathways for individual and collective transformation. Applications of theory and practice are discussed.

**Templated essay writing for Lee: Transformation through templated writings**

Lee’s writings were mostly end-of-semester course essays. Most of them fell into the category of real-world problem analysis or critical reviews of current policy issues in education. Specific procedures are portrayed in the following figure. The portrayal is around the three major themes, identification of a case/problem, critical evaluation of the case/problem, and solutions/suggestions to the case/problem, all of which emerged in Lee’s case report in Chapter Five. What is added are the strategies Lee applied in the critical thinking process. Specifics are presented in the following diagram.

The above figure explains the major phases Lee went through while doing case/problem analysis.
To begin with, she needed to identify a case or a problem that she wanted to address before writing. This step was simple, and she simply explained that “it has to be an issue” to describe how she finally decided to select the shadow education system in South Korea (Interview #3, May 3, 2017). It had been a frequent tool to stimulate critical reflections on one’s previous habits of mind through the action of polemizing longstanding assumptions or taken-for-granted phenomena (Locklin, 2010; Taylor & Laros, 2014). In Lee’s case, she believed shadow education was both good and bad, as described in the interview:

*I feel it’s both good and bad. It’s good because it’s better for them (students) to learn something at their free time, particularly for English learning, I was an English teacher, it was better for them to learn English when they were younger than they were elder, because it’s easier to learn language at an early age. So it’s good for them in the long term, but they are so stressed. It’s bad because, . . . I used to be an English instructor, and I saw students, they, falling in sleep during lessons. They are so stressed, and they cried, and they go against teachers. I feel bad, and I don’t want to teach when they were acting this this. They won’t learn."* (Interview #3, May 3, 2017)

Lee didn’t have the chance to evaluate the phenomenon in written form until decided to select this issue for her final paper. The decision of problematizing shadow education compelled her to search for shadow-education-related information online. Lee turned to Google and Naver, the Korean version of Google, and read what was said about it in both Korean and English. She described the process as follows:

“I first read multiple articles regarding that issue (shadow education), and some other opposing opinion articles on that, and make my points more clear. And then I developed my thoughts regarding that issue. . . . I searched them on google, so I found some English articles, that’s the view of American perspective. And then I searched on Naver, which is a Korean site for Google, so I see a lot of more articles that are not biased in biased. So I read both, outline my thoughts.” (Interview #3, May 3, 2017)

Lee’s interview transcript shows that she used the technique of comparing and contrasting different perspectives and evidence in order to formulate her own perspective on and outline of the issue.

In the above-mentioned process, Lee’s previous experience with shadow education played a very important role in the formulation of her current perspective. She talked about her early experience with shadow education and her gratefulness for such an experience, as quoted in the following sentence:
“For me, it (shadow education) was a great advantage because my mom strongly believed in better education, as she didn’t get enough education, so she put me into, like, six to seven shadow educations per week. And major ones were English. ... It is very important for me because all those little things like pronunciation, other little small wording words, vocabulary and stuff, kind of develop fast during the younger age, younger stages of life. And that, my mom’s effort to put me into that education helped me a lot in the language sense, but not in the content sense, because I forgot everything I learnt from the institutions and tutors.” (Interview #3, May 3, 2017)

Based on Lee’s description of her previous experience with shadow schools, it was obvious that she had complicated feelings toward this issue because she benefited a lot from it as a student but also witnessed as a teacher how it stressed out students and hindered their learning. She integrated her experience with online journal articles and formulated a new and broadened perspective, which is presented in the following part:

“The competition between children is ... a matter of how much supplementary education outside of school they receive and how much money their parents have. Cram schools help students boost their grades and academic performances, but they give students much pressure and much workload that could cause an increase in their stress levels. Shadow education creates educational disparity between high performing and low performing students in South Korea because in the countries like the United States, Cyprus, Israel, Belgium, and Denmark, shadow education is used for remedial purposes by those who have lower levels of academic achievement and are willing to catch up with supplementary education.” (Lee, Education in South Korea)

What is more, she cited different sources to support her claim. The technique of “definition-elaboration-citation” in writing is discussed in Figure 6-3 and thus is omitted here. However, the method of comparing and contrasting, particularly synthesizing different sources of information and incorporating the useful ones into one’s writing, has proven useful in developing undergraduate students’ critical thinking ability (Bezanilla et al., 2019). Lee used this technique to increase her ability to critically considering the problem “in a larger view,” in her own words (Interview #3, May 3, 2017). To be specific, Lee took in multiple perspectives of the problems in shadow education and extended her original dichotomous belief of good or bad to much larger perspectives that included unfairness in parental economic status and increased educational disparity while comparing and contrasting different
perspectives.

After performing a critical analysis of these problems, she provided a general solution to change the current situation and wrote that “shadow education should play a role in children’s learning, but not that much. Policy makers in South Korea should resolve the issues by creating laws and regulations in favor of students to have better educational environment” (Lee, Education in South Korea). The solution Lee provided at the end of her writing was a very broad principle that was very different from Kim’s and Ruan’s solutions of specific imagined teaching behaviors or future classroom settings.

While acknowledging the problems caused by shadow education, she was generally in favor of the system and admitted that she would send her child to shadow schools if she went back to South Korea for work.

To conclude, Lee first problematized a longstanding issue in the Korean education system, then searched online in both English and Korean to extend her perspective. Next she selected relevant information and integrated the information into her perspective, and after that she outlined her writing and listed relevant evidence and citations. Finally, she presented her commentary writing on shadow education and provided simple solutions to make modifications to the system. After such an exploration, she used the techniques of reflection, inference, and synthesis, all of which enabled her to reach a reasonable conclusion to solve the problems caused by shadow education. As a result, she held a much broader perspective of shadow education and investigated its impact on larger levels from teachers and students to educational equity and fairness. Eventually, she realized that a reform of shadow education was needed. Such a fundamental change had to start with systematic efforts, and the end results would benefit students, teachers, parents, schools and society in general if the reform were conducted appropriately.

**Summary of the Cross-case Analysis**

I approached the summary through a quick analysis of the similarities and differences among the transformative learning experiences of the three participants. To begin with, all three participants went through certain aspects of critical reflection, which proves the claim that critical reflection is one of the most important elements in transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, 2009). Within the process of critical reflection, participants’ international experience was the topic most frequently reflected upon,
and all participants went through the process of reinterpreting their home country learning experiences. I adopted Canagarajah’s (2020) four negotiation strategies in transnational literacy to explain how the three participants in the current study re-interpreted their home country learning experiences. The four strategies are envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization, and interactional. I also used these four strategies to explain how the participants integrated newly learnt knowledge into their existing knowledge structure. The third shared feature was that all three participants wrote about their imagined changed courses of action, and therefore imagination functioned as a pathway to and an assessment tool of transformative learning.

Despite these common features they displayed in transformation through writing, the three participants also displayed different paths to transformative learning. For Kim, her learning didn’t evolve to any form of transformation unless the purpose of her writing went beyond the goal of demonstrating to her course instructor that she had done the readings. For Ruan, transformative learning happened mainly through a vision of future teaching in which she was able to put what she had learnt and believed into practice. As for Lee, she acquired the habit of evidence-based thinking ability mainly through templated writing exercises, in which she learnt to deliberately cite what others said in order to prove the objectivity of her claims in the writing. The specifics of these discussions are presented in the following part, where I first summarize the similarities and then move to a description of the differences.

Similarities in individual transformation

As discussed in the above paragraphs, all three participants went through transformative learning due to the practice of writing. The commonality in this process was that they all conducted critical reflection in the writings that displayed signs of transformative learning, their international experience was an important component of the critical reflection, and they all went through the strategic fabrication of new knowledge into their existing knowledge structures.

To begin with, the three participants all went through critical reflection while being transformed by the writings they produced. But before I jump to the details of their critical reflection, I want to remind my readers that critical reflection is defined as a process of “challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning” (Mezirow, 1990). To be specific, it is “a process in which we attempt to justify our beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions, often in response to intuitively becoming aware that
something is wrong with the result of our thought, or challenging its validity through discourse with others of differing viewpoints and arriving at the best-informed judgment” (Mezirow, 1990, 1998; Taylor, 2007). By following this definition, I was able to answer the question of how critical reflection happened to the three participants. The focus was on the process of critical reflection, and it enabled me to peer into the cognitive aspects of participants’ thinking in which they became aware of their previously held beliefs, critiquing the adequateness of those beliefs and transforming them into more capable ones that were truer to the new context.

Mezirow’s (1998) framework helped me as a researcher to understand the three participants’ thought processes, but other aspects of critical reflection, such as the content and ultimate purpose, remained unexplained. In order to depict the process in a more comprehensive way, I expand Mezirow’s (1998) original diagram and integrate two more aspects into the picture of critical reflection: the purpose and content. By the content of critical reflection, I mean the “assumptions of oneself, schools, and the society about teaching and learning, and the social and political implications of schooling in teaching and learning” (Lundgren & Poell, 2016). Such a definition allows me to examine what my participants chose to reflect upon and thus shed light on the type of assignments a course instructor could offer to facilitate critical reflection. As for the definition of purpose of reflection, I mainly drew conclusions from the three participants’ writings about their future actions in teaching and learning and synthesized them as my understanding of the ultimate purpose of critical reflection for my participants. As such, the ultimate purpose of critical reflection in this research is understood as to enhance a changed course of actions that could facilitate teaching and learning and could help build a more just society for all learners and educators. After drawing a conclusion about the ultimate purpose of transformative learning for my participants, I then turned to compare the conclusion with the existing literature to discuss what forms actually transformed when we talked about transformative learning.

Figure 6-5 is a brief summary of the three aspects of critical reflection discussed in previous paragraphs. For a brief recap, my discussion on participants’ critical reflection mainly focuses on three aspects: the content, the process, and the ultimate purpose. The first aspect is the content of critical reflection, and it mainly guided my exploration into the assumptions participants held about teaching, learning, and the implication of sociopolitical issues on teaching and learning (Lundgren & Poell, 2016). An exploration of this aspect could help me as a course instructor, as well as other instructors, to gain a
better understanding of what topics have the potential to stimulate critical reflection. Exploration of this area also expanded the discussion on the role of critical incidences in transformative learning (Fleming, 2018). The second aspect is the process of critical reflection, which mainly involves cognitive activities such as challenging the validity of previously held assumptions. In the current study, participants went through a series of critical reflections on their previously held assumptions once they had chosen what content to reflect on, and then they went through a critical examination of these assumptions either by critical self-reflections or critical discourse with others who held different viewpoints. An exploration of this aspect, particularly the critical reflection through writing about different viewpoints rather than actual discourse with others, could move forward the debate of transformative learning by adding a new element to what counts as critical discourse (Fleming, 2018; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013).

The third aspect is concerned with the ultimate purpose of critical reflection, which is mainly enhancing changes to better teaching and learning or help build a more just society for all learners in the field of education. The exploration of the ultimate purpose of critical reflection could shed light on the conversation of what transformed at the end of transformative learning (Kegan, 2000) as well as the discussions on critical reflection as a assessment tools (Romano, 2018).
The three aspects of critical reflection had varied facets among the three participants. As for Kim, her purpose of critical reflection was best reflected in her own words in the journal:

“I want to be a teacher who can support students’ linguistic and cognitive risk-taking abilities and development of prediction...to support struggling readers for their reading and confidence in their own abilities ... to help ESL students.” (Kim, Reflection #1).

Kim’s ultimate purpose was to become a good teacher and improve the learning of young learners, particularly ESL students. Her stated purpose was in line with existing research on transformative learning that learners engage in transformation because of longing for a better self or a justier society (Kitchenham, 2008), and partly answered the question of what transformed at the end of transformative learning (Kegan, 2000). For a brief summarization of the ultimate purpose of transformative learning, the final products were to improve learning and teaching in the field of educational research.

As for the content of Kim’s reflection, she reflected on her belief about good ESL teaching, her experience as an ESL learner, and her understanding of the topics she had learnt from the courses she took. One example of her reflection on the newly learnt material is as follows:

“When I was little, I loved to play with miniature sets of monster characters. .... I realized that the cute had transformed into the cool like Cross analyzed.”

She wrote about her early experience of playing with monster characters and her realization of how her preference in toys could be explained through the newly learnt knowledge. Specifically, she reflected upon how her early years of experience playing with monstrous toys echoed the reading materials she was discussing in one of her writing assignments. The content of her reflection indicated that the necessity of making connections with the newly learnt knowledge was a prominent factor when it came to the participant’s choice of what to reflect upon. Such an indication is further proved by Kim’s answer during the interview when asked why she decided to cite her early childhood experience with toys to illustrate her agreement with Cross, the author of an article she cited. Part of her answer is transcribed as follows:

“I don’t know. I didn’t think much about it [the reason of why picking up a particular experience]. ...I guess it reminds me of my own experience. I liked to play dinosaurs and monster figures when I was little. So I feel I can connect with him (the author of the article). I used it [her experience playing with toys.” (Kim, Interview #1, Apr. 29, 2017)
The above transcript is a further proof that Kim’s decision on what to reflect upon was influenced by the relevance to the topic she was writing about rather than whether the experience was a critical incident or not. Such a finding breaks the limited definition of critical incidents as significant events in life such as marriage, divorce, illness and death (Mezirow, 2000, 2009), and brings into consideration of relevance to the topics at issue as an important component of critical incidents at the time of writing. Such a finding also echoes with critics of significant events in transformative learning (Sharoff, 2008), and indicates that the significance of an incident mainly lays in its relevance to the topic at issue.

Ruan, the second participant, went through a similar process but added different aspects to existing literature. Ruan’s experience mainly focused on the writing about imagined future teaching, but her analysis took a different path. Her experience was an illustration that the ultimate purpose of critical reflection could be exemplified in the specifics of actual teaching in her imagination. Everywhere she observed could be improved through her imagination. In her imagined site, the problems she observed worked as a trigger for critical reflection, and then she specifically focused on writing about how she would make changes in her future classroom. The ultimate purpose of her reflection was the same as Kim’s: to become a good ESL teacher, which she actually was doing in Canada. The content of her reflection mainly focused on her field experience with young learners in a local kindergarten. She mainly reflected upon what she observed in the field, what she learnt from the classroom, and how she would like to change the observed to make her teaching much better. What was special about her content was that she mainly focused on what she observed from the field, how the teachers in that kindergarten dealt with the situation, and what the implications were for her future classroom. Critical incidence, in this case, fell into the category of observed problems in the situation, expert experience of dealing with it, and the imagined application of such experience in her future classroom.

As for Lee, her ultimate purpose was to build a better and more just society for all learners and teachers. She wrote about how teachers were better paid in her home country in South Korea and how educational legislation should be used to improve teachers’ socioeconomic status in North America. She also wrote about how she thought that educational policies should be applied to regulate shadow schools so that they could help students’ learning but not cause inequality because of parental economic status, particularly how much they could afford for private tutors and extracurricular learning. The content of her reflection mainly focused on the discussion of cases presented by her course instructors,
her reference back to her experiences as a learner and later an English instructor in a private institution. What was special about her content was that the triggers were mostly the cases presented by her current course instructors. As for the process of critical reflection, she began to analyze a case and then learnt to make connections with what was learnt in the materials, and finally to give a solution as to how she hoped educational policy would be put in place to solve the problem she observed. Her critical reflection was mainly triggered by the specific cases assigned to her.

The above was a detailed analysis of the critical reflection all three participants went through. It elicits the first similarities among the three during the course of transformative learning. The second significant feature in all of their transformations is the usage of previous international experience in the current learning experience.

The second similarity shared by all three participants was that their home-country learning experiences comprised a very important part of their critical reflection and that they all adopted similar strategies to critically re-interpret those experiences. Before diving into the details, I want to introduce the four strategies adopted from Canagarajah’s (2020) book, which are envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization, and interactional. They originally stemmed from Canagarajah’s (2013) observations of his English writing research course, where the majority of students were multilingual speakers. I borrow these terms because they are especially useful to interpret how my participants, all of whom were multilingual speakers, made use of their previous learning experiences in the process of making connections with the newly learnt knowledge. Such an exploration was also useful to course instructors when they aimed to promote students’ real learning. However, I made some slight modifications to his original definitions in order to better depict my participants’ transformative learning experience. To begin with, envoicing originally refers to “identities represented by the text or writers” (A. S. Canagarajah, 2020, p.127). I extend it to include standing points the writer held while writing about her previous learning experience. Thus, the term envoicing in the current research indicates both the identities and the standing points the writer takes while composing the writings. For example, when Lee, the third participant, wrote about her experience of attending shadow schools, she not only constructed her identity as a participant of the shadow school system, but she also took a neutral standing point to recognize how the shadow school helped make her who she was today, as well as to comment on the potential harms of too much shadow school. In this way, the strategy of envoicing not only permitted
her to construct her identity as an insider and a participant but also indicated her neutral standing point toward shadow schools in her home country.

In a similar way, the term “recontextualization” originally refers to “the changes in meanings and values of texts in successive new contexts they are placed or read” (A. S. Canagarajah, 2020, p.128). What was special in the writings I collected was that their target audience was mainly course instructors, and the purpose of writing was to prove the writers’ comprehension of certain knowledge to these instructors. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned facts, I narrowed down the term recontextualization and understood it as “the changes in meanings and values” participants placed of the previous learning experience at the time of writing in the new contexts. Such a definition also indicated that recontextualization was an important strategy participants employed to help envoicing textual recourses in the current research. Take Kim’s narratives as an example. She cited and quoted words from her weekly readings, made connections with her previous learning experiences, and thus attached new meanings to both her citations and her previous learning experiences. Recontextualization is a description of what the participants have done to bring changes to the meaning and values to the learnt knowledge and their previous learning experiences, yet it’s unclear how participants drew on different resources to achieve to recontextualization.

The term “entextualization” is an effort to explain the specific process. Once again, the term entextualization was defined as “a process by which diverse resources get woven into a text” (A. S. Canagarajah, 2020, p.129), and it took part in the form of integrating multiple resources into the text that were produced. Linguistics usually approaches this through the semiotic resource writers choose to use in order to express certain meanings. Take the third participant’s templated writing as an example. A linguistic perspective would look at how she configured the arrangements of different sections and the sequences of text unfolding. But the focus of my current research isn’t on the semiotic usages. These strategies were superficial changes that participants have experienced, but deep down there were shifted beliefs in the significance of these resources and their new meanings in the new contexts. Therefore, the focus of my analysis of entextualization was on the significance of these resources in entextualizing meanings. Take Lee’s templated writing as an example again. I mainly explored how significant her previous learning experience in South Korea was in terms of facilitating her understanding of current educational and political issues she observed in real life and how that significance was reflected in the
Finally, interactional refers to “the strategies that readers and writers adopt to negotiate meanings with each other via the text” (p132). Traditionally, the meaning of a written product is negotiated by both the readers and writers, and the two work in a reciprocal way in the ideal situation. But I excluded readers from my current analysis because of the focus of my study and the significance of writer initiatives in the existence of transformative learning. The focus of the current research is on the transformative learning experiences and the writers who have experienced them. It was writers’ decisions on about what and how to reflect that decided whether they opted into the chance of transformation or not. Although readers played an important role in writers’ decision-making processes, particularly in terms of what to write and how to reflect, the final calls were still made by the writers. This was particularly true in the previous analysis of the role of field observations for Kim and Ruan, both of whom were from the same focus area, shared similar writing assignments, and even took several core courses with the same instructors at different times. Despite these similarities, field observations worked differently for the two participants. It was the major component of Ruan’s transformative learning process but didn’t stimulate any type of transformation in Kim because Kim stopped at making connections with what was observed and what was learnt. The strategies Kim adopted to convey meaning were simple: she elaborated what she observed, made a connection with what was learnt from her course readings, clicked the submit button, and believed she had completed her (the course instructor’s) task. Given the abovementioned two reasons, I decided to narrow down the term interactional to the extent that only writers’ strategies of meaning negotiation were explored. Readers’ reciprocal strategies were neglected as they are not the focus of my research and their role was overshadowed by writer initiatives.

The relationship between the four strategies participants adopted to re-interpret their home-country learning experiences is shown in the above figure. These negotiating strategies are non-linear, related, and interactional. They can happen in any order, at any place in the text, and they work interactionally with each other. Although they are labelled separately and explained in the order of envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization and interactional, I don’t mean to imply that they are in any sense separated or that they happen in the abovementioned order. They are presented in this way to help my readers’ understanding and my analysis of how each participant made use of the four strategies to re-interpret their previous learning experience.
As for strategies for the integration of newly learnt knowledge, each participant adopted the very basic model of “citation of course readings-elaboration of personal understanding-making connections with previous experience,” as explained in Chapter Four. But they each used different strategies when looking closely at the general pattern. They used all four strategies of envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization, and interactional in their writings in general. In addition, Ruan and Lee experienced transformative learning as they took a step forward to imagine how things would unfold differently in their future classroom or future school.

In general, the strategies of envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization and interactional are employed to explain how each participant reinterpreted their home country learning experience and integrated newly learnt knowledge into their existing knowledge structure. They can happen in any order in a non-linear way.

The third commonly shared feature among the three participants is that they all used framed imagination to visualize how their future teaching would look like and how they would change their course of actions in order to improve student learning. I coin the term framed imagination and use it in a metaphorically way in order to point out the fact that participants consciously limited their imagination within the frame of teaching and learning, and that they deliberately perceived their future teaching from perspectives that they mentioned in their writings. I also use this term to distinguish it from other
commonly used term imagination in previous transformative studies because my participants weren’t just given the space to imagine freely about their future teaching or write freely about their fantasies and imaginations. The reason that I had to point out the uniqueness of the framed imagination was that it had several features that facilitated participants’ transformative learning. First of all, framed imagination provides writers virtual sites of practices to put the newly learnt knowledge into practice. As international students, they generally lack direct contact experience with K-12 education in the US, and have very limited access to put practice of newly learnt knowledge into practice. In face of such challenges, framed imagination can function as an ideal way for them to make up these shortages, extents what they learnt in class to a virtual site of practice where framed imagine provides them the tools to put practice of what is learnt in the foreign context.

Differences in individual transformation

The differences among the three participants mainly lie in two aspects: they were transformed by different genres, and their transformation took different forms. The following is a specific explanation of Kim’s, Ruan’s and Lee’s cases, respectively.

For Kim, narratives, particularly autobiographic writings, functioned as a safe house for her to reveal her vulnerability, embrace her ESL identity, grow confidence with herself, and develop strong sympathy to other ESL learners. As discussed in Chapter Five, narratives mainly worked to develop Kim’s ESL teacher identity, and transformed her perception about herself as a future ESL teacher. Journal writing and other genres didn’t work for her, as she didn’t open up in the writing process or wrote for her instructor. Her transformation was mainly reflected in her belief evolvement such as language teaching and a qualities of a good language teacher. Such changes were further token into action in her imagined future classroom, where she could exercise her belief in good language teaching and conduct teaching confidently.

For Ruan, transformative learning happened in both narrative and journal writing. For the writing of journals, she found a space to critique, mainly through comparison and contrast with her home country learning experiences and newly learnt knowledge. Based on such comparisons and contrasts, she went a step forward to re-interpret these experiences through the technique of envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization and interactional. Her interactional strategies were mainly reflected
in the form of inner-reasoning, through which she elaborated her reasons of the imagined approaches of teaching and illustrated its theoretically basis. In a similar way, narratives worked for her to imagine how her future teaching would like, but it worked in a saliently different way because Ruan wrote extensively about what she observed in her field experiences, the stories of working with young kids in an on-campus kindergarten, her deep love to these little ones and strong determination to grow into a good teacher for them. Strong emotions such as love to young kids and determination to teach well for them facilitated her transformation in both real-life behaviors during the field observations as well as her imagined future teaching. At the end of the writing about filed observations, she became more actively involved in interacting with these young kids rather than sitting there and observing at the beginning of the observation, and she was more confident with herself as a competent future teacher, particularly working with young ESL leaners.

Lee’s transformation was mainly reflected in the templated-essays. The basic procedure was that she picked up a real-life issue, commented on it by making connections with the newly learnt knowledge, and finally gave some solutions to solve the issue. Specifically, Lee often wrote about educational political issues she observed in South Korea such as the shadow school systems and its influence in Korean education system. Take the issue of shadow education as an example, she went online to look up what the U.S. and the South Korean media said about shadow education, picked out points she agreed, and finally formed her own points. It was through the process of comparison and contrasts that Lee learnt to compare complex ideas, provide evidences, and form her own opinions, and finally cited widely to ensure the objectivity of her claims. It was also through this process that Lee displayed her awareness that knowledge and opinions were constructed contextually and that her opinions on a topic would shift in the future as she moved through different contexts. The shift from the conception of absolute knowledge to contextual knowledge was fundamental to her learning process. Lee’s experience demonstrates the importance of properly designed writing tasks in facilitating critical thinking and leading to transformative learning.

Findings of the Study

Both Kim, the first participant, and Ruan, the second participant, displayed signs of transformative learning in their journal writing and narratives where they reflected on their significant previous
learning experiences in their home countries. As for Kim, she wrote about how she was taught to choose words accurately in order to express meanings appropriately and how she learnt the technique of distinguishing the annotated (literary) and denotated (implied) meanings of a word. The follow-up interview proved that the acquisition of this technique helped her to cultivate the habit of checking words’ “deeper meaning” (Interview #1, Apr. 27, 2019) rather than simply translating them from Korean to English when she began to write. She also envisioned how she would extend the technique of identifying the deeper meaning of a word and apply it to her future ESL students’ instruction in her writing about imagined teaching.

In a similar way, Ruan, the second participant, reflected on how she learnt to read as a child and how this experience shaped her identity as a visual reader when growing up, and she imagined how she would integrate pictures into her future teaching. She also wrote about her experience of learning English, acknowledging the role of one’s cultural background, and stated in her field notes that she would teach students to respect each other’s cultures and learn each other’s languages in her own classroom.

However, it was very hard to find signs of critical reflection on previous significant learning experience from Lee, the third participant. There was a persistent writing template in the data she sent to me. As for the lack of signs of previous significant learning experience, she made connections in her reflective writing, but most of them were simple summarization or synthesis of what she had learnt from certain readings. She didn’t make connections between the readings and what she had observed, nor did she try to apply the reading to real-life situations when elaborating her thoughts on these readings. The majority of her reflections fell into the pattern of paraphrasing a certain point from the reading, expressing her agreement or disagreement with the point, and citing documentary examples that had nothing to do with her own life to support the claim. Specific situations related to each participant are analyzed in the following part following the order of my research questions.

**Answer to research question one: Critical reflection, identity construction, and the strategic integration of new knowledge**

The quick answer to research question one is that writing facilitated international students’ transformative learning experience mainly through the following three aspects: critical reflection on significant previous/international learning experiences, strategic new knowledge integration through templated essay writings, and identity construction through imagined teaching.
Writing for critical reflection on previous/international learning experiences

Critical reflection is one of the most essential steps for the occurrence of transformative learning. Yet very few studies specifically explain what counts as “critical” reflection, and why certain types of critical reflection can facilitate transformative learning while others cannot. The findings from Kim’s and Ruan’s case show that critical reflection can be understood as the types of reflection that focus on previous significant learning experiences, which must be relevant to the topics that are discussed at hand, and that gives space for the writers to imagine how their future teachings look like in an imagined classroom. In such a way, critical reflection permits writers to make connections between their previous learning experiences and the newly learnt knowledge. Such type of connections has the potential to help writers either re-interpretate their previous experiences from a new perspective, mostly perspectives newly learnt at the time of writing, or imagine how they will teach in the future through the new perspectives. During such a process, the strategies of envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization and interactional play an important role in facilitating transformative learning.

Writing as a safe house to construct new identities through imagined teaching and learning

The next major finding was that writing provided the writers imagined sites of practice where they could consciously make connections between what was learnt or discussed in class and what was observed in real life. During this process, interpretation played a very important role. How a participant interpreted the connection between the learnt and the observed/discussed might have impacted whether the learning had the potential to be transformative. Eventually, the observed and the interpreted were integrated into the writer’s imagination of how she would deal with similar situations in real life or in one’s future teaching.

One strong example is from Ruan, the second participant. Most of her writings were reflections about her field experience or on-site observation in a kindergarten. It was through the scrutiny of the conscious application of theory or knowledge learnt in class to practice or her reality that she got the chance to deepen her understanding of the learnt knowledge and to apply the newly acquired knowledge in the writing about her imagined future teaching. Furthermore, Ruan took a step forward, fibrated the internalized knowledge into the vision of her future classroom, and imagined how she would deal with similar situations differently in her future classroom. It was through the elaboration of knowledge and its
application to an imagined classroom that she re-constructed her identity as an ELL and an ESL teacher.

As for Ruan, writing mainly provided her a safe place to imagine how her future classroom would look, how she would teach, and why she would bring certain cultural elements into her future classroom. She also used writing as a site for making connections between what she observed in real life, what she learnt in class, and how she would apply that knowledge in the future.

Previous research on field note reflections mainly focuses on how the reflection took place and what was reflected upon. Very little research specifically focuses on how student teachers reflect on contexts where they were easily identified as “different” and where the majority of the interns were white females.

Writing could also work as a catalog for dual identity construction if arranged properly. It was mainly through various writing activities, particularly critical reflection on previous significant experiences and writing about changed actions in imagined future teaching, that all three participants gradually assumed the role of competent future educators.

**Writing for strategic knowledge integration**

The current study was approached with the assumption that the act of writing itself serves as an instrument to learn content knowledge (S. Canagarajah, 2011b; Manchón, 2011). At the center of this perspective are two fundamental assumptions for course assignment writing: firstly, learners eventually use writing as a tool to exhibit mastery of content knowledge, and secondly, they use the resources that writing provides to maximize their writing. The two were intertwined and inseparable. During such a process, all participants used four strategies to integrate newly learnt knowledge into their existing knowledge structures. As explained in the cross-case analysis part, these four strategies are envoicing, recontextualization, entextualization and interactional (A. S. Canagarajah, 2020). Take Kim, the first participant, as an example. Her writing served as an important tool to “clear my thoughts” (Interview #1, April 29, 2017) while dealing with the weekly course materials, particularly the reading of compulsory articles before class. She picked out certain topics from the readings, particularly the reading of compulsory articles before class. She picked out certain topics from the readings, evaluated how these topics resonated with her previous learning experiences, elaborated her understanding about those topics, made connections between the topics at issue with her real-life experience, and finally integrated these topics or perspectives into her existing knowledge structures. Such writings also created a safe house for
her to think independently and express her true thoughts with the notion that the teacher would value the depth of her thoughts and the effort she put in the writing over the grammatical correctness.

A question that arises for teacher educators is that how to evaluate or assess the “effort” students put in and how to make students believe that they care about the effort and originality of ideas over grammar. The other question that arises is how to balance the two (efforts and originality of ideas versus grammar). Despite the important role of writing, it’s quite rare for students to view writing as a tool for learning without teachers’ help. It’s even rarer for students to actively engage in transferring what they learnt through writing to what they will do in teaching.

**Answer to research question two**

The second research question explored what, if any, changes the three participants had experienced due to the act of writing. The answers to the second research question varied slightly for each participant. For Kim and Ruan, the major change they went through was their identity evolution (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010) as they learnt to embrace the identity of an ESL (for Kim) or an ELL (for Ruan), critically reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of this identity, and construct new identities as competent future teachers who grew through their shared experience with their future ELL toddler learners. Lee, the third participant, didn’t display signs of such changes. Her changes were mainly reflected by the formation of new writing and thinking habits, which are together known as the habit of mind from the perspective of transformative learning theory (Liu, 2015; Mezirow & Associates, 2013), and her critical thinking ability, through excessive practice of evidence-based writings and constant compare-and-contrasts of opinions on educational policies.

As for the identity changes the three participants had experienced, they could be explained through the perspective of writer identity. Specifically, I adopted the framework of writer identity and explored changes through four perspectives: autobiographical identity, authorial self, discoursal self, and possibilities for selfhood (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Ivanic, 1994).

In terms of writer identity changes, the participants experienced belief changes concerning the interpretation and repositioning of their previous language learning experience (the autobiographical self). They also displayed dilemmatic changes in self-perception about themselves as writers (the authorial self). On the one hand, they expressed appreciation for the instructors who had focused on the
meaning of their writings rather than grammatical issues because focusing on meaning gave writers the spaces to focus on the authenticity and authorship of the ideas and voices. They claimed authenticity and authorship through deliberate guidance of focusing on the meanings rather than grammatical issues. On the other hand, all three participants hesitated when asked to complete the sentence “I am a writer that...” in the interviews. One participant read the phrase several times and said she didn’t think she was a writer, while the other two said they were not sure if they were writers. Their answer is an implication for researchers in the field of writing to continue the discussion of what counts as a writer. Shall we emphasis on meanings and teaching our ESL students that each of them is a writer who owns absolute authenticity and authorship of their writings, or shall we make it clear that they will always have grammatical issues no matter what they write simply because they are ESL learners and they should get over of that and focus on both meaning and grammar?

Their discourse-self evolves through critical discourse, particularly the reflection on previous significant learning experiences. Writing also enabled the three participants to experience changes in possibilities for the future. They all perceived themselves as future educators but also expressed concerns about the limitations and challenges of finding a teaching position in the United States. Ruan, the second
participant, even asked the researcher for more information when she heard that California might have some teacher positions, although she ended up finding a job in Canada.

As for Kim, she mentioned that knowing she was competent in writing was very healing in relation to the trauma of her previous ESL learning experience. During the interview (Interview #1, April 29, 2017), Kim repeatedly used the word “traumatic” and the phrase “fake writing” to describe her experience of learning to write in English and being evaluated by grammatical perfectness. Her description is in line with existing research that over emphasis on grammar can harm learners’ autonomy, and further alienate them from their real thoughts and meanings.

As for Ruan, writing provided her a chance to analyze what type of a learner she was, how she learnt the best, and how she would teach students with similar learning styles in the future. Writing for Ruan was a process of re-discovery and re-identification of what types of a learner she was and how she would incorporate this experience into her future teaching.

Lee’s major transformation was that she evolved from holding negative feelings about writing to believing that writing was a way of communication. In her case, she used writing as a means to express her opinions and communicate with her professors and peers.

**Answer to research question three: The particular importance of journals and narratives for transformative learning**

As discussed in the findings of the cross-case analysis part, the three essential elements for international undergraduate education students’ transformative learning process are critical reflection, strategic re-interpretation of home-country learning experiences and newly learnt knowledge, and the framed imagination of changed courses of actions. The writing of journals and narratives are particularly important to this process because they are the main sites and major facilitators of the above mentioned three elements. I briefly explain the significance of journals and narratives in terms of why they reflected, what they reflected, how they reflected and what transformed at the end of learning.

To begin with, the writing of narratives and journals, particularly imagined teaching in the future, encourages student teachers to challenge their beliefs in previous learning experiences, empowers them for problem solving as future teachers, helps them establish the identity of a future teacher, and finally presents them new perspective to understand the student teachers. In this sense, narratives, particularly storytelling and autobiography, is closely related with writers’ real life, and thus has an
enormous potential to reorganize writers’ narration of their life experiences, and thus form new habits of mind (Arshavskaya & Whitney, 2014; S. Canagarajah, 2021; Dolk & den Hertog, 2008; Phillion & He, 2004). Take Ruan’s case as an example.

Summary of findings

In general, writing facilitated participants’ transformative learning when the participants were able to engage in critical reflections on their previous significant learning experiences. Writing also provided a safe house for international students to imagine their future teaching in an idealized classroom. It was through writing about imagined future teaching that they constructed and embraced their professional identity as future teachers. Writing provided them the pressure and motivation to shift their focus to the creation of meaning in order to integrate newly learnt knowledge into their existing knowledge.

At the same time, the three research questions revealed the struggles of the participants as Asian international undergraduate education students. Writing functioned as a facilitator of transformative learning for them. The current findings suggest that for international education students, when they write in writing-intensive courses where writing is used as a tool to convey meaning, the struggle they face is enormous and solutions might be complex. But what is a simple prerequisite is relatively simple; they mainly need encouragement and affirmation from the course instructors that the ideas and thoughts expressed in their writings are valuable and that their writings will be graded by the quality of the meaning they conveyed rather than grammatical correctness or lexical complexity.

Discussion

Research on English as a second language (L2) writing has been increasingly focused on transfer and writing to learn, but little research considers the links between transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 1994; Mezirow & Associates, 2013) and writing to learn content knowledge (Mastura). The current research explored the transformative effect of writing and how it affected the learning experiences of Asian international education students. This study has implications for theory, research, and practice.
Theoretical implications

Transformative learning theory has dramatically expanded over the past 40 years. People have long believed that it is an effective way to explain adult learning. However, in recent years the theory has faced the dilemma of an increasing number of studies but a decreasing number of in-depth discussions on the theory itself. The result of such imbalanced growth is that on one hand, we see a fast-growing number of empirical studies replicating the premise of transformative learning theory in a prophecy-filling way, while on the other hand, some of the crucial concepts in transformative learning, such as experience, triggers, and critical reflection, have stopped evolving as fewer and fewer researchers talk about these terms. As such, some researchers have even begun to question the usefulness of the theory in explaining the complexity of adult learning.

Although the purpose of the current research was to explore the role of writing in international education students’ learning experiences, the research also sought to enhance the theory from the perspective of cultural and contextual aspects.

Theoretical framework for cross-case analysis: Transformative Learning Theory

Writing to learn is fundamentally an act of knowledge transfer, and therefore it is necessary to bring a transformative aspect to the study of the relationships between writing and learning. The current study focused on the role of writing in the process of knowledge transformation among undergraduate education students. Transformative learning theory, with its focus on the transformative aspects of individual learning, provides an adequate framework to examine the process. The analyses in the previous chapter showed that well-structured writing tasks can help facilitate transformative learning. Previous experience, critical reflection, and making connections and space for the imagination of future teaching are especially important in deciding whether there is a chance of transformative learning.

In the following section, I examine transformative learning theory from the following aspects: the expansion of the domain to non-western learners, the significance of personally significant experience, and ways to promote transformation. I particularly point out the importance of imagined changed courses of actions to the facilitation and assessment of transformative learning.
Expansion of the domains of the transformative learning theory

Although transformative learning theory is grounded in Habermas’s three domains of learning, which are instrumental learning, communicative learning, and emancipatory learning, this western-originated learning theory seldom is used to explore the relationship between non-western ways of learning and transformative learning. The current study tries to fill in the gap by extending the domains of the theory to Asian international students who are largely trained for mechanical learning. All three of the participants in this study came from Confusion-influenced countries where the mechanical memorization of learning is heavily emphasized and critical thinking, which is one of the key elements in transformative learning, is curbed in many cases. All three participants experienced some sort of shock in terms of learning when they came to the United States for their undergraduate studies.

The current study found that mechanical learning still played a role in their learning process. Even as they struggled to focus on improving their own content knowledge, the participants could not help but try to looking up and copy quotations and citations to prove that they had mastered the knowledge required of them. On the other hand, mechanical learning, particularly the overemphasis on grammar, made for traumatic memories for them even after years of study in the United States. Such experiences of having their writing evaluated for grammatical correctness led them to label themselves as “incapable writers” unconsciously.

Significant previous/international learning experience

Experience is a very important concept in transformative learning. It is the prerequisite and medium of transformative learning, which means that only when a prior experience is critically reflected on and re-interpreted can transformative learning happen. Without prior experience, learning is merely an accumulation of knowledge. In this sense, transformative learning is not able to happen for adult learners without experience and critical reflection and re-interpretation of the meaning of that experience. Mezirow (1996) summarized the role of experience by saying, “Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (p. 162). During such a learning process, experience “constitutes a starting point . . . to critical examination of normative assumptions” (Mezirow, 2000, p.31).

Despite its fundamental role, experience is seldom critically examined in transformative learning.
research, particularly in cases where prior experiences failed to stimulate transformation in adult learners. The current research is an attempt to distinguish transformative experiences from non-transformative ones. Furthermore, the current study explores what gives meaning to an experience when transformation happens in the writing.

Before discussing what count as transformative experience, I would like to point out that it is impossible to have a single definition of the term “experience,” given the fact that each individual is different and the interpretation of “experience” also varies a lot. But what can be concluded from the analysis of the participants’ writing is that experiences that are significant for the particular individual are important. Therefore, I advocate for using the term “personally significant experiences” as a standard to define experience.

Approaches to promote transformation

The ultimate purposes of educational research are always to better understand the mechanism of learning and improve student learning outcomes. Transformative learning is one of the efforts in adult education. Such a theory emphasizes learners’ initiatively and autonomy and teacher educators’ deliberate effort to create opportunities for learners to experience transformations. The present study has found out that critical reflection, strategic re-interpretation of personally significant learning experiences and integration of newly learnt knowledge, and framed imagination of future teaching are the three most salient features for international education students to experience transformative learning.

Such findings are different with claims advocating critical discourses in order to promote transformative learning. Taylor (2018) pointed out the importance of dialogic approach in his synthesizing studies on approaches to transformative learning. Following this, I find that inner dialogic is also a very important way for leaners to experience such transformation, particularly when they have very limited sources to put the learnt knowledge into practice. For example, Ruan, the third participant, projected how her future classroom would look like mainly through imagined usages of newly learnt language about language teaching. She wrote about how she realized the importance of culture in language teaching, and imagined how she would allow her future students to teach their home country language each week in order to make kids learn different culture. Ruan didn’t stop at framed imagination of her future teaching, she also discussed the adequateness of such a culture-focus approach of teaching and the applicability of
her imagination. Self-reasoning is an important element of inner dialogue. Ruan’s case is an extension of approaches to transformative learning

**Summary of the theoretical discussion**

The current research expands the domain of transformative learning theory to international undergraduate students studying in the US. As international students, they bring with them rich linguistic and cultural background information, which facilitated their unique paths to transformative learning. During such a process, their previous/international learning experiences play an important role in the process of critical reflection. The current study also finds out there are certain approaches in which international students are more prone to transformation. One is the safe house their course instructors’ crate within and beyond physical spaces such as classroom settings or libraries. Once they feel safe to open up, they are more likely to conduct deep reflection on prejudiced beliefs and more open to alternative explanations. The process of opening up and re-interpretating previous learning experiences also offers them chances to make use of newly learnt knowledge and even fabricate such knowledge into their existing knowledge structures. It is through critical reflection on previous international learning experiences and strategic integration of newly learnt knowledge that international students go through transformation of habits of minds (Mezirow, 1998, 2000), and eventually lead to transformative learning.

Writing also provides an assessment tool to evaluate transformative learning. Transformative learning theory has long been criticized for the lack of effective evaluation measures (Romano, 2018), and the ignorance on emotional factors (Nogueiras et al., 2019; O’Connor, 2008). However, the current research finds that writing provides an effective way for learners and teacher educators to examine learning through tangible results of writing such as the meanings and perspectives expressed in leaners’ writings. On the one hand, writing provides writers a way to clarify their understanding, and on the other hand, writing also can function as an assessment tool to evaluate their students’ thought process.

**Future Projections**

Personally, I hope this dissertation is a new start rather than the endpoint of my career after overcoming so many obstacles. I want to repay the help I have received during the tough journey by lightweighting my students’ lives just as the professors did for me when I was a student. Professionally, I
hope the study can continue guide my teaching and researching as I continue the work in ESL teaching in China. The current research reveals the huge potential of international students’ previous/international learning experiences to facilitate transformative learning. Writing was a useful tool for the participants to re-construct their previous learning experience, particularly when there were conflicts in the new learning contexts. Writing in this sense works as a tool for and a process to enhance critical reflections on these differences. It enables students to make the reconstructing process explicit through written language while trying to verify, clarify, elaborate, modify or alter their original understandings. It is through the process of re-construction that they become critical learners who are ready to adopt to new teaching and learning environments. In this sense, writing helps them to achieve the program goals. It also prepares them to be transformative learners in future learning and working.

The exploration process has shed much light on my teaching. I have been teaching College English Reading and Writing to non-English major undergraduates and international students during the past five years. My teaching has evolved a lot as the dissertation progressed forward. At the beginning of the dissertation writing, I had a vague idea that I would use transformative learning theory to guide my research, and that such a theory was suitable to guide adult language teaching and learning. Therefore, I made deliberate effort to make obvious usage of aspects of transformative learning theory in my teaching. For example, I deliberately asked students to make connections between their previous learning experiences and the new knowledge we learnt together, provided outlines to organize their thoughts into logical orders, and finally encourage them to compose the writing by focusing on the uniqueness and depth of their ideas rather than grammar and templates.

As the dissertation writing progressed to the ending part, I found that transformative learning could take many facets (Grabove, 1997), but it must start with students taking initiation to conduct critical reflection willingly. How to help students to take initiation to conduct critical reflection in a non-English context become one of the foci of my teaching. After many weeks’ exploration and observation, I found that I could use the topic of exploring cultural differences to help students to conduct critical reflection. In a similar way, I also found out that my students lacked the technique to integrate newly learnt knowledge into their existing knowledge structures when asked to write in English. They were used to focus on grammatical correctness rather than meanings. I made up a method to ask them to break their writing into several parts for each paragraph. For example, I asked them to write one sentence to
summarize the main idea of a paragraph they planned to write, then listed two supporting examples, and finally asked them to put these things together as a complete paragraph.

Currently, my writing class is composed of four parts: write to develop critical thinking ability, write to promote cultural appreciation, and finally write to become a reflective learner. For each part, I have different tasks designed to promote the development of such ability in that area. For example, I would ask students to identify and write down the main ideas of a reading, the major supporting evidences the writer used, whether they agreed with the writer or not, and finally listed one or two sentences to illustrate their points. The main purpose is to develop students’ evidence-based critical thinking ability. As for the purpose of promoting cultural appreciation, I invited students to form into different groups to explore whatever cultural phenomenon appeared in our reading materials, and finally each group had a chance to present their findings. In a similar way, I asked students to write reflections on their learning experiences and beliefs biweekly. They were encouraged to use the knowledge we discussed in class to guide their reflective writing and imagine how they would behave differently in a similar situation in the future.

What I find interesting yet challenging in the teaching process is how to promote students’ transformative learning in big classes where teachers have rare chances to talk with each student and students don’t feel connected with the teachers. Transformative learning happens when learners feel they are connected with the teachers, the learning materials and their previous materials. But it’s very hard to find out an effective way to make students feel connected with the teachers in Chinese EFL writing classes because each class is as big as holding fifty students and each teacher have five to six different classes. It’s literally impossible to get to know three hundred students who meet once a week during a 14-week session. In face of such difficulty, I have been exploring if there is a way to promote collective transformative learning. This is the emphasis of my future teaching and researching because I want to help these honest leaners sitting in my classes, and I also want to help my colleagues and friends who face the same problem as I did but couldn’t find a way to solve it effectively.
Appendix | Semi-structured interview

Part one: Background information

Q1: Can you say a few words about where you are from and your brief language learning experiences?
Q2: When did you begin to learn to write in English, and for what purpose?
Q3: Please briefly explain your experience of writing in English in both your home country and the US.
Q4: Is there anything else you want to share in your English learning/writing experience?

Part two: Questions about the writings

Q1: (Pointing at one writing) Did you remember why you write this piece?
Q2: (Pointing at certain sentences) What do you mean here? /What is your opinion on this?
Q3: I observed you seemed to have certain techniques when writing this, can you say a few words about what is your trick, how you learnt it, and things like that?
Q4: Do you feel you have experienced some changes in writing? If yes, please briefly explain what these changes are. If no, please explain how so.

Part three: Open-ended questions:

Please fill in the blanks and explain briefly. 1. Writing is like ________________ to me.
2. I am a writer that ________________.
3. I personally feel that writing and learning are two things that ________________.
References


434-454.


Vita

Junxian Zhang

2006 B.A. in English Literature, Henan University, Henan Province, China
2006-2007 Lecturer in Shengda Business and Management School, Zhengzhou University
2007-2010 Research Asistant, Program of Applied Linguistics, Zhejiang University
2010 M.A. in Applied Linguistics
2010-2012 Lecturer in School of Foreign Language Studies, Hangzhou Normal University
2012-2017 Teaching Assistant, Depart of Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University
2017-2022 Lecturer in School of Foreign Language Studies, Hangzhou Normal University
2022 Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction

Field of Study

Curriculum and Supervision
STUDY00006741: The role of writing in lea
teach

Principal investigator: Junxian Zhang
Submission type: Initial Study
Primary contact: Junxian Zhang
PI proxies:

IRB office: Office for Research Protec
IRB coordinator: Correspondence for_STUI
Letter:
Regulatory authority: Pre-2018 Requirements

Approved
Entered IRB: 2/8/2017 6:27 PM
Initial approval: 3/27/2017
Initial effective: 3/27/2017
Effective: 3/27/2017
Approval end:
Last updated: 4/6/2017 1:53 PM

Next Steps
- View Study
- Printer Version
- View Differences
- Create Mod/CR/Admin Review
- Report New Information
- Assign Primary Contact
- Assign PI Proxy
- Manage Guest List
- Add Comment
- Print Materials

History Funding Contacts Documents Follow-on Submissions Reviews

Filter Activity Enter text to search for Go + Add Filter × Clear All

Activity Author

Comment Added Administrator, System 9/8/2021
The Assigned Coordinator was updated in the process of removing an IRB Coordinator no longer employed l Offices.

Comment Added Administrator, System 2/22/2020
The Assigned Coordinator was updated in the process of removing an IRB Coordinator no longer employed l Offices.

Modification MOD00010379 Opened Zhang, Junxian 4/6/2017
Modification: MOD00010379

Letter Sent Moeller, Joyel Debra 3/27/2017
Correspondence_for_STUDY00006741.doc

Finalized Documents Moeller, Joyel Debra 3/27/2017

Response Submitted Zhang, Junxian 3/23/2017

Dear Junxian,

Thank you for the clarification suggestions. They are very helpful for clarification. I’ve updated the 591 protocol accordingly. I’m also listing the modifications here for your convenience.
1) In the 5.1.1.2 section, the compensation part has been deleted since it only caused confusion when standi
2) In the 7.3 section, I clarified the length of the interview and explained how the compensation formula works.
3) In section 14.0, I rephrased my explanation and tried to ma… read more

Dear IRB advisor,

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2) In the 7.3 section, I clarified the length of the interview and explained how the compensation formula work
3) In section 14.0, I rephrased my explanation and tried to ma… read more

Dear Junxian,

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the application, protocol, and supporting materials. It has that clarifications and/or revisions are needed. Please access your research protocol in CATS to make the ch outlined
Thank you
Joyel

Clarifications%20Requested%20STUDY00006741-1.doc

Response Submitted Zhang, Junxian 3/22/2017
Dear Ms. Moeller,

Thank you very much for the detailed revision guidance. They are very very clear and helpful. 
I've made changes to meet all the requirements for the clarification process. 

Please let me know if there are other clarifications needed. 

Thank you very much!

Julia

Clarification Requested by Designated Reviewer
Moeller, Joyel Debra
3/21/2017

Dear Junxian,

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the application, protocol, and supporting materials. It has that clarifications and/or revisions are needed. Please access your research protocol in CATS to make the ch outlined

Clarifications Requested STUDY00006741.doc

Response Submitted
Zhang, Junxian
3/16/2017

Dear IRB advisors,

Thank you very much for your help in preparing the IRB application.

Per your advice, I've done the following updates:
1) Updated the HRP 591 forms in Item 7 of the application,
2) Added my advisor's information in form HRP-509 IN THE Study Team Members,
3) Updated the HRP-588 ORP Consent Form in the Consent forms and recruitment materials section,
4) Added interview questions and volunteer recruitment letter in the supporting documents.

I will also add these attachments in the following "... read more

Response Time Exceeded
Administrator, System
3/2/2017

Clarification Requested
Moeller, Joyel Debra
2/14/2017

Dear Junxian,

Your submission has been assigned to me for the coordination of the review and approval process. Unfortunately your application is incomplete at this time and the review process will not begin until the following items are submitted for review:

1. Basic Information Page:Item 7: Please remove the current 598 form uploaded as this document is not a document for your research. What is needed here is for you to access in CATS the HRP 591 Protocol ... read more

IRB Coordinator Assigned
Kahler, Tracie Lee
2/8/2017

Assigned to Joyel Moeller

Notification Sent to Study Team Members
Zhang, Junxian
2/8/2017

Submitted
Zhang, Junxian
2/8/2017

Study Created
Zhang, Junxian
1/30/2017