

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND THE ACQUISITION OF ACADEMIC
LITERACY SKILLS OF GENERATION 1.5 STUDENTS
AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A CASE STUDY

By

Mahua De

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Dr. Nydia Flores

and approved by

Dr. Alisa Belzer

Dr. Jennifer Rowsell

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ABSTRACT

Generation 1.5 students are American-educated children of immigrants who have completed part of their elementary and sometimes, secondary education in their native country and in their native language before immigrating to the United States (Harklau, Losey, and Siegal, 1999; Goen, Porter, Swanson, & vanDommelen, 2002; Thonus, 2003). Because of the interruption in their education, many Generation 1.5 students experience difficulties as they negotiate through the academic reading and writing requirements of the freshman college composition course even after they graduate from an U.S. high school. At the same time, the schism in research between composition studies and second language instruction has resulted in the difficulty of composition specialists to understand and address problems faced by second language learners, especially Generation 1.5 students (Matsuda, 2003; Silva & Leki, 2004).

This study investigated the impact of Learning Communities (LCs) as an alternative format of delivering instruction to Generation 1.5 students in freshman composition classes in a community college. An LC offers two or more linked classes as well as additional support in the form of tutoring, mentorship, and counseling to a cohort of students (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Killachy, Thomas, & Accomando, 2002; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004).

Participants in this semester-long study included six Generation 1.5 students, four of whom were enrolled in composition classes within two separate LCs, and two in a stand-alone composition course. Data for this study emerged from essays and interviews of the six participants as well as interviews with their instructors and tutors. These data were analyzed qualitatively to assess the manner in which the LCs shaped the writing skills of the participants.

The study demonstrated that well-designed LCs had a number of positive, even redundant features from which several participants chose the most appropriate ones to improve their writing skills. In doing so, they became active actors in the learning process, using their funds of

knowledge and working with instructors, tutors, and their peers to improve their academic skills. However, other students, some with a higher level of confidence in their writing skills, resisted the idea of participating in LCs and their academic progress was less obvious.

The study is significant as it contributes to the fields of both second language composition studies and the learning communities. The study addresses the existing gap in research on Generation 1.5 students, a subset of second language learners, in the composition classroom. It also explores the potential of LCs in serving these students in their freshman year in college.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Statement of the problem	1
Statement of purpose.....	6
Research questions	7
CHAPTER II.....	11
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	11
Introduction	11
Generation 1.5 students	11
Description of Generation 1.5 students	12
Academic issues facing Generation 1.5 students	16
Composition studies: History, goals, and second language writing	22
A socio-cultural approach in the Generation 1.5 classroom.....	33
Theoretical Framework: Academic Literacies Model.....	34
Learning communities (LCs)	42
LCs at Windsor Community College: Organization and rationale	48
Conclusion.....	50
CHAPTER III.....	52
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	52
Introduction	52
Summary of the pilot study	53
Description.	53
Site.....	54
Participants.....	55
Research questions	56
Data Collection.....	56
Results of the pilot study.....	57
Findings of the pilot study.....	57

Research design and qualitative methodology	59
Introduction	59
Site.....	60
The ESL department at Windsor Community College.....	61
LC: Components and objectives.....	63
LCs: Students and instructors.....	65
Composition classroom: Objectives.....	66
Freshman seminar course: Objectives.....	66
Library course: Objectives	67
Participants.....	68
Instruments of data collection	70
Bias.....	73
Participants from stand-alone composition course.....	74
Trustworthiness.....	74
The practitioner as the researcher.....	75
Data analysis	78
Teacher reflexivity	80
CHAPTER IV	82
THE RESULTS.....	82
Introduction	82
Researcher-led LC (RLC)	84
The library course: The instructor and the course.....	85
Tutors working with RLC	86
Preparation for LC classes.....	90
RLC: Demographic profile and participant selection.....	91
From complacency to confidence: Lauren’s journey as a Generation 1.5 student	92
From isolation to community: Marsha’s experiences in the RLC.....	115
Complementary LC: LC2.....	138
Faculty profiles.....	138
Going from strength to strength: Rafael’s journey as a Generation 1.5 student	143
Learning in isolation: Liang’s journey as a Generation 1.5 student.....	158
Outside LCs: Non- LC participants and their experiences.....	174
From a reader to a writer: Marivia’s journey as a Generation 1.5 student.....	174

Stability and success: Lisbeth's journey as a Generation 1.5 student	200
CHAPTER V	218
SUMMARY: RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED	218
Research question 1	219
Research question 2	231
Research question 3	239
CHAPTER VI	256
FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	256
Introduction	256
Finding 1: Miscommunication and mistaken messages.	256
Finding 2: Misapprehension about LCs.	258
Finding 3: Prior preparedness and funds of knowledge.	259
Finding 4: Collaboration, cooperation, or conflict?	261
Collaboration among instructors	261
Collaboration between instructors and support staff	262
Collaboration between instructors and support staff with students	262
Collaboration among students	263
Conclusion	264
Limitations	265
Recommendations for future LCs	267
Tutoring: Restrictions and recommendations	267
Counseling services: Restrictions and recommendation	269
Student voice and communication	270
Creation of third spaces	271
Implications for future research	272
Length and breadth of the study	272
Tutoring and counseling	272
Conclusion	273
List of Appendices	275
References	294

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: <i>Sequence of classes in the ESL program at Windsor Community College</i>	62
Table 2: <i>The organization of the 2 LCs</i>	66
Table 3: <i>Design of classes in the 2 models & list of writing assignments</i>	68
Table 4: <i>The participants</i>	70
Table 5: <i>The students, instructors, and tutors in RLC</i>	84
Table 6 : <i>List of assignments in RLC</i>	90
Table 7: <i>Schedule of classes in RLC</i>	92
Table 8: <i>Profile of the participants in RLC</i>	92
Table 9: <i>Sequence of courses taken by Lauren in Fall 2010 & Spring 2011</i>	95
Table 10: <i>Sample analysis of Lauren's writing</i>	114
Table 11: <i>Marsha's summer schedule</i>	133
Table 12: <i>Sample analysis of Marsha's writing</i>	137
Table 13: <i>Professor Cohen's writing assignments</i>	139
Table 14: <i>Schedule of classes in LC2</i>	142
Table 15 : <i>Profiles of participants in LC2</i>	143
Table 16: <i>Rafael's schedule in Spring 2011</i>	147
Table 17: <i>Sample analysis of Rafael's writing</i>	157
Table 18: <i>Liang's schedule in Spring 2011</i>	162
Table 19: <i>Sample analysis of Liang's writing</i>	173
Table 20: <i>Profile of participants in stand-alone class</i>	174
Table 21: <i>Marivia's schedule for Spring 2011</i>	182
Table 22: <i>Sample analysis of Marivia's writing</i>	199
Table 23: <i>Lisbeth's schedule of classes for Spring 2011</i>	205
Table 24: <i>Sample analysis of Lisbeth's writing</i>	217

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of the problem

Community colleges are philosophically committed to providing a wide range of educational opportunities to a diverse population, a goal achieved, in part, by their open admissions policy. This open admissions policy, however, acts as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it makes a college education feasible for many students who might not clear the competitive admission requirements of four-year colleges or universities. At the same time, paradoxically, this policy also allows underprepared students to take challenging college courses in which they struggle (Hadden, 2000; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tsao, 2005), most notably in often-mandated first year courses. Hadden noted that community colleges face a predicament in attempting to balance their goals of democratizing education with maintaining the academic quality of their courses or, as he put it, the “the irony of access versus success” (p. 826). Therefore, community colleges have to consider ways of reconciling their goals of providing quality education to students while preparing them to succeed academically. In addition, community colleges have to continue to reinvent and redesign their courses and delivery format to remain relevant to their communities they serve.

One way in which community colleges have maintained their relevance is in the attention they have paid to English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Blumenthal (2002) reported that the period between 1991 and 1999 saw a double digit increase in the percentage of community colleges offering ESL instruction. The need for ESL courses is urgent since most of the second language learners in the majority of community colleges

across the country need further instruction in academic English before they can begin credit courses (Blumenthal, 2002). However, ESL students are not a homogenous group; ESL students in community colleges come from different educational backgrounds and exhibit a varying range of skills and facility with oral and academic English.

One subgroup of ESL students is Generation 1.5 students (Roberge, 2002; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) who are American-educated children of immigrants. They have completed part of their education in their native countries and moved to the United States at a point during their middle or high school education. Although they consider themselves bilingual, their academic skills, including their ability to read critically and write extensively in both languages, are weak, largely due to the interruption in the education. As Thonus (2003) explained, Generation 1.5 students "...have lost or are in the process of losing their home languages without having learned their writing systems or academic registers. Unlike international students, Generation 1.5 students lack a basis of comparison in fully developed oral, written, or both systems of a first language" (p. 18). Thonus has rightly indicated that the interruption in their education is detrimental to their academic progress. They stop receiving instruction in their first language when they immigrate to the United States and have to restart it and learn English at the same time. As a result, they do not have the academic framework of their first language which they can use to learn English or other academic skills.

The weak academic skills of Generation 1.5 students have far-reaching consequences for them in college. When they start college, the gap between what they should have learned in high school and what they actually know becomes apparent to college instructors. Leki (1999) has noted that this mismatch between instructors'

expectations and student abilities might result in frustration on the part of the latter and their refusal to participate in academic activities.

However, their needs in the second language classroom are not always addressed by the ESL programs in which they are placed, which cater to the more academically proficient international students who are the subject of most research done on second language acquisition. As a result of this mismatch, Generation 1.5 students often struggle academically and remain marginalized in the college community. One course in which the academic struggles of Generation 1.5 students become visible is the mandatory freshman composition course.

The limited research devoted to Generation 1.5 students is surprising, giving their growing numbers. As Matsuda & Matsuda (2009) remarked, “By 1990, the foreign student population in U.S. higher education had exceeded the two million mark, 65 percent of whom were U.S. citizens” (p. 50). In spite of their growing numbers, unfortunately, second language research has not focused on Generation 1.5 students or acknowledged their distinct needs in the second language classroom.

There is even less research on composition studies in second language classrooms because research on L2 academic proficiency has tended to focus on reading skills (Matsuda, 2003; Valdés, 1992). Matsuda noted that research in the area of L2 composition is lacking in two main areas. First, there is little research in the area of early writing in L2. By this he refers to the writing and composition created by ESL learners in a K-12 setting. Since writing is a process, knowledge about early writing skills of ESL learners can shed light and offer recommendations on their writing practices in a higher education setting. The second gap that Matsuda (2003) noticed is the fact that L2

composition has often been detached from research in mainstream composition. So, while the goals of composition instruction in mainstream and L2 classes are ostensibly the same, existing research on mainstream composition studies does little to contribute to the knowledge base of composition studies in the second language classroom.

However, research in areas of L2 composition is of crucial importance. Lea (2004) has recognized that academic writing remains an integral component of higher education. In the composition classroom, students learn and reinforce skills like reading, analyzing, and making associations across subjects. These skills are critical for student success (Carson, Chase, Gibson & Hargrove, 1992; Chase & Gibson, 1994).

Students in developmental and mainstream English classes have varying skills in composition as do students from different groups of second language learners. Yet, the goals of composition classes for all populations are predictable, if not similar. In most courses, students are expected to learn not only the process of writing in different genres but also *through* the process of writing as they explore and refine their ideas. In fact, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) explored the differences between what they termed mature writers and immature writers. In their study, novice or immature writers used their writing to present information in a linear manner. This form of writing, or knowledge telling, took the form of a narrative and reflected their knowledge on a particular subject matter. In contrast, mature writers used the act of writing to explore and extend their knowledge. Bereiter and Scardamalia viewed this form of writing as knowledge transformation. Ideally, students in composition classes should use writing as a transformative tool, a tool through which they demonstrate their engagement with and eventual mastery of a topic.

This vital role of academic writing in higher education, thus, underscores the need for more intensive research in the area of second language composition since second language learners grapple with content as well as their ability to express their ideas adequately. The relevance of being able to write across disciplines has made freshman composition classes a gatekeeper for many academic programs. Successful completion of this course permits students to continue on with other courses. In the college which is the site of the proposed study, Generation 1.5 students often start composition courses with enthusiasm, but many find it difficult to complete them, principally, because they did not receive adequate training in academic literacy skills in high school.

Learning communities (LCs) can offer a mode of delivering instruction to the Generation 1.5 student population with its unique needs and challenges. In its most basic form, an LC consists of a small cohort of students who are enrolled in two or more courses which may share either a common curriculum or common assignments (Andrade, 2007; Tinto 1997b). Membership in a cohort encourages a feeling of community and collaboration among students which helps them in their academic and social integration (Tinto, 1997b), while linked classes help reinforce the learning of important skills and strategies. At the site of the doctoral study, LCs also included the services of designated tutors and counselors to further enhance student performance

This doctoral study used a qualitative case study method to investigate the ways in which membership in LCs helped Generation 1.5 students negotiate their way through a freshman composition course and gain academic literacies. The analysis of data collected from interviews and writing samples indicated the ways in which the LCs shaped the writing proficiency and the academic integration of the participants.

Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between a learning community (LC) and the acquisition of academic literacy skills of Generation 1.5 students in a freshman composition class. The original intent of LCs at Windsor Community College¹, the site of the study, was to increase college-wide student retention. Using Tinto's (1993) retention theory as a foundation, LCs at Windsor Community College linked two or three classes in addition to tutoring and counseling services for first year students. This study, however, does not investigate the correlation between the LCs and student retention. The scope of this study is limited only to how these LCs shaped the acquisition of academic literacies skills of the Generation 1.5 student participants in the community college.

This dissertation used a case-study approach to study the effect of the LC on six participants. Generation 1.5 students from a non-LC class were included in the study to provide a perspective on their progress through a stand-alone composition course without the benefit of additional support.

The study investigated and analyzed the influence of tutors, linked classes, and counselors on the academic literacies practices of Generation 1.5 students. By academic literacies practices, I refer to the academic literacy skills or the reading and writing skills learners use to complete academic tasks. In addition, I also use Lea and Street's (1998; 2006) framework of academic literacies which includes reading and writing skills acquired by participants and, more importantly, the process enabling this acquisition and the resulting impact on their identities.

¹ The name of the institution has been changed to preserve anonymity.

To assess the changes in the writing of the participants, I analyzed multiple drafts of essays they completed over the semester. In addition, the work of two participants from a non-LC class was analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison. These students had similar academic profiles to the LC students, but did not have access to the same resources. To assess the overall influence and efficacy of the LCs, I interviewed participants as well as tutors and instructors in the LC. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, and the resultant data was coded and analyzed.

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What changes were observed in the academic literacy skills of the participants over the course of the semester?
2. How did student participants assess change in their writing skills over a semester?
 - a. In what ways, from their perspectives, did the LC help students to acquire the necessary academic literacy skills?
 - b. In what ways did they find the LC unhelpful?
3. From the perspective of the instructors, how did the LC influence the academic literacies of the participants?
 - a. What did they believe are the ways in which the format of the LC had a positive impact on the acquisition of academic literacies, including academic skills, of the participants?
 - b. What changes did the instructors believe could be more helpful in future LCs?

Significance of the study

The significance of this qualitative case study lies in its attempt to link issues of research, theory, and practice in the field of second language acquisition, in particular, with regard to the writing practices of Generation 1.5 students who are a largely under-investigated community.

First, this study addresses a gap in the existing research on Generation 1.5 studies in the community college composition classroom. Community colleges, with their liberal admission policies, host an increasing number of underprepared students or first-generation students, many of whom are Generation 1.5 students. Matsuda & Matsuda (2009) noted the increase in the number of Generation 1.5 students in the country. In spite of the growing numbers of Generation 1.5 students, unfortunately, second language research has not focused on them or acknowledged their distinct needs in the second language classroom. Significant research exists on traditional second language learners, many of whom are international students who have achieved proficiency in their first language. In particular, there are ample studies focusing on developing oral and academic proficiency. However, a corresponding body of research focusing on Generation 1.5 students in the second language classroom is comparatively limited. Scholars such as Harklau (1999, 2000, 2003), Matsuda (1999, 2003) and Roberge (2002) among others have contributed significantly to research and created a greater awareness about Generation 1.5 learners. These scholars have conducted meticulous research into the circumstances under which these learners come to this country and the varied range of their skills in the language classroom. Yet, theirs are among the few voices in this field.

The limited research on Generation 1.5 students indicates that although they are most likely to have weak academic literacy skills, they are also least likely to find specific programs or instructional formats catering to their needs, especially in the mandatory college freshman composition course. Thus, research centered on Generation 1.5 students in the community college composition classroom is imperative.

This study also contributes to professional development of ESL and composition faculty while acknowledging the responsibilities of community colleges towards a diverse group of students. These colleges balance their goals of providing open access to education while ensuring their students can deal with the rigors of academic courses. Community colleges can help Generation 1.5 students, many of whom are underprepared for college, by employing learning communities (LCs). Therefore, this study is valuable since it explores the potential of an LC as format of instructional delivery. With its combination of traditional and alternative resources and its multi-faceted approach to scaffolding in the form of additional resources to supplement classroom teaching, an LC can provide a supportive environment to those Generation 1.5 students who struggle with academic tasks. By exploring the impact of the various aspects of the LC, including instructors, tutors, and counselors, I identified possible instructional practices to help participants acquire the skills and practices needed for success in their academic journey. The close analysis of the LC suggested ways in which it could be modified to better serve Generation 1.5 students. Identification of such programs is important to faculty and teachers since it is their responsibility to implement them in order to serve Generation 1.5 students. Thus, the findings of this study are relevant to professional development and teacher education programs as well.

Finally, case-study methodology has been used to illuminate the academic literacies experiences of the participants in the LC. There is little evidence of in-depth studies conducted on the progress that Generation 1.5 students make on their road to academic literacies. The use of multiple case studies provides a multi-dimensional look at Generation 1.5 students in the freshman composition classroom. The academic history of each participant was unique as were their experiences during the study; the rich details of their collective stories contribute to a larger understanding of Generation 1.5 students, their experiences in a freshman composition course, and their interactions within a learning community.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review explores three major, interdependent themes on which the research questions are based. The first section describes Generation 1.5 students and the academic issues they most commonly face, particularly in the first-year college composition course. Next, I review the field of composition studies with emphasis on issues of bilingualism in order to provide a context for the next phase of discussion, namely, the issues and challenges of academic literacy of Generation 1.5 students.

After this exposition of concerns, I present the theoretical framework of academic literacies that informs this study. Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) conceptualization of academic literacies illuminates the academic and social journey that all students make in college. In this study, I describe the learning experiences of the Generation 1.5 participants through the lens of the ALM. I also describe the concept of learning communities (LCs) which served as a vehicle of learning for the participants.

Generation 1.5 students

Research in the area of second language acquisition at the higher education level has traditionally focused on three specific categories of students. One group consists of adult immigrants who want to increase their oral proficiency in English but do not have significant academic aspirations. These students generally enroll in non-credit bearing continuing education courses. The second group of second language learners, who have been the focus of a significant body of research, are international students who have completed their secondary, and sometimes, part of their post-secondary education in their

native countries. They possess strong academic skills in their heritage language and come to the United States in search of advanced degrees. To achieve that end, they enroll in intensive English courses as a preparatory step before taking regular academic courses.

A third group of students, less visible, yet sizeable in number, is now gaining more attention among researchers (Harklau, Losey, and Siegal, 1999; Goen, Porter, Swanson, & vanDommelen, 2002; Thonus, 2003). These students are the American-educated children of immigrants who have completed part of their elementary and sometimes, secondary education in their native country and in their native language. They are often known as Generation 1.5 students, a term originally used by Rumbaut and Ima (1988) to describe the children of Southeast Asian refugees. This term refers to the fact that these children display characteristics of both first generation and second generation immigrants. They are more adept than their parents at acquiring verbal skills in English and adopting, outwardly, at least, the customs of their host culture. At the same time, they continue to regard their heritage language as their primary language and identify strongly with their native culture.

Description of Generation 1.5 students

By their own admission, Generation 1.5 students consider themselves bilingual but identify their first language as the one with they feel more comfortable. As Goen, Porter, Swanson, & vanDommelen (2002) and Goen-Salter, Porter, & vanDommelen (2009) have discovered, a vast number of Generation 1.5 students consider their first or home language as their stronger language. These researchers further noted that while Generation 1.5 students professed ease in their oral use of English and their native language, they did not feel as confident of their literacy skills in either language,

primarily because of the interruption in their education and its resumption in a hitherto unfamiliar language (Blanton, 2005; Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Harklau, 1999; Goen, Porter, Swanson & vanDommelen, 2002).

Researchers point out that these students enter college with language skills that are neither native-like, nor like those of the traditional second language learner (Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Harklau, 2003). On the one hand, English is the language in which they have received much of their academic instruction. Yet, they only received instruction in English in middle or high school when they were abruptly placed into ESL classes. However, English is neither their first language nor the language of choice in their interactions with friends and family. The linguistic conundrum makes it difficult to place them in appropriate programs when they start college. For instance, Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) commented:

With backgrounds in U.S. culture and schooling, they [Generation 1.5 writers] are distinct from international students or other newcomers who have been the subject of most ESL writing literature, while at the same time these students' status as English language learners is often treated as incidental or even misconstrued as underpreparation in writings on mainstream college composition and basic Writing (p. ii).

Generation 1.5 students are generally placed in ESL programs since they are considered second language learners due to the limited nature of their academic literacy in English.

To fully understand Generation 1.5 students, it is important to define them and establish the differences between them and other second language learners. Age as well as skills sets Generation 1.5 students apart from other second language learners. Szuber (2007) has explained how this group differs by virtue of their age from two other sets of second language learners. According to Szuber, children up to the age of ten often learn their second language in a more natural setting. ESL classroom settings for children are

generally designed to be stress free and comfortable. International ESL students, who comprise the most recognizable group of adult second language learners, benefit from being in a formal classroom setting where they are taught syntax as well as reading and writing skills in a structured fashion. These learners use the framework of grammar to enhance their speaking and writing skills. Generation 1.5 learners, who come to the United States as adolescents, however, move between these two settings- one, a relaxed environment where speaking is given more attention than syntax, and second, a structured class with emphasis on grammar rules.

Roberge (2002) has worked with and written extensively about this population of college students. Along with other scholars (for example, Goen, Porter, Swanson & vanDommelen 2002; Harklau, 1999), Roberge has commented on the fact that the steady growth in the number of Generation 1.5 students has not led to a reciprocal increase in the amount of research focused on this student population. Therefore, policy makers and teachers do not always have adequate information or research on which to base their policies and their instructional techniques. For that reason, Roberge's (2002) theoretical work on Generation 1.5 students is particularly significant as he provides a nuanced, detailed picture of the different circumstances prompting the immigration of Generation 1.5 students and their families. In addition, Roberge has analyzed the acculturation process that these students have experienced and the impact of such experiences on their language and literacy acquisition.

Roberge (2002) has argued that the use of the term Generation 1.5 has become indiscriminate. According to him, the fact that there is no clear criterion of age that distinguishes them from other language learners has led to the random use of this term

although they remain a unique group of students within the ESL student community. According to Roberge (2002), the quality of their academic and verbal English and the circumstances of their home lives are important factors in determining whether or not they can be defined as Generation 1.5 students. He has contended that this term be used to describe five specific immigrant groups which are not mutually exclusive. In the first group, he includes students from American territories such as Puerto Rico. The second group comprises children who have been sent by their parents to live with relatives or friend in the United States for economic or political reasons. For example, political unrest and economic instability in Haiti have led to the dissolution of families where parents migrate to the United States in order to send back remittances (Amuedo-Dorantes, Georges, & Pozo, 2010). At other times, parents send their children to what they believe are safe havens in the United States. Family reunifications can often take a long time.

A third segment of Generation 1.5 students live with their parents but lead a peripatetic existence. Their parents move from country to country without settling in any one for any length of time, perhaps because of the nature of their jobs. Yet another group consists of children who were born in the United States to immigrant parents and continue to live in linguistically and culturally insulated communities. The final group, as observed by Roberge, includes speakers of non-standard English such as African-American Vernacular English. Roberge believes that the term Generation 1.5 encompasses young people who are neither foreigners nor completely native, participating in the experiences of both groups without completely identifying with either.

While Roberge (2002) has attempted to provide a cohesive definition of Generation 1.5 students, the fact that this term has been used in a wider sense implies diversity in this population, both in terms of their experiences and their academic and language skills. The composition of Generation 1.5 students in each region or college depends on the patterns of migration in that area, the socio-economic status of immigrant families, and the school system to which these students have access.

To summarize, Roberge's research indicates that Generation 1.5 students are distinguished from other language learners by the circumstances of their immigration, their age, and their educational experiences across different countries. They differ from other second language learners in the ways in which they use both their heritage or first language, and their second language. Their oral and academic facility with each language, especially English, affects their educational experiences in this country.

In this doctoral study, based primarily on Roberge's research, the term Generation 1.5 is used to describe those students who came to the United States, placed in a middle school, graduated from high school, and finally registered in a community college. In the next section, I discuss the academic issues Generation 1.5 students face once they begin higher education.

Academic issues facing Generation 1.5 students

Two factors influence the academic literacy skills of Generation 1.5 students in college. The first is the length of schooling to which they have had access in their first language. The second is the period of time during which they have received academic instruction in their second language.

First, the academic skills that immigrant children exhibit depend on the length and quality of schooling they have had access to in their native countries. Longer, uninterrupted schooling in their first language helps them to develop their academic skills in their first language (Thomas & Collier, 2002; Destendau & Wald, 2002; Gawienowski & Holper, 2006). During these early years of schooling, students are also able to acquire both cognitive and metacognitive strategies that can later help them to achieve academic proficiency in both languages and become independent learners. Gawienowski and Holper asserted, “Completion of high school curricula in a person’s first language ensures, or at least increases the chances, that critical thinking skills are in place and the student has a core knowledge of the world” (p. 119). This portrayal of the dilemma of Generation 1.5 students corroborates earlier work by Thomas & Collier (2002) who discovered that students could acquire proficiency in their second language more effectively when they also received simultaneous instruction in their first language. First language instruction establishes the foundation on which students build their academic skills in their second language.

Because Generation 1.5 students do not have the advantage of a sustained education in their first language, they have not had the opportunity to sufficiently develop their academic literacy skills (Destendau & Wald, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Roberge, 2009; Singhal, 2004). These learners come to the United States either during middle school or high school. At this stage, their native born counterparts are learning various literacy skills across different subjects. Writing lab reports in a science class, summaries in a language arts class, discussion questions in a history class are only a few of the skills that are taught at this stage in school. Generation 1.5 students have to learn these skills, which

they did not have a chance to master in their first language. In addition, they have to learn English. In an effort to cope with such diverse academic demands, they try to develop their oral skills in English by listening to their peers and their teachers. During this process, their learning in their first language is interrupted, often never to be resumed.

Generation 1.5 students are characterized by their primary mode of learning of aural input. Reid (1998, p. 4) has used “ear learning” to describe this form of learning. In this regard, Reid, asserts, they differ from traditional second language learners who are “eye learners” and whose learning is based on reading and learning grammar rules. The framework of syntactical knowledge provides traditional second language learners a firm metalinguistic awareness which Generation 1.5 students lack (Reid, 1998). They see little difference between written or academic English and oral English and compensate for their weak reading and writing skills by acquiring verbal proficiency in English fairly quickly (Destendau & Wald, 2002; Harklau, 2003). Because they have not been able to develop their reading skills, these students are not inclined to search for information through reading. The lack of strong reading skills has two effects. First, these learners begin to avoid the act of reading. This, in turn, affects their writing in English which becomes increasingly more phonetic as they attempt to translate what they hear onto paper. As a result, their writing, although fluent, is often littered with spelling and syntactical errors. Both their fluency and their errors stem from their aural approach to learning language. The use of *firstable* instead of *first of all*, which is a common error, typifies this kind of ear learning. Secondly, and more importantly, lack of reading proficiency affects their academic literacy or their ability to understand, process, and

analyze the information they read (Carson, Chase, Gibson & Hargrove, 1992; Chase & Gibson, 1994).

The length of time to which these learners have been exposed to academic English instruction also affects their academic literacy skills. In her seminal work, Virginia Collier (1989) argued that while second language learners can acquire verbal fluency in two to three years, this fluency is limited to context-dependent language or what Cummins (1979) has referred to a Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). In Collier's study, students needed at least five years of intensive instruction in English to be able to perform at the fiftieth percentile in class. It took students at least ten years, if not more, to acquire academic literacy skills in English. Cummins used the term Cognitive -Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to describe this type of proficiency in the second language.²

College instructors often expect Generation 1.5 students to write with the same facility as native speakers of English (Porter, Goen, Swanson, vanDommelen, 2002; Roberge, 2002). Yet, as the research by Collier and Cummins illustrates, this expectation seems unrealistic for several reasons.

First, as Roberge (2002) has noted, it is in college that many Generation 1.5 students are faced with great quantities of dense and challenging reading material for which high school did not adequately prepare them. Another point to note is that community colleges have open access policies to encourage equal educational

² Cummins (1981) later refined his conceptualization of language proficiency to include the role of context. He extended his original conceptualization of BICS (1981:4) to context-embedded language. In social interactions, interlocutors make use of gestures, cues, and other signals in their communication to understand language. In such instances, language is embedded in context, and therefore easier to understand. However, more challenging to language learners is context- reduced language such as that encountered in lectures and books. Here, learners can only rely on linguistic signals in those academic contexts to glean meaning. Context-reduced language is an extension of CALP.

opportunities. As a result of these policies, community colleges admit students with high school degrees or their equivalent General Education Development (GED) degrees to provide equal educational opportunities. Community college students, therefore, do not encounter the competitive admission requirements at most four-year colleges. Thus, many of them may be underprepared for the reading and writing requirements of college, notwithstanding their graduation from high school. The challenges faced by Generation 1.5 students are distinct from those faced by developmental writers; this distinction is explained in detail in a later section.

Community colleges, therefore, host significant numbers of students who are underprepared or first-generation college students, or a combination of both. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004) have noted that first-generation college students enter college with more trepidation than those whose parents have attended college. These students are less confident of completing college, and possibly less prepared, both academically and emotionally. Those first generation students who do complete an undergraduate degree are likely to take longer than the traditional four years.

Pascarella et al. (2004) also suggest that college students whose parents possess a college degree have access to social capital in the form of knowledge and awareness of norms, attitudes, and skills required in college. For these students, the transition from high school to college is relatively smooth. In addition, parents with college degrees are likely to be financially stable, thereby enabling their children to take more courses in the first couple of years, and focus on their academic needs.

The research by Pascarella et al. (2004) explains why first generation college students are inadequately equipped to deal with demands of college. For one, they are

less familiar with college practices and must familiarize themselves with the expectations of instructors. Their financial backgrounds indicate that they are also more likely to spend more hours working outside of college and therefore, tend to take fewer and easier courses. For students who come from different linguistic backgrounds, especially for Generation 1.5 learners, the stakes are higher. Because of their age, they bear many responsibilities for their families. They may be required to contribute financially to their family income because in many cases, the parents are unable to find suitable jobs due to language barriers. In addition, they may have to act as translators or cultural brokers for their families. For students who come to college ill-equipped with literacy skills, the hurdles are many. Academic literacy, unfamiliarity with the norms of college, and little support from literacy skills in first language are some of the obstacles for these students. Community colleges host many first generation college students whose educational experiences bridge two countries and two languages, but lack a solid foundation in either, and as a result, are at somewhat of a loss when they start college. Destendau and Wald (2002) have summarized the skills Generation 1.5 students have failed to acquire before they start college:

In most cases, Generation 1.5 students' language and literacy training has afforded them little opportunity to focus on acquiring the following skills and strategies: syntactic and lexical accuracy and variety, sophistication in organization and development, academic audience awareness, use of appropriate heuristics depending on task,... (and) metacognitive learning strategies (p. 208).

The lack of these skills manifests itself most vividly in the generally mandatory first year composition course. Again, the intersection of composition studies and second language writing has continued to be a complex area of discussion. The next section of literature review focuses on composition studies: its **goals** and relation to second language writing.

Composition studies: History, goals, and second language writing

Freshman composition courses, with their complex goals, are ubiquitous across American colleges and universities. A brief look at their genesis is informative.

History of the composition course. Composition classes began to grow as a field separate from literary studies only in the earlier twentieth century (Silva & Leki, 2004). Prior to that, writing centered around discussions and analyses of literary works and topics. But around 1910, composition teachers and scholars had come to believe that college students needed to learn the mechanics of writing, especially on a variety of topics of social interest. Over the next few decades, composition studies developed into a discipline independent of literature studies and emphasized the cognitive aspect of writing including an appreciation of rhetorical styles. Writing was a discipline where all students were expected to achieve a certain ideal state of writing expertise.

Objectives of composition courses. The positioning of composition studies as an independent field required a specific explanation of its objectives. Of course, as in other disciplines, specialists have offered diverse opinions about the goals of a composition course. For instance, in 2000, the Writing Program Administrators (WPA) presented preferred outcomes for all freshman composition courses in the country. In their statement, the WPA acknowledged the process of learning to write as well as the role of both instructors and students in it. In addition, the WPA recommended that the outcomes of a successful freshman composition program include teaching students to assimilate, critically evaluate, and organize information from appropriate sources on the one hand as well as using appropriate writing conventions and demonstrating their awareness of revision and writing multiple drafts. Most college writing handbooks (e.g. Anson &

Schwegler, 2011; Sommers & Hacker, 2011) hone in on this objective and extort students to inform, educate, and entertain through their writings.

Reid and Kroll (1995) dispute this notion and argue that freshman students are novices whose primary goal is to demonstrate their competence with various rhetorical genres. These experts believe that student writing is essentially a tool of assessment, not of information. Bartholomae (1985) agrees with Reid and Kroll and points out that many college writers, especially basic writers, find it difficult to position themselves as experts. This assumption applies more strongly to second language writers and Generation 1.5 writers who are equally or more hesitant to take on the mantle of an expert.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) illustrate the dichotomy with their characterization of the act of writing. They consider writing as either telling or creating knowledge. Through knowledge telling, immature writers demonstrate their knowledge by narrating what they know in a linear fashion. In other words, they repeat what they know. Mature writers, on the other hand, use writing as a tool to revisit a topic, to think critically about it, and eventually to extend and transform their knowledge. Scardamalia and Bereiter explain, “Discussions by expert writers are replete with testimonials to the effect that their understanding of what they are trying to say grows and changes in the course of writing” (p. 143). Thus, the act of writing becomes a process of discovery and problem-solving and is not restricted to a mere narration of facts. Scardamalia and Bereiter refer to this higher pedigree of writing as knowledge transformation.

While talking about composition and writing skills, it is important to consider Street’s (1984) notion of literacy. Street proposed an ideological notion of literacy which acknowledges the existence of multiple strands, forms, and purposes of literacy, informed

by context. This is in contrast to the autonomous model which envisioned literacy as a uniform set of skills required by everyone. With regards to composition skills, Downs and Wardle (2005) argue that non-composition teachers see the goals of composition courses to have an autonomous purpose. That is, the larger academic community believes that this course should equip students to handle the writing assignments of all future college courses. This implies that writing across courses require a standard set of higher and lower order skills, regardless of the content of the courses. Higher order skills include the choosing of a thesis, use of appropriate content, and organization of facts. Lower order skills refer to the ability to apply grammar rules appropriately.

Ultimately, in a composition course, students are expected to develop and reinforce skills in academic literacy like reading, analyzing information, making associations across different courses, and using different rhetorical styles competently (Carson, Chase, Gibson & Hargrove, 1992; Chase & Gibson, 1994).

Composition studies & writing in the 2nd language classroom. As noted earlier, the composition classrooms in the early twentieth century served largely homogeneous, monolingual student groups (Silva & Leki, 2004). Gradually, these classrooms recognized their students as individuals from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds with unique perspectives that they expressed through their writing. This awareness led to the realization that writing was as much a socio-cultural activity as a cognitive process. With time, composition classes included discussions on socially relevant issues like race and gender. The twentieth century thus saw the development of composition studies with the focus shifting from the process and the product to the creator or the students (Silva & Leki, 2004).

At the same time, the field of applied linguistics, which focuses on second language learners, also began to flourish. Silva and Leki (2004) and Matsuda (1999, 2003) have commented on the parallel paths taken by composition studies and applied linguistics, each of which focused on writing but differed in terms of scope (homogenous or multicultural), focus (theory or practice), and approach (holistic or microscopic). For instance, second language classrooms obviously served a diverse group of students and their instructors looked at the practice of writing, not only the theory of writing, which was not the case with composition instructors. Additionally, in the writing assignments, too, second language instructors focused on dividing up larger activities into smaller, more manageable tasks. At times, the micro-approach precluded looking at the larger picture. It must also be remembered that second language instructors had to pay attention to spoken as well as written language.

Thus, similar macro goals but varying micro objectives created a schism between the two fields and prevented composition specialists from understanding issues faced by second language writing experts. Composition studies did not embrace the issue of second language writing wholeheartedly (Matsuda, 1999, 2003; Silva & Leki, 2004). Even when writing and composition became part of the second language curriculum, mainstream composition teachers were hesitant to acknowledge the issues and concerns in second language writing.

Matsuda (2003) maintains that while ESL teachers did try to participate in conferences and discussions in composition studies, their issues and concerns were not adequately recognized or addressed by mainstream composition teachers. Gradually,

ESL teachers created their own forum, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and separated from composition studies.

In spite of this disconnect from mainstream composition classes, by the early 1970's, research in second language writing had developed a close relation with basic skills writing, a subset of composition studies (Matsuda, 2003). One factor for this closeness was the remedial nature of instruction in both these fields. By the end of the decade, teachers and researchers of composition had finally begun to gain greater awareness of the issues faced by ESL instructors. This resulted in more collaborative research between these fields, with researchers drawing on their insight from their knowledge of both composition and second language instruction. This collaboration yielded greater amounts of research in the field of second language writing.

The convergence of interests between mainstream and second language composition studies, however, did not indicate a complete understanding of issues of either discipline by researchers. As Valdés (2006) has argued, researchers need to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of bilingualism of their students. Although it is tempting to group all bilingual students together, the degree and process of their bilingualism and biculturalism impacts the nature of their writing.

Issues of bilingualism. Haneda (2006) has provided an overview of the many paths that lead to bilingualism for adolescent students. For instance, some Generation 1.5 students might transition into their classes in the United States with seemingly little confusion and continue to maintain their heritage language while gaining proficiency in English. Other learners may not be so fortunate. In their attempt to learn English, they might lose their first language, in which case, their bilingualism leads to language loss.

However, the level of English that these students have acquired may not give them the same level of expression that they had possessed in their first language. Yet another group of learners gain a level of proficiency in their verbal English without simultaneously developing their academic skills. At the same time, they may gradually lose any academic skills they might have had in their first language. Yet another group of Generation 1.5 students exhibit enough proficiency in their first language to make them comfortable in it, while struggling with their English skills at school.

Researchers like Kenner (2004) and Francis (2006) have argued against a commonly held assumption that bilingual Generation 1.5 students live in two mutually exclusive monolingual worlds with each language forming a self-contained unit. Rather, these scholars believe that bilingual speakers function within a framework where each language complements the other. Bilinguals draw on their knowledge of each language to augment their proficiency in the other language. In other words, bilinguals use their knowledge of both languages in a simultaneous manner. In addition, Francis (2006) has argued that language proficiency is multilayered and sequential. The level of language proficiency affects the nature of the tasks that students can carry out.

Francis (2006) contends that bilingualism is the interaction of two languages with varying competencies in each language. However, schools assume that language proficiency implies literacy proficiency, which may not always be the case. Monolingual children proceed on a linear path from verbal proficiency in their childhood to levels of literate proficiency as they start school. Literate proficiency can start at the word level, when children start decoding words and continue to the point when they engage in higher order thinking skills and in create narratives. For bilinguals, however, this progression

occurs across two languages and necessitates the development of skills across both languages. Francis (2006) insists that children are able to engage in critical and abstract thought and visualize complex situations from an early age through the medium of language. For bilinguals, including Generation 1.5 students, the process of abstract conceptualization depends on the mastery they possess in each language. Second language acquisition is facilitated by the transfer of skills from heritage language to the second language. In addition, according to Francis, higher order thinking skills need not only transfer of skills but transfer of learning strategies.

The path taken by Generation 1.5 students towards bilingualism affects their skills in the writing classroom and should shape the instructional methods that teachers use. Valdés (2006) labels bilinguals as either incipient or functional. Incipient bilinguals are still in the process of acquiring academic English. They make syntactical errors and possess limited vocabulary. Based on the results of placements tests, they are often placed in ESL classes and are expected to work on improving their command over grammar. Functional bilinguals, among them most Generation 1.5 students, have acquired English over time, and being proficient speakers, and are fairly confident of their language skills. However, since they have acquired English orally and aurally, they may make syntactical errors which have become fossilized. The challenges they face in the composition classroom are a manifestation of their language learning process.

Generation 1.5 students in the composition classroom. To succeed in the composition classroom, second language learners including Generation 1.5 students must employ specific strategies and develop crucial skills. For example, before they can be competent writers, they need to be efficient readers. This means that in addition to

decoding, these learners must learn to predict, identify and organize main ideas, make associations across texts, and above all, employ critical reasoning in dealing with these texts (Block, 1986). In addition, as Carson, Chase, Gibson, and Hargrove (1992) have noted, a vocabulary adequate for college is equally important. Students have to be familiar with the discourse of college courses and be able to use it competently. They should also possess vocabulary sophisticated enough to deal with a wide variety of texts that they will encounter in college.

When they start taking college courses, Generation 1.5 students continue using strategies they learned as high school students where surviving rather than excelling is necessary for some of them. Yet, the difference in the nature of assignments in high school and college may create problems. Crosby's (2009) study identifies three separate areas of problems that Generation 1.5 students face in the composition classroom. The biggest stumbling block for students is vocabulary. This stems from the lack of challenging texts and practice in intensive and extensive reading that Generation 1.5 students face in high school, partly because their goal is to continue to develop their reading skills in their second language. In college, this limited vocabulary becomes a problem since much of college writing is based on their understanding of a variety of complex and diverse texts. Next, when they actually start writing their essays, these learners may be stymied by the organization of ideas required by each rhetorical style. Finally, writers must also learn to deal with grammar problems. As Reid (1998) has documented, many of them have learned English aurally; thus, they find metalinguistic lessons on grammar difficult, which in turn, makes it difficult for them to detect and edit errors in their writing. In fact, their weak reading skills also factor into their weak editing

skills; their lack of reading proficiency often makes reading even their own work problematic. As a result, in a composition classroom, these learners need access to challenging material with adequate scaffolds to help them understand and interact with it. Murie and Fitzpatrick (2009) have referred to the process of “academic acculturation” (p. 154) whereby Generation 1.5 students are given new tools which they learn to use to help them succeed in college.

In addition to these problems outlined by Crosby (2009), Harklau (2003) has highlighted an even more complex problem that Generation 1.5 students face in college. These students are often confused by the nature of the assignments which require process writing and multiple drafts when, in high school, they had only been required to write short pieces in single drafts. The challenge for language students, therefore, goes beyond the mechanics of language. Language learners need to understand the conventions of their new academic environment in addition to the language. Thus, the difference in the framing of objectives by teachers across cultures can be a source of confusion to language students. The diverse nature of Generation 1.5 students and their needs also indicates, according to Harklau, the need for entire institutions or educational systems to frame policies which will guide teachers to create more realistic assignments. For that reason, successful instructional methods for Generation 1.5 students should consider their special strengths and needs in the language classroom.

Basic writers and Generation 1.5 students. Matsuda (2003) has remarked on the close relation between basic skills and second language research. Continuing on that note, it is difficult sometimes, to distinguish between basic writers and Generation 1.5 students

since members of both groups appear orally fluent but lack strong writing skills.

However, there are some important differences between them.

Like Generation 1.5 students, basic writers, too, are in some ways, underprepared for college. However, there are crucial differences in the nature of the challenges they face. Basic writers have two main challenges. First, they are monolingual students whose home dialects may differ from Standard Academic English (Crosby, 2007; Bizzel, 1985; Barthomolae, 1985; Shaughnessey, 1977). This difference in home discourses and school discourses may account for most of the errors in their writing. While these errors might appear random, they are, in fact, logical and consistent in the framework of their home discourses. In her insightful work, *Errors and Expectations*, Shaughnessey (1977) has also drawn attention to another important factor. In addition to the gap between discourses, basic writers have often been disadvantaged by poor schooling. As a result of this, they may not have had sufficient practice writing before they start college courses. When they do start writing in college, their errors are typical of a beginner writer and represent the early stages of learning writing. This complicates the already confusing differences between their home dialects and standard academic English.

Generation 1.5 students, on the other hand, are bilingual, so transfer from their first language is an issue in their writing. At the same time, unlike basic writers, they have not had the opportunity to complete or continue learning their first language when they start learning English. While they have not had an optimal amount of time learning either their first language or English, they have had a superficial exposure to conversational English (Crosby, 2009; Schwartz, 2007) which transfers on to their

writing in the form of phonetic spelling and seemingly eccentric grammar. Thus, their mistakes represent the early stages of language learning, not merely learning writing.

Complicating the language learning process is the fact that many Generation 1.5 students are getting acclimatized to a new culture and simultaneously helping their families get used to a new culture, new language, and new expectations at work (Leki, 1992; Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003). Yet, as Chiang and Schmida (1999) and Schwartz (2007) note, unlike their parents, Generation 1.5 students identify, to some extent, with their American counterparts as well as their home cultures. Thus, they are bilingual and bicultural. Their apparently seamless transition into American culture often forces them into roles of translator and interpreter of customs, variously labeled as “paraphraser” (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003, p. 508) or “cultural brokers” (Kim et.al., 2003, p. 163), which results in a transference of roles from parents to their children.

Another aspect of Generation 1.5 students is that they are still learning English and bring their framework of experiences from their home languages and cultures to this process. Yet, because their education in their first language is not complete, they do not have adequate resources in their first language to help them with their writing in English. At this point, their ear learning plays a role (Reid, 1998). Much of their oral proficiency is a result of oral and aural input, not reading or grammar rules. Therefore, many of the errors they make are a result of what they think they hear. Verb inflections, subject-verb agreement, the use of *a* instead of *I*, (first person, subject), *in* instead of *and* and *want it* instead of *wanted* are a result of this ear learning and not interference from their first language.

At other times, Generation 1.5 students are frustrated in their writing process when they cannot locate appropriate vocabulary to adequately express their thoughts (Crosby, 2009; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). Paradoxically, their oral fluency belies their lack of vocabulary appropriate for college work.

It is in oral fluency and cultural awareness that Generation 1.5 students most closely resemble basic or developmental writers (Gawienowski and Holper, 2006). Thus, teachers who encounter Generation 1.5 might be unable to distinguish them from basic writers and give them the required scaffolding. However, it is clear that Generation 1.5 students function with a set of tools quite different from basic students. What Generation 1.5 students need in the composition classroom is additional instruction in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary to help them craft their writing and gain a metalinguistic awareness of English.

A socio-cultural approach in the Generation 1.5 classroom

It must be stressed that writing, as Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) have asserted, is not simply a cognitive activity but also a socio-cognitive process. In fact, scholars like Heath (1983) and Gee (1990) have examined not only the process of writing but also the products of writing along with their social and political implications. What students write, for whom they write, and why they write is as important as *how* they write. Therefore, the reading materials they are assigned and the topics on which they write probably influence the nature of their writing to a large extent. Moreover, members of an academic community tend to use a typology of language unique to itself (Lea & Street, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006; Shreeve, 2007). In fact, each discipline within the larger community uses terms and concepts specific to that area. For example, sociology students

use terms with which nursing students may be unfamiliar. Since writing is a social process, both context-embedded and context-dependent, students need to possess not only syntactic knowledge but also awareness of the discourses of the discipline for which they need to write (Gee, 1990; Lea & Street, 1998). In other words, writing for a specific course entails becoming familiar with the conventions and the terms of that particular academic community.

When seen from this angle, the teaching of writing can no longer draw from behavioral and cognitive theories which have usually informed instructional methods in the ESL classroom with a one-design-fits-all approach. In contrast, the idea that learning in general is social as well as cognitive owes its conception to the work of Vygotsky (1978). His characterization of learning as a social process in which each individual's learning contributed to the entire society's fund of knowledge led to the idea that learning, especially higher order thinking skills, occurs, not in isolation, but in society. Although learners have different levels of potential and learning styles, they benefit from an environment which provides them with optimal degrees of support. For that reason a discussion of the ALM, which informs this study, is relevant.

Theoretical Framework: Academic Literacies Model

As seen before, freshman composition courses have a complex set of goals, designed primarily for a monolingual, almost homogenous group of students (Matsuda, 2003). These goals, however, as Downs and Wardle (2005) have argued, presuppose an autonomous set of skills that students have to master. Yet, composition classrooms today, especially in community colleges, play host to students from diverse backgrounds. What

each student brings to the classroom in terms of skills may not match their composition instructors' expectations of academic discourse or literacy.

An academic literacies model (ALM) provides an alternative perspective to a deficit-centered approach to student writing (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Scholars increasingly regard literacy as a locally situated social and cognitively dynamic skill. Drawing on the work of New Literacy theorists, Lea and Street (1998) have proposed that academic reading and writing be viewed through the lens of three mutually inclusive concepts. The most basic concept is that of academic skills, a collection of discrete, autonomous skills, consisting largely of punctuation, grammar, and organization. Seen through this lens, a piece of writing is judged by its surface features of acceptable syntax, spelling, and grammar. There is little involvement with the content or with student perspective on any topic.

At the second level is academic socialization. This concept follows closely Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of Community of Practice (CoP). Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice (CoP) draws on the idea that each community is defined by a range of shared practices. Learning, intrinsically a social activity, is a process through which learners are apprenticed into acquiring these practices. The process of learning and teaching includes a period of apprenticeship where masters use varying forms of scaffolds to initiate novices into the practice. Through this period of apprenticeship, novices gradually gain increasing mastery of that topic or skill, which in turn, leads to their acceptance as members of the host community.

For language learners, the process of learning writing is a process where more proficient speakers and academic users accept language learners into their community

and help the latter to move gradually from a peripheral or marginal position in the community to a more central role. Errors are a natural component in this process, and learners make fewer of them as they gain more practice. Through this framework, Generation 1.5 students are the novices. Their teachers, tutors, mentors, and other college students who are native speakers of English are the masters who initiate them in the process of language socialization in addition to the associated practices within the English-speaking, academic community into which they are transitioning.

Implicit in the language socialization process is the notion that the target community, in this case, the college, is fairly homogeneous, and that the flow of knowledge and ideas is uni-dimensional, from experts to novices. The learners are expected to bring little of their cultures and their identities into the target community.

Finally, the academic literacies model (ALM) views literacy through ideological (Street, 1984) and transformative (Lillis & Scott, 2007) lens. The academic literacies framework (Lea & Street, 1998; Street & Lea, 2004) considers the social and cultural aspects of academic literacy. Rather than focusing on deficits, this model looks at the strengths, the perspectives, and the knowledge that students bring to the learning environment. It considers the learners' history and the future and how each course will shape the identity of each learner and how they assess each course.

This model assumes that language learning is as much about gaining awareness of cultural practices and norms as about grammar and vocabulary. A factor that has highlighted the importance of this approach in preparing students for competence in college level courses is the increasing diversity of students in higher education. Lillis and Scott (2007) believe the inclusion of students of diverse abilities and backgrounds has

prompted educators to consider not simply the lack of student abilities but their unique knowledge and insight in topics of academic interest.

Thus, while ALM acknowledges the role of academic skills and academic socialization, it also considers students as active contributors to the process through which they integrate into academic communities. Unlike the academic skills and academic socialization lens, ALM looks at learning as a multi-directional and dynamic process. Therefore, Lillis (2003) looks at the process of composition as a dialog between instructors and students, not simply a unidirectional monologue. Such dialogs exist on many levels. At its basic level, each piece of writing by a student is in response to a question or a prompt. In that sense, it is a dialog between an instructor and the student. The next step is the feedback from instructors and students' use of it. Lea and Street (1998) note, however, that instructors are often unable to articulate their responses to student writings; therefore, their feedback cannot be used in a constructive manner. The dialog, in this case, is not fruitful. At a more profound level, students can, through their writings, draw on their unique experiences, challenge the conventional ideas presented or discussed in class, and stimulate new ways of thinking in their class.

A composition classroom where students are encouraged to use their writing to develop and present their views is transformative rather than normative (Lillis & Scott, 2007). A normative classroom preserves the notions of right and wrong ways of writing, of privileging one group of students over others. A transformative classroom, on the other hand, recognizes and builds on the diverse skills students bring to the classroom and the funds of knowledge that each student possesses.

Why is it important for teachers to acknowledge home literacies and incorporate them in the classroom? Oscar Lewis's work on the culture of poverty (Groski, 2008) was based on the assumption, erroneous but pervasive, that certain homes and families lacked crucial cultural resources which made it impossible for their children to succeed in schools. Heath (1983), however, in her groundbreaking research, countered this argument of deficit and demonstrated the richness and diversity of literacy practices in all homes. As Pahl and Rowsell (2005) have indicated, all learners have taken their first literacy steps at home. Generation 1.5 students, too, develop their initial literacy practices and preferences at home. The problem arises when practices from non-dominant cultures are not recognized in schools. That is when these learners are perceived as lacking critical learning skills. Language learners find it difficult to explain the literacy practices with which they grew up, and schools that do not recognize these practices take away an important framework of skills that can help these students.

One way of bridging the distance between home and college literacies is to acknowledge and empower family literacy practices. These practices emerge when parents are given the opportunity to share their literacy practices in school. The recognition, validation, and use of such practices can improve student performances in school. The situation for Generation 1.5 students is complicated by the fact that their role in their family hierarchies is often inverted when they become "cultural brokers" for many in their families (Kim et.al., 2003, p. 163). In such situations, Generation 1.5 students, who themselves exist in an in-between world between first generation immigrants and native born students, can be encouraged to discover and validate their family practices through literacy narratives or oral histories.

The range of skills and knowledge that Generation 1.5 students bring with them to college differs from those that students from mainstream communities bring. Yet, the instructional methods and curricula that instructors offer are not designed to accommodate such differences. In an effort to be fair, educators often forget that those practices that help one group of students might not be as useful to other groups. Like other scholars, Gutierrez (2008) has pointed out that many college courses have a narrow focus and there is an automatic acceptance of the fact that college students start from a point of no knowledge and proceed towards a point of optimal knowledge acquisition.

These students lose an important form of support when the language and practices used in schools are different from the ones with which they grew up. One way of ensuring that they have access to support at home is when schools make an attempt to acknowledge different home literacies and cultures. When teachers and researchers legitimize the household and literacy practices of their students, they affirm the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) that each community possesses and generates. The growing realization on the part of instructors of the importance of home literacies and funds of knowledge has led to them exploring ways of increasing their understanding and awareness of these literacies. A college classroom might not be able to incorporate home literacies of every student; however, by accepting the diversity of literacy practices, educators acknowledge that their students have not all traveled the same path to reach their classrooms. Yet, their experiences provide a wealth of information that can be used to create third spaces. They could share their experiences about each of the cultures and the worlds that they inhabit, through the media of class journals and magazines, wikis, digital stories or research projects. Each of these stories

can be a rich resource for discussion, writing, conversation, and language learning in the classroom. This awareness can guide teachers in discovering ways in which they can help students acquire academic literacies and make learning more of a participatory action than a transference of knowledge one.

On a practical level, however, the question remains as to whose funds to use and validate. Oughton (2010) raises this pertinent question because the knowledge and beliefs shared by students and instructors may be valid and valuable, but also, judgmental, biased, incomplete or in complete contradiction to their peers. In a composition classroom, for example, students are likely to share their valuable insight on topics under discussion. They are equally likely to bring incompletely developed or misunderstood ideas to the table. Oughton suggests that, in such cases, a student-teacher dialog is especially crucial in classrooms. These dialogs, also recommended by Lillis (2003), and discussed in the earlier section, form an important tool in the development and negotiation of ideas. In addition, Oughton also proposes the use of third spaces.

The concept of third space is an extension of the Vygotskian (1978) notion of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and is defined by the experiences, knowledge, and practices of the students. Bhaba (1994), originally credited for defining this term, located third spaces in a political milieu. He visualized this space as one created by a colonized people inside their colony. Bhaba believed that the third space could facilitate the free exchange and expression of ideas among members of the marginalized community without being influenced or coerced by the colonizers. Educators have translated this political concept into educational terms and visualize third space as a meeting ground between home and school literacies. It exists within the school and yet does not have an

official boundary or curriculum (Gutierrez, 2008; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004). It acknowledges, incorporates, and develops ideas contributed by students in an unofficial space within school premises. Gutierrez explains the specific contribution of the notion of third spaces to ZPD. First, daily, commonplace work, home, and literacy activities can be reinterpreted as learning opportunities, some of which may require problem solving skills. More importantly, she argues that the academic identities are shaped by their social environment; what they learn and how they learn is determined, in part, by the communities in which they live.

This notion of third spaces can be extended to the classroom in multiple ways to benefit Generation 1.5 students. Possibilities range from student clubs and organizations, mentored by college instructors and counselors, to much larger learning communities (LCs). Once a meeting point is established, learners can then use their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) to develop their academic literacies in the third space.

Analysis of student discourse yields fascinating information about their interests, their worlds, and events that are important to them. Gutierrez (2008) suggests that this information be used to shape their learning activities. For example, in their literacy classes, students can be encouraged to write in a variety of rhetorical styles on topics relevant to them. They can then draw from their own experiences and knowledge in their writing to develop a skill that is valued in all schools. In addition, students are encouraged to locate their own experiences in a historical perspective, which allows them to feel less isolated and more in control over their lives. The student-centered discussion on pedagogy can accommodate different formats of instructional delivery and, in fact,

does require alternative classroom and out-of-classroom approach. A practical manifestation of the ideals of the ALM is the format of learning communities (LCs).

Learning communities (LCs)

The implementation of learning communities (LCs) is based on a social and constructivist framework of learning. The essential design of an LC involves a cohort of students enrolled in two or more shared classes (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Killachy, Thomas, & Accomando, 2002; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). These linked classes help to generate a collaborative environment where faculty and peers form support groups for students. In addition, courses are paired to enable students to discover common patterns across them thus reinforcing certain study skills.

The manner in which instructors use these linked classes vary from institution to institution and is ideally shaped by the needs of students. Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick (2004) have referred to the three most common methods of linking classes. In its simplest form, an LC may be unmodified where the linked classes, in addition to its basic cohort, also serve a small number of floating students who may register in one or the other of the classes. In a more complex version, two or more classes are linked in a way so that the faculty teaching them can collaborate on lesson plans and activities. The most complex form of an LC is one which is thematically organized. The syllabi of all linked courses are designed around a central, unifying theme which generates reading material and writing and problem solving activities. In addition, some LCs might be residential, where students live close to each other in residential dormitories. However, many LCs serve students of commuter colleges as well.

Tinto (1997, 2003) points out, by definition, a common theme in all LCs is collaboration and cooperation among students, which promotes interdependence among students in a cohort, which, in turn, leads to a more active mode of learning. LCs promote student involvement initially with their peers, then faculty, and finally, with the larger college community as a whole. In addition, through strategic pairing of classes, LCs also let students develop social partnerships outside both their linguistic and academic networks, thus easing their entry into the college community. For Tinto, then, an LC increases student engagement initially by creating social networks in the classrooms which later segue into academic networks in the wider college community. The LC thus provides underprepared students with an academic support system which they might not always have outside of school.

The efficacy of LCs depends on many factors. One of these is the extent of cooperation between the instructors. Lichtenstein (2005) has identified three degrees of cooperation in LCs. In the ideal LC, instructors strive to link their syllabi and create shared lessons in an effort to create a positive classroom environment (PCE). In these exemplary LCs, instructors create lesson plans to challenge and stimulate students and to empower them to cope with credit courses in college. At the other end of the spectrum lies the LC which is one only in name since instructors have little communication with each other and make no attempt to link their classes, syllabi, or grading criteria. They create what Lichtenstein refers to as a negative classroom environment (NCE). Between these opposites is the LC with a mixed classroom environment (MCE) where well-meaning instructors make some attempt to collaborate with their partners at a superficial

level. These instructors focus more on the community aspect of the LCs rather than designing lessons to develop critical thinking and other academic skills of the students.

Another feature of successful LCs is their ability to ease the transition between high school and college (Jehangir, 2009; Pike, Kuh, & McCormick, 2011). LCs, with their emphasis on small groups and linked courses, provide first-generation and minority college students with a safe environment in which their voices can be nurtured, heard and recognized. For children of immigrants, this space becomes especially valuable, as it can bridge the divide between home and academic communities, between their native cultures and the unknown and challenging in their adopted countries. Moreover, as Tinto (1997, 2003) has insisted, community colleges do provide open access and otherwise unimaginable education opportunities. Yet this access becomes irrelevant without sufficient academic and social support for the first generation college student. LCs, especially those that include a freshman seminar course offer critical academic support.

Freshman seminar courses, as noted by Andrade (2007), play a crucial role in providing academic support to underprepared college students. These courses offer instruction in study skills and time management. Andrade also believes that use of journals in many freshman seminar classes offers insights into the learning experiences of students. When probing the experiences of international students in graduate classes, Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) observed that their participants exhibited difficulty with the rhetoric specific writing that was required of them and struggled with the academic discourse of their disciplines. Their instructors, however, remained unaware of their struggles and expected their students to perform at par with native speakers of English. Academic essays offer little opportunity for students to explain their discomfort;

as a result, faculty find it difficult to assess student discomfort. In such cases, journals are an effective medium of communication and enable faculty to understand their students' prior experiences and training and their current difficulties. Because they incorporate tools to gauge student engagement, freshman seminar classes have become useful components of LCs.

Many colleges institute the use of LCs to increase student retention (Lardner & Malnarich, 2008). Yet, educators and researchers argue that this should not be the case (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Lardner & Malnarich, 2008; Talburt & Boyles, 2005). The primary objective of LCs, they believe, is for colleges to serve the interests of students, not the other way round. In other words, rather than focus on student retention, LCs should focus on student achievement and engagement.

LCs function best when their students exhibit engagement. For student engagement to be long term, students have to be active and deep learners (Zhao & Kuh, 2004; Lardner and Malnarich, 2008; Jehangir, 2009). That is, they need to become active participants in the learning process, critically assess and analyze their readings in each course, and locate patterns and common concepts across different courses. A successful LC can achieve these goals by creating challenging environments where students are encouraged and prompted to think. At the same time, it should provide enough scaffolds to guide and develop their thinking so that they progress as scholars (Pike, Kuh, & McCormick, 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). As Tinto and Jehangir reiterate, students are prodded and guided through this process of scholarship and active learning primarily when courses are linked in a creative manner. Students then learn to make connections across various courses, and in their communities, learn to construct knowledge. The goal

of an LC, then, is to encourage and inculcate these skills. Brownell and Swaner (2009) add that the true worth of this learning lies in the ability to apply it in practical ways.

Vince Tinto (1993, 1997a, 1997b), one of the leading advocates of LCs, discovered through his research, that when students are placed in LCs and encouraged to study in a collaborative fashion, they tend to have a higher rate of success in their classes. These students begin to realize that they belong in the academic community, and work hard to maintain their membership in it. His studies were based on the monolingual, English speaking students in Seattle Central Community College. Pike, Kuh, & McCormick (2011) built on this research and discovered that LCs provide their students with the opportunity to collaborate with peers from diverse ethnic and academic backgrounds, which encouraged further engagement. Peer collaboration, in fact, pushed students to spend more time studying and engaging in higher order thinking activities. Andrade (2007) concurred with Tinto about the efficacy of LCs and asserted that the efficacy of LCs depended, not on their individual components, but on their overall administration.

Tinto's concept of learning communities was adapted in a Freshman Composition program for Generation 1.5 students by the University of Minnesota (Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang, 2005; Murie & Fitzpatrick, 2009). At the University of Minnesota, Generation 1.5 students were found to lack an understanding of the workings of their university. Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang (2005) noted, "The insider knowledge is inevitably less accessible to multilingual students than to native English speakers, because it is implicit and culturally based. One of the goals in our Commanding

English (CE) program, was to reduce the sense of alienation among students who must overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers in order to succeed” (p. 159).

In the year-long Commanding English program at the University of Minnesota, students took four courses each semester. Content courses were paired with supplemental reading classes, writing courses, and courses in oral presentation. In a supplemental reading course, students had the opportunity to cover related material and reinforce reading strategies, crucial in any college course. In the writing course, they worked on writing multiple drafts of papers and completed at least two papers requiring research. Thus, through the linked courses, these learners were given academic scaffolding which helped them to become familiar with the topics of the content course in addition to developing additional study skills.

In their assessment of the project, the researchers, who were also instructors, noted its advantages and drawbacks. In their project, the supplemental reading course helped students understand the core concepts of the primary courses while the small size of the program enabled teachers to conduct ongoing assessment and modifications to the program. A significant drawback of the program, as perceived by the students, was the sense of isolation or marginalization they felt as they were restricted to one cohort for an entire year without being able to integrate into the larger college community. In that respect, the LC did not fulfill one of its tenets of easing ease the students’ entry into the college community. However, the Commanding English program remains a worthwhile model for other LCs including the one at Windsor Community College.

LCs at Windsor Community College: Organization and rationale

With its open access policy, Windsor Community College attracts many students who might otherwise not have had an access to a college education and whose goals may sometimes include only selected courses instead of a complete degree. Additionally, it hosts a large number of first-generation college students, some of whom are underprepared or not adequately supported for the rigors of college. The priority of these students, as Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini's (2004) have demonstrated, are often be family, jobs, and course work, in that order. Those first generation students who started their education in their native countries and completed high school in the United States are further hampered by weak literacy skills in their first language.

This complex web of factors has led to low graduation, success, and retention rates at Windsor Community College. As part of its ongoing process to address the above problems, in 2007, the college applied for and received a Title V grant towards aimed at learning communities (LCs). According to the U.S. Department of Education website, "The Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program provides grants to assist HSI's to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of, Hispanic students. The HSI Program grants also enable HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability." The primary goal of the grant was to create LCs which would provide resources and academic support primarily but not only for Hispanic students. It must be reiterated here that although the principal objective of these LCs is to increase student retention and graduation rates, the goals of this doctoral study are strictly to analyze the relation between LCs and the academic skills of Generation 1.5 students.

There are three main components of learning communities at Windsor Community College. First, in each of these learning communities, a freshman seminar course is paired with another foundation level course. In an effort to increase graduation rates, many colleges have adopted various versions of freshman seminar courses to address the issue of student persistence and retention. According to the Policy Center of the First Year of Colleges, such freshman seminar courses can be found in over 90% of colleges and universities across the country. Windsor Community College, like other institutions, has created its own version of this course, which aims to increase student retention and improve graduation rates by helping students master key academic strategies including note-taking, test taking, and study skills. Another aim of this course is to encourage students to identify long-term goals and start planning for their careers. This course continues to be refined and modified to maintain its relevance.

A cohort of students takes two linked courses together. For example, students in the mathematics department enroll in first year seminar and a basic level mathematics course. In the ESL department, the first year seminar course is paired with the freshman composition course as well as a one-credit library course.

The second component in the learning communities is the role of the support personnel. Each learning community had designated tutors and counselors. Tutors work with students on their assignments while counselors help students to plan their schedules and work on any issues with which they need help. Some LCs also have peer mentors who act as role models for each LC. Mentors and counselors maintain a somewhat informal relationship with the students and discuss topics not always related to academics. For instance, they may suggest solutions to employment and daycare

problems when asked for such advice or offer informal training for interviews. In that sense, they can be considered as creating a third space (Gutierrez, 2008) for the students.

The final component of the Title V LC is emphasis on continuous professional development for faculty and other support personnel. The coordinator of the Title V LCs at Windsor Community College is responsible for organizing workshops and conferences with outside speakers or experts in the field. In addition, orientation programs were organized at the start of each academic year where faculty exchanged ideas and offered recommendations.

Tinto (1993) has proposed a model of community college retention which centers on student engagement and social integration. According to Tinto, students are more likely to succeed if they feel integrated into the academic community and have adequate support from peers, mentors, and faculty. It must be emphasized that while LCs cater to students in their first year of taking credit courses, they are not restricted to any one demographic or age group. At Windsor Community College, Generation 1.5 students made up a significant segment of students in the LCs in the ESL department.

Conclusion

The research on Generation 1.5 students indicates that they arrive in the United States from countries across the globe, at different ages, and under widely varying circumstances. There is little correlation between the level of academic skills they possess and the support which they can access at home and in their neighborhoods. What makes them a unique student group is the fact that all of them have experienced a disruption in their schooling at a crucial point in either middle school or high school and have to pick up the pieces in an unfamiliar country in an unfamiliar language. Their

efforts to blend in with their peers lead them to acquire speaking skills more quickly than literacy skills. At the same time, they register in schools which are not prepared to deal with their specific needs as students. Their graduation from high school, too, does not guarantee their academic readiness for college. Their academic unpreparedness also hinders them from integrating socially into the college community.

Freshman composition classes in college have generally catered to monolingual students from largely homogenous backgrounds. For that reason, they are unable to appreciate the funds of knowledge that Generation 1.5 students bring to their classes or identify the most appropriate instructional forms. One perspective that might serve Generation 1.5 students better is one which acknowledges the plurality of their experiences and the complexity of their learning experiences. The ALM (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007) with its three tier emphasis on academic skills, academic socialization, and academic literacies offers a more inclusive teaching philosophy, one that encourages students to build on their strengths, honors their perspectives and offers them adequate scaffolds in the process. In such contexts, the creation of LCs is strongly informed by the principles of the ALM. LCs that incorporate the ALM can "...help to create a space in which multilingual students can find place and develop a voice during the freshman year" (Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang, 2005, p. 159). At Windsor Community College, LCs were an implementation model of the ALM designed to help students build academic skills and enhance collaboration. However, it must be noted LCs are complex organizations, molded by the needs of their host communities. In many cases, the fluidity of their composition, while an asset, might make it difficult to always reconcile their execution to the ideals of the ALM.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this doctoral study, I examined the ways in which an LC affected the academic literacy skills of four Generation 1.5 students. I also attempted to consider the experiences of two Generation 1.5 students who did not belong to an LC and the potential benefits that membership in an LC could have added to their experiences.

I was encouraged to undertake this study since, in my work as an ESL and freshman composition instructor at Windsor Community College, I encounter an ever-growing number of Generation 1.5 students. Their pride at graduating high school and their resolve to attain a college degree are obvious and admirable; at the same time, many Generation 1.5 students at the site of the study appear inadequately prepared to deal with the rigors of college study and appear overwhelmed with their responsibilities in college. I also saw contrasting ways in which Generation 1.5 students and traditional ESL students approached their daily academic activities such as completing homework, doing background reading, and consulting with tutors and counselors. When the college adopted LCs through the Title V grant, I believed that these LCs, while not targeted at Generation 1.5 students, could nevertheless accommodate their challenges through the arrangement of shared classes and tutoring and counseling services. This doctoral study, therefore, is a practitioner-directed investigation into the potential of LCs in serving Generation 1.5 students build their academic literacy skills.

This chapter begins with a brief description of a pilot study which I undertook in Spring 2010 at Windsor Community College. I describe the site, participants, and the results of the pilot study.

In the next section, I provide a brief introduction to the research methodology I employed in the dissertation study. I then go on describe the site, a community college in New Jersey, specifically its ESL program and its sequence of courses. Next, I explain how the learning communities (LCs) in the ESL department are organized, which courses they link, and what resources they offer. I then proceed to describe the process of participant recruitment from three sections of freshman composition classes of the ESL department, two of which were part of LCs and one a stand-alone section.

In the third section of this chapter, I give a brief summary of my methods of data collection and data analysis. I conclude with a discussion on researcher reflexivity.

Summary of the pilot study

Description. At Windsor Community College, which is the site of both the pilot study and the dissertation study, Tinto's (1997) principles have guided the creation of college-wide LCs funded by a Title V grant. In each of these learning communities, a freshman seminar class (First Year Seminar) is paired with either a developmental English course, a developmental Mathematics course, or a freshman composition course for second language learners. The freshman seminar course functions as a support for the content course (freshman composition, mathematics, or developmental English) and provides students with training in study skills. This course is designed to provide guidance to students at the start of their academic experiences in college.

Teachers in the LCs were encouraged to develop shared lesson plans where one teacher started a lesson which was then continued in the other class. In addition to these paired classes, each cohort of students also had a designated tutor at the Academic Learning Center (ALC) and a designated counselor who provided academic advisement and help with other counseling issues. This LC, which spanned 3 departments, was designed to be less isolating and protective than the one at the University of Minnesota (Murie & Fitzpatrick, 2009). Students at Windsor Community College needed to register for only two linked courses. This allowed them to simultaneously register for other college courses outside their LC with other students. In addition, they remained in the LC for only one semester after which they could take any combination of courses. Thus, in theory, students could benefit from the support of the LC without being restricted to it.

I conducted my pilot study in Spring 2010. In this study, I focused on two Generation 1.5 students in a Learning Community which I co-taught with another professor. The purpose in instituting LCs was to increase retention; however, it must be stressed that the scope and purpose of the pilot study was not to track retention but to discover the ways in which the instructional strategies and modalities used in the LC helped Generation 1.5 students acquire or improve academic literacy skills, especially their writing skills.

Site. The pilot study was conducted at Windsor Community College,³ a multi-campus community college in New Jersey. Like other community colleges, it pursues an open-door policy; admission is open to any adult student over the age of eighteen. It attracts a significant immigrant population, predominantly from Spanish speaking

³ Names of institutions and participants have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

countries and from Haiti. The ESL department at this community college, one of the largest in the state, functions as an institute within the English department.

Most students who apply for admission to this college are required to take the Accuplacer, a basic skills placement test designed by the College Board. However, international students, immigrants, and Generation 1.5 students are required to take an ESL placement test to determine their proficiency in English. The results of this test place students in level appropriate ESL classes (beginning, intermediate, high or Freshman Composition) or in regular credit courses. Students do not get academic credit for any ESL courses that they take; therefore, the composition course which students can take only after they have completed their ESL program is considered a freshman course.

Participants. For the pilot study, I used purposeful sampling to identify the participants from an LC that I co-taught. To participate in the study, students had to identify themselves as being bilingual in a preliminary survey that they filled out. In addition, they had to have completed their elementary schooling in their native countries and their high school education in the United States. I elicited this information through a questionnaire on receipt of approval to conduct research by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Two students volunteered to participate in my study: twenty-four year old Lesly from Colombia, and Carla, a twenty-year-old from Peru.

The participants for this pilot study were my students in the freshman composition class in the Learning Community (LC). The other class in the LC was a freshman seminar course.

One reason for choosing students from my own class was to ensure easy communication between the participants and myself. As Sternglass (1997) has pointed out, a close relationship between participants and researcher is useful since it can help the researcher identify factors that help or obstruct the progress of the student. In addition, students can share their assessment of the learning community with a familiar person. This familiarity was an important consideration for me as I undertook the pilot study.

Research questions. The following research questions guided my pilot study:

1. What were some difficulties or challenges in writing which the participants faced at the start of the pilot study?
2. What modalities of instruction seemed to be more effective with regard to change or improvement in writing capabilities of the participants?
3. In this preliminary study, which aspects of the LC seemed to affect the writing skills of Generation 1.5 students?
4. Which instructional strategies in the LC did the students find most helpful in improving their writing skills?
5. Which instructional strategies in the LC did the instructors believe were most effective in helping students improve their writing and academic literacy skills?

Data Collection. The instruments of data collection for the pilot study consisted of writing assignments and three audio-taped interviews of each of the participants as well as audio-taped interviews of instructors and tutors who worked with them. I used multiple drafts of an argumentative essay that had been assigned in the composition class and compared the changes in content and grammar over these drafts. In addition, I interviewed each participant three times: once at the start of the semester, once in the

middle of the semester, and finally, at the end of the semester. I also interviewed their instructor and the tutors who had worked with them. The writings and the interviews yielded rich data through which I gained an understanding of the LC. My own observations of the students added another dimension to my findings. At the same time, the pilot study also revealed some gaps which I decided to address in my doctoral study.

Results of the pilot study. In the pilot study, I investigated the impact of the various elements of the LC on the writing skill of two Generation 1.5 students, Carla and Lesly. Each of them responded in different ways to the LC. While Lesly made optimum use of the resources in the LC and benefited from her interactions with her peers, instructors, and tutor, Carla was unable to do so.

Although the pilot study was limited by its scope, it generated interesting results. Two elements of the LC, peer support, and tutor support, seemed to have particular impact on the work and effort of both participants. Peers appeared to be the most important catalyst influencing the performance of the participants. Another surprising finding from the pilot study was the role of tutors as gatekeepers. Carla expected to play a passive role in the tutoring process. The tutor tried to explain her function and responsibilities; however, she did so in an aggressive manner during a class visit. Her angry denunciation of what she believed were lazy students created a barrier between Carla and the tutoring services. Already a reluctant learner, Carla was further demoralized by the tutor's attitude and did not make use of the tutoring services. Thus, the tutor's role can be seen as that of a gatekeeper in the academic community.

Findings of the pilot study. The findings of the pilot study or the answers to its research questions can be summarized thus:

- Although neither student possessed strong writing skills at the start of the semester, Lesly was at a higher level of preparedness for the freshman composition class than Carla. Lesly had a history of poor performance in earlier courses she had taken. Carla had weak skills which were not appropriate for this course. Both students had trouble with grammar (appropriate use of verb tenses, subject verb agreement, etc.) and organization (introduction, support, conclusion, thesis statements)
- The aspect of the LC with the most potential to affect the writing skills of the participants was peer support. Both participants made strong and defining friendships within the LC.
- Peer support helped one participant to access and make use of tutor services. Encouraged by her friend Frances, Lesly visited tutors regularly and asked for help with her writing. The help from the tutors was the single most effective source of improvement in Lesly's work. Lesly's writing skills improved sufficiently for her to pass the course.
- Carla, on the other hand, was discouraged by her negative experiences with the tutor. Her already passive attitude towards learning intensified over the semester, and she continued to struggle with her assignments so much so that she was unable to complete two major ones. Ultimately, Carla did not pass the course.

An analysis of the work of only two participants cannot give a complete picture of the workings of such a complex network of people and services. The pilot study was limited by the number of participants, scope of study, and input from instructors. I had

recruited only two participants. Of them, Lesly's performance was promising and indicated that a Generation 1.5 student can make the leap from struggling to successful with adequate support. While her work was encouraging, her use of the resources cannot be seen as definitive since she was the only participant to do so. For that reason, I hoped that a larger study, spread across two LCs and involving multiple instructors, would yield more detailed results about what works in an LC and what does not. I also included the experiences of two participants from a stand-alone class who had access to no extra scaffolding, to obtain a more complete picture of the extent of the usefulness of the LC.

Another development in the LC was also accommodated in the doctoral study. Based on the needs of students, the ESL and the library departments decided to add a one-credit library course to the LC. Therefore, while the LC in the pilot study only had two linked courses, the freshman composition and seminar courses, the LCs in the doctoral study had the additional library instruction course, thereby making them both more student-centered and more complex.

Research design and qualitative methodology

Introduction. This doctoral study employed a qualitative case study approach from a practitioner's perspective. Researchers use the case study method to explore and describe a case constrained in time, context, and scope of questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003) also adds that the boundaries between context and the phenomenon, in this case the boundaries between the instructional delivery format of the LC and development of academic literacy skills of participants, are indistinct.

In this study, I explored the ways in which participants worked on their academic literacy skills over the course of a semester in the context of the LC. Through this

doctoral study, I attempted to locate the meaning making process of the participants, namely the ways in which they reacted to the multiple mechanisms in their first-year classes. Therefore, I believed that qualitative methodology could offer me the ideal platform to capture the complexity of participant experiences. To quote Marshall and Rossman (1999), “ For a study focusing on individual’s lived experiences, the researcher could argue that one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions- their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptive worlds; the researcher, therefore, needs to understand the deeper perspectives captured through face-to-face interaction” (p. 57).

Creswell (2007) supports Yin’s (2003) suggestion that relevant case studies emerge from multiple and varied sources of data. Four out of the six participants in this study were enrolled in two LCs, one of which I taught. The remaining two participants belonged to a stand-alone composition course which I taught as well. The primary sources of data were documents or writing of the student participants in this study. As a secondary source, I used semi-structured interviews with participants and their instructors and tutors, and document analysis as my primary sources of data. As an instructor of four participants in this study, I played the dual roles of a practitioner and a researcher. Therefore, my perspectives contributed to the data in this study. In those situations, my observations were based on the outline in Appendix 19 A. Finally, I used class observations to provide another layer of data to support the findings in this study.

Site. The study was conducted at Windsor Community College, a multi-campus community college in New Jersey. The college, like Windsor County⁴ where it is located, has multiple facets. Windsor County has some of the most affluent towns in the state

⁴ The name of this county and its towns have been changed for the purpose of anonymity.

nestled among some of the poorest cities. The main campus of Windsor Community College is located in Westford, a small but prosperous town. In addition to the Westford Campus, there are two other satellite campuses in downtown areas of two, much poorer towns with large immigrant populations.

The second campus is located in Lakefront which is home to a large immigrant population, mostly Spanish speakers from South America, and French-Creole speakers from Haiti. The downtown area in Lakefront has seen a recent economic resurgence and much money has been invested here over the past decade. The college has benefited from such investments as is evident in the addition of a second building at the Lakefront campus. The new building is “smart” in that each classroom is equipped with computers and techpods or multimedia presentation units. In addition, an entire floor has been dedicated to housing the college’s highly acclaimed and well-equipped nursing program.

Public schools in Lakefront are large, with Lakefront High School being one of the largest and, unfortunately, one of the lowest ranked high schools in the country in terms of academic accomplishment. Many Lakefront High School graduates enroll in Windsor Community College. Like other community colleges, Windsor Community College pursues an open access policy with admission open to high school graduates and adults over eighteen. Immigrants and their children, both second generation and Generation 1.5, constitute a large segment of the student population at this college.

The ESL department at Windsor Community College. The ESL department, one of the largest among community college ESL programs in New Jersey, has a student population of around 1800 and functions as an institute within the English department. The ESL department follows a program which is academic and rigorous in nature and

serves as a feeder department to the other academic programs in the college, especially its reputed nursing program. International students, immigrants, and Generation 1.5 students are required to take an ESL placement test to determine if they require further ESL instruction or if they can take regular credit courses. The results place students in level appropriate ESL classes (beginning, intermediate, high or Freshman Composition) or in regular credit courses. Table 1 indicates the structure of the ESL program.

Table 1: *Sequence of classes in the ESL program at Windsor Community College*

Level 1 (low beginning)	Grammar	Reading	Writing	12 credits, full time
Level 2 (high beginning)	Grammar	Reading	Writing	12 credits, full time
Level 3 (low intermediate)	Grammar	Reading	Writing	12 credits, full time
Level 4 (high intermediate)	Grammar	Reading	Writing	12 credits, full time
Level 5 (low advanced)	Grammar (6 credits)	Reading (3 credits)	Writing (3 credits)	12 credits & part time options
Level 6 (high advanced)	Grammar (6 credits)	Reading (3 credits)	Writing (3 credits)	12 credits & part time options
<div style="text-align: center;"> ↓ Freshman composition, semester 1 (3 credits) + Any combination of credit courses ↓ Freshman composition, semester 2 (3 credits) + Any combination of credit courses </div>				

Although the ESL program at Windsor Community College is academic in nature, ESL courses. Upon successful completion of the ESL program, students can begin to enroll in credit courses. One of the first credit courses they are encouraged to take is the freshman composition course, offered by both the English and the ESL departments. The former offers a one-semester course to native speakers of English while the ESL

department has designed a two-semester freshman composition course for students for non-native speakers of English which they take in two consecutive semesters. One of these two freshman composition courses counts towards the liberal arts requirements necessary to complete an associate degree from the college. Each freshman composition course in the ESL department includes students who are Generation 1.5, international students, and immigrant students.

LC: Components and objectives. The participants in this study were enrolled in one of three sections of ESL composition classes. Two of these classes were part of Learning Communities (LCs), each taught by a different pair of instructors. The freshman composition course was paired with a freshman seminar course and the same group of students was enrolled in both courses. Along with these two courses, students also registered for a one-credit library course designed to help them with the requirements of their writing course.

Asher, Case, and Zhong (2009) have delineated both the utility of library courses for college students and the unique approach of Generation 1.5 students towards library services. These researchers note that Generation 1.5 students were most likely to use both the electronic and the physical spaces in the library, primarily for social purposes, but also for academic ends. Their use of the library was also dictated by peer influence. Thus, their use of the library was social in nature, and while they were familiar with basic internet use (surfing, checking e-mail), they were less skilled in navigating it for academic research. Therefore, Asher et al. (2009) noted the potential for libraries and library instruction "...as it is a particularly important provider of a physical space for Generation 1.5 students, ...(because it can) allow unstructured social learning to take

place... (and) become an important provider of technology” (p. 270). Like the freshman seminar course, a library course, too, holds immense potential for Generation 1.5 students.

In addition, a tutor was officially designated to each LC, and students were encouraged to visit her when working on their writing assignments. They were also free to consult other tutors if they wished. Destendau and Wald (2002) have outlined the benefit of tutoring for Generation 1.5 students in particular. They believe that tutors fill in the gaps that instructors cannot. For instance, tutoring, by definition, consists of one-on-one or small group interaction. Smaller groups enable tutors to assess and cater to the learning styles of students, thereby guiding them to become more independent learners by teaching them not only *what* to study but *how* to study. As noted earlier, the experiences of Generation 1.5 students in high school generally focused more on acquiring oral English than gaining academic proficiency, so the role of a tutor is deemed crucial.

In the LC, peer tutors were mainly former ESL students who had excelled in their courses and are allowed to tutor students in specific courses. They were trained by the head tutors in the Academic Learning Center (ALC) to work collaboratively with students without doing their work for them. Although students were tracked each time they visited a tutor, they were not penalized for not visiting the ALC nor were they restricted to working with only their designated tutor.

A counselor was also assigned to each LC and met with each student periodically. The responsibilities of the counselors were two-fold. First, they were responsible in helping students create a study plan for the current semester and plan their academic

schedule for the following semester. More importantly, counselors were also required to intervene with students who had irregular attendance or struggled with their assignments.

The LC counselors were expected to play a proactive role by making frequent visits to the students in their classes. Additionally, they were expected to help students look for jobs, prepare for interviews, and even provide support for personal problems.

LCs: Students and instructors. Two categories of freshman composition students constituted the LC class. Students with D's in their final semester of ESL courses were required to take the three linked courses. In addition, first year students who had never taken any courses at Windsor Community College were also required to take both the freshman composition and seminar course, though not necessarily together. However, the LC seemed a convenient option to many students. Finally, students with higher grades had also registered for the LC since the combination of the freshman composition, freshman seminar, and library courses presented an attractive combination.

In the researcher-led LC or RLC, I was the composition instructor while Professor Claudia Martin⁵ taught the freshman seminar course. In LC2, Professor Judith Cohen was the composition instructor, and Brenda Andrews, the freshman seminar instructor. The librarian, Professor Elizabeth Feng, worked with both LCs. The third class, which I taught, was a stand-alone composition class.

⁵ Names of all individuals have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Table 2: *The organization of the 2 LCs*

Academic courses				Additional resources
	Freshman composition (3 credits)	Freshman Seminar (2 credits)	Library (1 credit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselor• Tutor
RLC	Researcher	Prof. Claudia Martin	Prof. Elizabeth Feng	
LC 2	Prof. Judith Cohen	Prof. Brenda Andrews		

Composition classroom: Objectives. This course is designed for non-native speakers of English who have completed the ESL program at Windsor Community College. Some students place directly into this course as a result of their performance in to the placement test. The primary objective of this course is to have students write in a variety of rhetorical styles to prepare them for possible future college writing tasks. Students write comparison and contrast essays as well as persuasive essays on a variety of topics. The most important assignment of this course is the research paper, where students demonstrate their ability to find sources of information on a topic which they analyze and synthesize into a five-page long paper. To that end, students are taught how to summarize and paraphrase passages and incorporate quotations in their papers.

Freshman or first year composition instructors, each trained in second language pedagogy, start the semester assuming their students are familiar with basic academic writing conventions like using appropriate prewriting, editing, and revising strategies as well as attempting to craft suitable introductions with effective thesis statements.

Freshman seminar course: Objectives. The objective of the Freshman Seminar course is to train students in the strategies that will help them deal with their college courses and succeed academically. In addition, this course also serves as a complement to

the first year composition course as both instructors are encouraged to share activities and reinforce skills.

Library course: Objectives. The library course focuses on teaching students the principles of information literacy. It helps students navigate through various databases, search for information on various topics, evaluate the reliability of websites, and manage citations. In the LC, this course supports students as they work on the research paper for freshman composition. Students, of course, can use the skills they learn in this course in many other college courses like psychology or sociology.

All three instructors shared notes on student progress or lack of it and discussed issues they have with each student. This collaboration and connection is intended to lead student success because teachers working as a team could assess and address student strengths and weaknesses more efficiently.

The research paper assignment required the largest degree of collaboration between the composition and the library instructors. In addition, the three instructors also worked together to design activities to help students with other discrete skills such as summarizing, paraphrasing, making oral presentations, taking notes, and other study strategies.

Table 3: *Design of classes in the 2 models & list of writing assignments*

MODEL 1: Learning Community (LC) Classes					
	<i>No. of participants</i>	<i>Freshman Composition instructor</i>	<i>Writing assignments</i>	<i>Freshman Seminar instructor</i>	<i>Library instructor</i>
RLC	2	Researcher	1. Comparison/contrast essay 2. Argumentative essay 3. Research paper 4. Reflection essay (Appendices 6,8, & 10)	Claudia Martin	Elizabeth Feng
LC2	2	Judith Cohen	1. Biographical essay 2. “Heroes” essay 3. “Monsters” essay (Appendices 12, 13, 14)	Brenda Andrews	
MODEL 2: Stand-alone composition class					
<i>No of participants</i>		<i>Instructor</i>		<i>Assignments</i>	
2		Researcher		Identical to those by LC 1	
Freshman composition (3 credits)		Freshman Seminar (2 credits)		Library course (1 credit)	
Additional resources		i. Student Development Specialist (counselor) ii. Designated tutor			

Participants. Participants for this study were recruited by criterion-based purposeful sampling. First, I identified the three classes from which I would recruit participants. I met with each class on the first day of Spring 2011 semester and asked them to fill out a questionnaire which would help me identify Generation 1.5 students (Appendix 1). Participants had to fulfill the following criteria:

- Participants had to self-identify as being bilingual.
- They should have completed their elementary school education in their native countries and in their first language.

- They should have completed all of their high school education in an English language American high school and could have done some of their middle school education in the US as well.
- Finally, each participant had to be registered in a section of freshman composition (the ESL equivalent of Freshman Composition).

In the LC where I taught, or the RLC, two out of a total of fourteen were Generation 1.5 students and were willing to participate in my study. They were Lauren from Colombia, and Marsha from the Philippines.

In the second LC or LC2, six students out of a total of fifteen were Generation 1.5 students. Five of them agreed to be part of my study. However, my schedules and those of two of these students made it difficult for us to schedule appointments for interviews. Another student, though willing, could only chat online because her schedule did not permit her to meet for face-to-face interviews. While I did conduct online chat interviews with her and made copies of her assignments, I did not finally use her experiences to inform this study. Two students, Rafael, a Portuguese, and Liang, from China remained in my study.

I was also the instructor for the stand-alone composition class where nine out of twenty-five students were Generation 1.5 students. While all nine volunteered eagerly to participate, five had irregular attendance in the first two weeks and other issues with their jobs and homework. I assumed that these students might be unable to complete all their assignments and decided not to include them in the study. Out of the remaining four, two students had trouble scheduling interviews. Marivia from Haiti, and Lisbeth from Venezuela, were the students selected to participate in this study.

Table 4: *The participants*

	Name	Country of origin	Native language	Year of arrival in the US	Age on arrival in US	Grade on arrival in US	Age at the time of the study
RLC	Lauren	Colombia	Spanish	2004	15	10	22
	Marsha	Philippines	Tagalog	2003	14	7	23
LC2	Rafael	Portugal	Portuguese	2007	15	10	19
	Liang	China	Mandarin	2001	11	5	21
Stand-alone LC	Marivia	Haiti	Creole	2006	16	9	21
	Lisbeth	Venezuela	Spanish	2004	13	7	20

Instruments of data collection. In selecting data collection and analysis strategies, I was driven more by a constructivist approach than a post positivist or a critical perspective (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller describe the constructivist approach as one where, “Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality. The validity procedures reflected in this thinking present criteria with labels distinct from quantitative approaches, such as trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and authenticity” (pp. 125-126). In contrast, the post positivist approach relied heavily on quantitative analysis to provide an absolute picture of the problem being researched. The third option, of using critical perspective, asks for a constant analysis of narration, of weighing hidden messages behind the story and considering the economic, political, and social implications of each case.

In this case, I relied on the information and the perspectives of the student participants, the instructors, and the tutors as I evaluated the LC.

This case study developed from three primary sources of data collection: semi-structured interviews, analysis of written documents, and observations of classes and accompanying field notes (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 2006; Creswell, 2007). In addition, an initial survey helped me in recruiting participants for my study.

Surveys. The first instrument of data collection was a survey to identify potential participants. (See Appendix 1: Questionnaire for student participants).

Participant interviews. I used Seidman's (2006) format of a three-interview process to elicit data from the student participants. Seidman believed that interviews were relevant when conducted in installments over time and noted, "The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (p. 17). Therefore, the first interview (Appendix 3), conducted over the first two weeks of the semester collected data about their previous literacy experiences. The second interview (Appendix 4) occurred around the midterm point and was designed to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants while in the LC. This interview probed for details about the writing experiences of the student participants, specifically their writing assignments, their use of various resources, and their experiences while working on these assignments. The final interview (Appendix 5) was conducted after the end of the semester. Seidman believes that the final interview should ask students to look back on their experiences. Therefore, through this third interview, I

assessed the experiences of the student participants over the semester and their impression of the impact of the LC. As Creswell and Miller (2000) have observed, “The qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be” (p. 125). Thus, through their reflections, I hoped the participants would provide their understanding of their experiences, whether in the LC or outside it. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed.

Document analysis. Another important instrument of data collection consisted of the writing assignments of the participants. Writing prompts for these writing samples and grading rubric are attached in Appendices 6 through 15.

First, I scrutinized the writings to extrapolate support for themes that had emerged from interviews. Secondly, these samples were analyzed to track changes, if any, in the use of vocabulary, syntax, organization, and content. Finally, I used writing at the start and the end of the semester to note how closely their assessment of writing skills corroborated with that of their instructors. In her doctoral dissertation, Gwen Schwartz (2006) has argued that language learners are in control over their academic identity even if their perceptions do not match their teachers’ assessment of their abilities. More than grades, it is the way students chart their own progress that reflects their identity as learners and provides the impetus for them to continue on their academic journey. As I searched for themes in the data, I considered the identities presented by the participants and ways in which they perceived themselves as students writing in a second language.

Interviews with instructors and tutors. In addition, I interviewed each instructor and taped their interviews. I continued to interact with them through e-mail to ask for clarifications or information. Through each interview, I attempted to explore ways in

which participants and instructors perceived the LC, the *how*, the *why*, and *in what way* the LC shaped student writing and their entry into an academic community. I also saved email interactions with the instructors which I used as an additional source of data.

Tutors in the ALC were interviewed to explore their interactions with the participants. In these interviews, I attempted to discover their tutoring process, the approach taken by both the students and the tutors, and the correspondence between their experiences. The tutors and the tutees each described their version of the same tutoring event; thus, their narration provided further insight into each interaction. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed (Appendix 17).

Class observations. Finally, class observations also served as a tertiary source of data collection. In my own classes, I noted my reflections (guided by Appendix 19 A) on class interactions and participant behavior. I visited Professor Cohen's class two times, once at the beginning of the semester, and once again towards the end. In those class visits, I interacted with the students at the beginning of the class session, but later confined myself to taking notes about the interaction between Professor Cohen and her students. I used the questions in Appendix 19 B to guide me in my observations.

Bias. It must be noted that my function in this study was both as an instructor and as a researcher. Therefore, I had to take steps in order to remove the possibility of bias with regards to my students and the grading of their assignments. In order to ensure that each assignment was graded fairly and without bias, my colleague, Professor Martin and I decided to blind grade them. That is, my colleague and I used rubrics (see Appendices 7, 9, and 11), to grade each assignment. Before grading, each assignment was only identifiable by the students' identification number to ensure that I did not allow prior

judgment or information to influence me. The use of two graders did make the grading process more impartial. Another point I wish to clarify is that although Professor Cohen and I taught the same course, we used different themes and assigned different topics. In my classes, I used the theme of education as a springboard for the comparison-contrast and argumentative essays, and the research paper (Appendices 2, 6, 8, 10). Professor Cohen used the theme of heroes and monsters in all of the essay assignments for her class (Appendices 12, 13 & 14).

Participants from stand-alone composition course. Two participants were recruited from a stand-alone composition class which I taught. They were not enrolled in either the freshman seminar or the library course. They did not have access to designated tutors or counselors either, and had to work with tutors and counselors on a first come first served basis. In other words, they were in the same situation as the majority of Generation 1.5 students in freshman composition classes.

The participants from the stand-alone composition class completed the same assignments as those in the RLC, namely a comparison and contrast essay, an argumentative essay, a research paper, and a reflection essay (Appendices 6, 8, 10, 18). They were also interviewed three times at strategic points in the semester.

Trustworthiness. Guba's (1981) recommendation for trustworthiness, echoed by Creswell and Miller (2000) includes credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The key components of a credible study are the adoption of appropriate methods of data collection and triangulation and the familiarity of the researcher with the site of the study and participants. In this study, I used multiple methods of data collection

such as interviews and written assignments. In addition, I talked to students as well as instructors and tutors in order to get a comprehensive idea of the efficacy of the LC.

Guba also believes that familiarity with the site and participants leads to increased cooperation between researcher and participants. As an instructor at the site, I had easy access to student participants and instructors. In order to maintain confidentiality, I did not disclose the name of the college or the faculty and students who will participate in the study. In the interests of dependability and transferability, I have described the site, participants, methods and circumstances of data collection in a meticulous fashion. I have already included detailed descriptions of the instruments of data collection. This attention to detail explained the conditions under which I obtained the results of the study. Finally, I analyzed the data in as objective and systematic a manner as possible without letting my judgment shape this process.

The practitioner as the researcher. One characteristic of this study is my role as a practitioner and researcher. I was an instructor in two of the three composition classes in this study. Three questions arise because of this situation. The first question concerns my reason for choosing to be intimately linked to my study. Next comes the question of researcher bias which concerns fairness. Were students penalized if they refused to participate in this study? Did the knowledge I gained from my interviews with participants influence my assessment of their papers? For example, did student comments influence my grading in any way? The final question concerns the validity of my observations and the interpretation of data. How accurately could I evaluate courses taught by me and my long-time colleagues and friends?

Much has been said about the impact of an insider researcher, especially about the possibility of bias. However, other researchers (Hockey, 1993; Innes, 2009; Le Gallais, 2008; Mercer, 2007; Sternglass, 1997) have argued that familiarity with the site and participants of the study have many advantages. Innes (2009) while talking of his research of his own community of Native Americans has noted his identity as an insider shifted as he started his studies. Le Gallais and Sternglass have explained the familiarity of insider researchers with the site of research as well as participants served as an advantage and eliminated the need to spend valuable time on introduction procedures. More importantly, as Hockey noted, insiders are not distractions or interruptions. Rather, because of their unobtrusive nature, they can get access to more information and gauge the nuances of what is being said and what is happening. In fact, Sternglass believes that only insiders can discover truly important information, sometimes of a personal nature, that can shed important light on findings. Mercer has suggested that one way of avoiding bias is for researchers to withhold, as far as possible, their views on the topic of their research and to encourage interviewees to speak extensively.

To avoid bias, I required all students, including participants, complete the same writing assignments. Secondly, each assignment was blind graded by two instructors, including myself, according to the rubrics attached. The blind grading process addressed the issue of fairness. I also started the process of data analysis after spring semester had ended, after students had received their final grades and completed teacher evaluations.

My perceptions of LCs also formed part of my bias. My experiences with LCs prior to this study had led me to believe in their general effectiveness as instruments of delivering instruction while acknowledging that their implementation could be improved.

I was encouraged to design this study based on my work in an LC and my desire to understand the ways in which they functioned and ways in which they could be made more efficient.

The final issue was my ability to reflect the work of colleagues and friends accurately. It must be stressed that my purpose in this study was not to investigate the instructional practices, but rather the effect of the learning community on the academic literacies skills of Generation 1.5 students. My colleagues in the LC and I have had many informal discussions about the LC and its usefulness to our students. We have exchanged ideas on teaching styles and class activities. We have also talked extensively about changes we would recommend. Thus, my interviews with my colleagues were an extension of those informal conversations.

In addition, to maintain validity, I used member checks, defined by Creswell and Miller (2000) as, "... taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. With the lens focused on participants, the researchers systematically check the data and the narrative account" (p. 127). In February, 2012, after I had completed analyzing the results, I emailed each participant, including students, instructors, and tutors, to ask them to read my analysis and offer comments. Although the student participants did not respond, my fellow instructors did read the draft version of my findings. It must be stressed that peer evaluations have always been a useful tool for assessment at Windsor Community College. Moreover, a college-wide project benefits from an assessment of an insider who has been intimately associated with it. In that sense, I believed that my study was valuable for the college community.

Data analysis. Data analysis is a multi-step process with many variations. I followed Creswell's (2007) suggestion of summarizing notes immediately after data collection. As I finished each interview, I would take notes on the information I had gathered. Later, as I transcribed interviews, I searched for emergent themes and inserted comments. I repeated this process with every interview I transcribed. Once I had completed transcriptions, I read each of them multiple times to become familiar with the data and identify additional themes. I would revert to earlier interviews I had transcribed in order to identify commonalities.

Although Seidman (2006) focuses on interviews as the principal source of data collection, I relied on writing samples of the participants to generate important data. I used writing samples to yield two different categories of information. First, analyzing each participant's writing samples over time indicated the quality of improvement, if any, in their skills. Secondly, their reflective writing at the start and the end of the semester yielded another layer of information. For instance, it was interesting to note how closely their assessment of their writing skills matched those of their instructors, and what the discrepancies meant. Student interviews, interviews of tutors and instructors, and literacy artifacts served as triangulation tools.

In analyzing the data, I was informed primarily by Wolcott (1994) for describing and interpreting the data and partly by Miles and Huberman (1994) for reducing and coding the data. According to Wolcott, data can be transformed by the process of description, analysis, and interpretation. In the first stage of description, I attempted to present the events in my data as faithfully and in as objective a manner as possible.

However, Wolcott does allow for the fact that no description is completely objective and inevitably bear the imprint of the researcher.

The next stage is what Wolcott terms analysis and Miles and Huberman (1994) call coding. Categorizing the data made it more manageable and led to coding, an integral element in data organization, without simplifying it. Rather as Wolcott (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994) have asserted, I tried to examine the data in order to develop or reconceptualize emerging patterns. At this crucial point, I used inductive reasoning to unearth patterns, relationships, and themes, while constantly using the research questions as an anchor.

The final step, after analysis and coding, is interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). As Wolcott has recommended, at this stage, I reflected on the findings and emerging hypotheses, to look for overarching themes and patterns of contrast and similarity so that a meaningful explanation could emerge. At this stage, I referred back to the original research questions and matched emergent findings to them. Wolcott (1994) maintains that this is the time to constantly suggest alternative scenarios. In other words, the researcher needs to consider situations where different conditions could have affected the output of data in any way. This initial writing process, too, has often prompted me reformulate, refine, and sharpen some of the ideas which consequently, led to a process of knowledge transformation (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987).

The focus of my study was two-fold. Not only did I look at their writing and the changes in their writing, but I also looked at their awareness of being part of the college community. After all, the point of the freshman seminar course was to prepare them for college level credit courses. Thus, my constant goal was to discover in what ways the

assignments and affordances used in the LC could train students to succeed in college courses. I asked the questions: to what extent did the instructors listen to the voice of the participants and use academic literacies in the classroom, to what extent did they attempt to create a dialog between students and teachers, and in what ways did that dialog help students to build on their existing skills.

Teacher reflexivity. In any classroom, as in a workplace, an us-them dichotomy prevails. In an academic setting, it could be the teachers versus the students, or the native speaker of English versus the non-native speaker, the first generation immigrant versus the non-immigrant and so on. I feel compelled to take this into account as I evaluate my philosophy as a teacher. I am shaped as much by my experiences as a first-generation immigrant and a multi-lingual professional as I am by my status as a non-native, yet proficient speaker of English. In addition, I am intrigued by the experiences and expectations my students bring to college. They have all taken advantage of the open-admissions policy at our community college and are proud to be college students. Yet, many of them, especially those who graduated high school, are unaware of the requirements of college and the work required to successfully transfer to a four-year college. They believe the transfer will be as easy as graduating high school and enrolling in a community college. Thus, while the open-admission policy in a community college furthers their dream of higher education, the nature of open-admissions makes them complacent about college requirements and ignorant about the grueling process of becoming college students (Tsao, 2005). Their pride in attending college can quite easily turn to frustration because of the gap between admission and success. Unfortunately, the skills that they do have are often ignored, both by them and their instructors.

This is the case with many of my students, especially Generation 1.5 students. I see my role in the classroom as two-fold. First, I intend to validate their funds of knowledge or the skills, knowledge, experiences, and hopes they bring to the classroom. Secondly, I want to empower them as students and help them develop a deeper awareness of the requirements of college. To that end, I use readings from multiple sources, each of which discusses different aspects of education. I create prompts and activities that encourage them to think about their responsibilities and their attitudes towards schoolwork and explore new career options. That is how I help them acquire, not just academic skills, but academic literacies where they can reflect on their writing and what it means to be skillful, thoughtful writers, regardless of the courses for which they write.

Finally, I draw on my experiences as a student when I teach. During my experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student, both in my native India and in the United States, I have benefited from the collaboration with and support from my peers and professors. All of this has been crucial to my progress as a scholar and an instructor in this country. In addition, as I work on my doctoral journey, I have benefited from the advice and help from a community wider than the immediate one at work and at school. This community consists of scholars, in second language pedagogy and literacy, from universities across the country who have already completed their dissertations and have shared their ideas and their work generously with me. This support from virtual strangers has further strengthened my belief in the importance of community, imagined and real, in academic progress.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the results of my study. As mentioned earlier, this case study focuses on the writing experiences of six participants from three sections of freshman composition classes. It examines the way in which the Learning Community (LC) has shaped the writing experiences of the participants, all Generation 1.5 students. This study also explores the usefulness of the LC from the perspectives of both the instructors and the student participants, henceforth the participants. Finally, this study uses the experiences of two participants from non-LC classes to provide a point of comparison to further investigate the impact of the LC.

Briefly, the design of the study included three sets of participants: students who were in a freshman composition class which was supported by the LC which I headed, students in another freshman composition class supported by a second LC headed by another instructor, and finally, a set of students who worked in a composition class that was not supported by an LC.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each describing the academic journeys of a different set of students.

In the first section, I describe the LC which I headed, hereafter referred to as Researcher-led LC (RLC). I begin by introducing the instructors and tutors involved in this LC and the preparation involved in the planning of assignments in RLC. Next, I inform the reader about the profile and previous academic experiences of each participant, after which I proceed to discuss their experiences in RLC, including their

interactions in and perceptions of the freshman seminar and the library courses. I also provide an overview of their performance in their composition assignments. In analyzing their progress through the semester, I also draw attention to pivotal events in their learning experience. By pivotal events, I refer to those experiences, both before and during their freshman composition course, which significantly impacted their acquisition of academic English. The participants were aware of the significance of some of these events but might have failed to appreciate some others, but remembered all of them enough to narrate them. The idea of pivotal events is similar to Bronson's (2004) conceptualization of critical incidents which he defined as "...moments when they (students) demonstrably changed their perspectives about themselves as students or apprentice academic writers" (p. 52).

I then illustrate interventions, both purposeful and incidental. Intentional interventions refer to deliberate actions taken by instructors and tutors to address issues demonstrated by participants. Incidental interventions evolved naturally from the interactions among the students in RLC. I then proceed to discuss the final writing assignments of the participants.

Each writing assignment will be analyzed from the perspective of the Academic Literacies Model (ALM) (Lea & Street, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006). The ALM evaluates student work through the acquisition of their skills (grammar and organization), socialization (practices shared within each academic community) and finally, the development of their identities as critical researchers and writers. In this study, therefore, I will focus on the participants' grammatical, compositional, and attitudinal progress. Each case study concludes with a table outlining their progress.

This chapter provides a descriptive overview; an interpretation of the data follows in the next chapter.

Researcher-led LC (RLC)

As mentioned earlier, three shared classes made up the LC which I headed, hereafter referred to as RLC. I taught the freshman composition course while Professors Martin⁶ and Feng taught the freshman seminar and the library courses respectively. The two research participants in this LC were Lauren and Marsha. The table below illustrates the constituent members in RLC.

Table 5: *The students, instructors, and tutors in RLC*

Instructors	1. Researcher ---> 2. Prof. Claudia Martin ---> 3. Prof. Elizabeth Feng ---->	1. Freshman Composition 2. Freshman Seminar 3. Library
Student participants	1. Lauren 2. Marsha	
Tutors	1. Regina (worked with Lauren) 2. Tazie (worked with Marsha) 3. Phuong (tutor officially designated for RLC)	

Professor Claudia Martin was the freshman seminar instructor for this LC. She has taught ESL at the college for over seventeen years. She has a M.A. in Instruction and Curricula (ESL). Her areas of interest lie in the use of technology in the ESL classroom.

In the freshman seminar class, Professor Martin's objectives were threefold: to engage students in metacognitive thinking, to work on study skills and strategies, and to reinforce and review those academic skills which are introduced in the freshman composition class. In her course, she focused on certain strategies that she deemed most crucial for student success, namely, those on note-taking, test-taking, time-management,

⁶ Names of all participants and institutions have been changed to preserve anonymity.

and learning styles. Like many of our colleagues in the ESL department, she believed that development of these skills led to an increase in the critical thinking abilities of students which, in turn, led them to assess their own learning styles and skills. As students gained an awareness of their learning, she believed that they could gradually become active learners, which in turn would lead to greater engagement on their part. It must be remembered that nurturing student engagement through active learning is a primary objective of LCs (Jehangir, 2009; Lardner & Malnarich, 2008; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

In addition to working on study skills and strategies, Professor Martin also reinforced skills taught in the composition classroom. To that end, she used passages from the mandated textbook for her course to practice summarizing and paraphrasing, two activities commonly taught in composition classes. As mentioned earlier, one rationale behind the creation of LCs was to create a connection between two or more courses through the use of common lessons.

The library course: The instructor and the course

The library instructor, Professor Elizabeth Feng has worked in Windsor Community College for thirteen years and currently heads the Lakefront campus library of the college. She was a high school English teacher in her native China. At Windsor Community College, she works closely with the ESL department. As a second language learner and English teacher, she considers herself a role model for second language learners, is sensitive to their needs, and has trained the library staff to work efficiently with them. She is particularly invested in encouraging students to read as extensively as possible, especially in an age when much reading material is digitized

The one-credit library course that Professor Feng developed introduces students to the physical and online sites of the library, taught them how to conduct internet research, and instructed them in the methods of navigating specific library databases and working on citations. To help with citations, she has developed easy-to-follow manuals for students and also introduced them to *Noodle Tools*, an online citation manager. Professor Feng worked with both LCs and tailored her assignments to fit the requirements of each set of teachers.

Tutors working with RLC

Tutors were an important component in the design of the LCs. At Windsor Community College, the tutoring center or the Academic Learning Center (ALC) employed paraprofessional and peer tutors who chose the subjects they preferred to tutor, subject to their grade point average in those courses. One tutor was designated for each LC although students were permitted to consult with any tutor they wanted.

Tutors have a unique role in the success of underprepared students in a higher education setting and offer a bridge between their class objectives and current knowledge. In the the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) report of 2010, Arendale has documented the scaffolding tutors provide to college students, especially those from minority or high-poverty homes.

Tutors in the ALC were given a week-long orientation where they learned how to work with students and to use materials relevant to their subject. As Thonus (2003) has recommended, the fundamental principle for tutors was to establish sociopragmatic conventions of each session. Accordingly, tutors laid out the ground rules to make each session effective. First, they established that the most important principle of their work

was to encourage students to remain active participants in the learning process. Basically, tutors could respond to queries of the students, but not proofread their writing or do their work for them. In other words, students had to come with specific questions for the tutors for the tutoring session to be fruitful. While this was a reasonable goal, some tutors acknowledged that waiting for students to locate their own mistakes made the tutoring process convoluted. In fact, Tanzie, one of the tutors working with this LC, commented:

I ask them what they have trouble in. They tell me what. We can't really do proofreading and corrections, but sometimes it's very difficult not to do that. What I look at is, well, I read the whole thing and I look for organization or does she have grammar faults, sentence structure or whatever it is and I ask her, "Do you think there is anything wrong in this sentence?" and stuff like that. So that's what we do.

(Tanzie, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

Tanzie realized that she would have to guide students to locate their errors. Regina, another tutor, also echoed the same sentiment:

They are not supposed to ask me to help them without asking for specific questions. But if I turned everyone away that didn't have specific questions, no one would come to me. I don't turn anyone away. I will ask them to read what they wrote and fix things so that they sound better.

(Regina, personal communication, June 17, 2011)

Thus, both Tanzie and Regina and indeed every tutor at the ALC attempted to be flexible while following the tutoring requirements. They realized that the rationale behind this approach was to make students more invested in their own learning and prevent them from manipulating tutors into writing their essays for them. This approach made the tutoring process seem longer and more labor intensive, but students who persisted with it found themselves becoming active and independent learners. Both Tanzie and Regina, however, were willing to offer direct suggestions and recommendations to students who

were unable to articulate their questions on realizing, as did the tutors in Thonus' (2003) study, that the spoon-feeding approach would initially be more helpful to the tutees.

Phuong: Designated tutor for RLC. Phuong was the peer tutor assigned to the RLC. Originally from Vietnam, she had completed the ESL program at Windsor Community College, and at the time of the study, was taking classes in the Criminal Justice department at the college. Her hours of tutoring were in the morning, so that she could continue to take her classes which started at 2 pm. She visited our class once at the beginning of the semester and introduced herself to the students. However, neither of the participants in this LC visited Phuong, mainly because of scheduling conflicts. Many students in this LC had to leave for their jobs immediately after their classes, which was when Phuong was scheduled to work in the ALC.

Lauren and Marsha, the RLC participants worked with different tutors. Lauren consulted Regina, a paraprofessional while Marsha was helped by Tanzie, a peer tutor.

Regina's tutoring background. Unlike most of the ALC tutors, Regina was a paraprofessional, not a peer tutor. A native speaker of English, she was, at the time of this study, working towards a degree in child psychology. Older than many of the peer tutors in the ALC, she brought a combination of tutoring expertise, understanding of student issues, and tough love to her job. She had started her job at the ALC primarily as a tutor of psychology and sociology, and later began to work with composition and ESL students as well. She had been a designated tutor for an ESL- LC in the previous semester.

Regina's approach to tutoring was based on her years of experience and knowledge of first-year college students. She knew that many students had problems with critical reading and thinking skills. Therefore, she focused on improving the reading

skills of her tutees and would often have them read aloud and explain passages to her. This activity helped her to assess the gap in their comprehension of reading materials. Regina generally enjoyed working with ESL students except for one aspect. She admitted:

I find that with ESL, it is a little hard because students make so many grammar mistakes, like sentence structure or verb use. I find that teaching grammar is draining.

(Regina, personal communication, June 17, 2011)

Although Regina recognized her under-preparedness in dealing with one aspect of ESL tutoring, she was considered an expert tutor with regard to her expertise in content areas and patience with students, and regarded highly by her employees and tutees.

Tanzie's tutoring background. Tanzie was a peer tutor who worked at the ALC. Although she was not the designated tutor for this LC, she had earlier worked with other LCs and was familiar with its concept and some of the instructors.

Tanzie, originally from Bhutan, had finished high school in her native country. Although Tanzie's first language was Dzongkha,⁷ she had received her education in English and had also learned Hindi⁸ in school. On coming to the United States three years earlier, she had enrolled in a public university. She had placed into a mainstream section of freshman composition, but soon felt uncomfortable because her instructor required her students to respond to a wide variety of topics on American culture, topics to which Tanzie had had little exposure. Tanzie asked to be transferred to the ESL section of freshman composition. She enjoyed working with this professor and believed that he had

⁷ Around 19 languages are spoken in Bhutan. Dzongkha, an Indo-Tibetan language, is the one of two official languages in the country. Many schools also use English, the second official language of the country, as a language of instruction.

⁸ Hindi is one of the official languages in neighboring India. Since many Bhutanese children are sent to India for their education, members of many Bhutanese families have varying levels of proficiency in Hindi.

pushed her to expand her vocabulary and refine her writing style. Thus, in spite of being a peer tutor, she was not a second language learner of English, and her tutoring style was informed by the education she had received in her native Bhutan and the university composition class she had taken in the US.

Tanzie transferred to Windsor Community College and into its nursing program and decided to work as a tutor. She had worked with many ESL students and felt that the ESL program at the college trained them to organize their essays competently with an introduction, appropriate support, and a conclusion.

Preparation for LC classes

Before the start of Spring 2011 semester, Professors Martin, Feng, and I met to plan our objectives for the RLC. As the composition instructor, I explained the assignments for that course, and the skills on which I would focus. The assignments consisted of principally of two essays and one research paper (Appendices 6 through 10).

Table 6 : *List of assignments in RLC*

Assignment 1	Comparison/ contrast essay
Assignment 2	Argumentative essay
Assignment 3	Research paper

To complete their writing assignments, students had to use their reading skills and work on summarizing and paraphrasing which would help them to analyze and synthesize information. Professor Martin planned to reinforce reading skills in her class while Professor Feng would work on the internet research skills and citations. As we planned the assignments for the semester, we were guided by Lichtenstein's (2005) tenet of creating a positive classroom environment (PCE) in all of our classes. A PCE is possible when LC instructors collaboratively design their syllabi and assignments. Such shared

assignments make it possible for students to perceive the link between the shared classes and reinforce skills that they are being taught.

In designing assignments for the LC, both Professor Martin and I were informed by the academic literacies framework (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007).

Drawing on Lillis and Scott's (2007) framework, I crafted composition prompts that were designed to be transformative rather than narrative. Each prompt encouraged student participation and opinions but did not grant privilege to any one perspective over others. Through each assignment, all three instructors attempted to explore the strengths and the knowledge students brought to the classroom as well as their outlook on various topics. Students were expected to explore each topic through the lens of their own experience and additional research. We wanted to hear what they had to say, and use that as a starting point in the writing course. We hoped our students would improve their skills in grammar, syntax, and organization as well as their knowledge about cultural norms.

RLC: Demographic profile and participant selection

The RLC had fourteen students, from eight different countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Thailand, the Philippines, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, and Brazil. The students ranged in ages from twenty to thirty nine. On the first day of class, after discussing the course description and objectives, I briefly talked about my dissertation study and handed out a questionnaire (Appendix 1). Two students, Lauren and Marsha, whose profiles fit the criteria for my study, agreed to participate. I then made appointments for initial interviews. The following tables explain the schedule of classes and participant profiles of the RLC.

Table 7: *Schedule of classes in RLC*

Tuesday		Thursday
8 am -9.05 am	9.15 am- 10.05 am	8 am – 10.40 am
Freshman seminar	Library	Freshman composition

Table 8: *Profile of the participants in RLC*

Name	Country of origin	Native language	Year of arrival in the US	Age on arrival in US	Grade on arrival in US	Age at the time of this study
Lauren	Colombia	Spanish	2004	15	10	22
Marsha	The Philippines	Tagalog	2003	14	7	23

From complacency to confidence: Lauren’s journey as a Generation 1.5 student

Profile and previous academic experiences. Lauren moved to the United States at the age of fifteen from her native Colombia in 2004. At that time, neither Lauren nor her parents spoke or understood English. Her parents decided to settle in Lakewood because of the sizeable Spanish-speaking population in that city. Neither of her parents had graduated high school. Lauren’s mother stayed home and looked after Lauren’s younger brother, while her father worked in a local Colombian bakery.

After moving to the United States, Lauren was enrolled in the local high school, and because she spoke no English, was placed in its bilingual program. In high school, her lack of English did not lead to her being challenged academically, largely because she rarely had to use English. There were enough Spanish-speaking teachers and students to make Lauren feel almost at home, and she recalled there being little academic pressure.

When she did not pass the HSPA⁹, she was allowed to take the SRA¹⁰ like many other immigrant high school students in Spanish. She graduated high school upon successful completion of the SRA. At the time of her high school graduation, Lauren was still enrolled in the bilingual program and had never taken any regular English classes.

On completing high school, Lauren explored her options, talked to some of her friends, and decided she wanted to earn a degree as a radiographer. Windsor Community College was close to her home, and Lauren had also learned of its partnership with the Goldenberg School of Nursing¹¹, a highly reputed nursing school in the county. Lauren realized that if she applied for financial aid, she could start taking courses towards her degree. Lauren took the ESL college placement test mandated for non-native speakers of English. The results of the college placement test indicated that she be placed in a high intermediate ESL course. She would need to take three semesters of ESL instruction before she could take the credit level freshman composition course. During the decision making process, Lauren's parents were encouraging, but not involved. Never having gone to college themselves, they felt proud of their daughter for taking such a step, but were unable to help her find information or decide on her career options. Most of the information that Lauren gathered was from her friends. In doing so, Lauren drew from the learning networks (Nelson, 2004) to which she had access, namely her friends. Her reliance on her own social and cultural resources made Lauren's decision to start school

⁹ The HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment) is administered in high schools in New Jersey to students in the eleventh grade. This examination is used to determine if students have met the reading, writing, and mathematical requirements of high school. Students who fail this examination are allowed to take it one more time.

¹⁰ SRA (Special Review Assessment) is administered to those students who fail the HSPA on their second attempt. Although it is considered an alternative to the HSPA, it can be taken in separate sections, which makes it less overwhelming for students.

¹¹ The name of the college has been changed to preserve anonymity.

particularly meaningful. Lauren's decision to start classes at Windsor Community College was a pivotal academic event as it was the first major decision that she had taken.

In her initial interview with me, Lauren described her language learning experiences in the ESL program at Windsor Community College. She recalled the difficulty she faced during that semester of ESL class, especially the first few weeks.

That was because I didn't speak too much English and that was hard for me.

(Lauren, personal interview, February 4, 2011)

Lauren's ESL classes met four days a week, three hours each day. After classes, she went to her factory job, assembling digital cameras. Her Spanish-speaking boss ensured that she did not have to read instructions in either English or Spanish. This period in Lauren's life is notable for another pivotal event. Lauren began to read *People* magazine because of the pictures and stories about celebrities. She was working on her English at school and speaking Spanish at home and at work. However, she realized that while she was gaining some proficiency in English, she was slowly moving farther away from Spanish. Even in her native Colombia, she had never completely developed the habit of reading in Spanish, and finally stopped upon coming to the United States. Lauren acknowledged her linguistic problems. In that same interview she admitted:

I don't speak too much English when I go to work. When I going to write in Spanish, I don't know, um, like wrong words. I don't know why that is. [sic]

(Lauren, personal interview, February 4, 2011)

Lauren had realized that she had reached a linguistic crossroad where despite her oral proficiency in both languages, she was slowly losing her intimacy with Spanish and had to fumble for once familiar words without quite having begun to master academic or oral English. Researchers (e.g. Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Harklau, 1999; Goen, Porter,

Swanson & vanDommelen, 2002) have noted this characteristic in Generation 1.5 students who have oral but not academic proficiency in their two languages.

The results of the ESL placement test placed Lauren in level four, a higher intermediate level, in the ESL program at Windsor Community College. Then, she went on to complete levels five and six which complete the program. She persisted with her classes by working conscientiously on her grammar, reading, and writing homework although mastering grammar rules remained a challenge. Her difficulty with her grammar classes led her to fail her writing and grammar courses in level six. Her struggle in her final semester of ESL courses is not unusual; many students struggle with the intensive grammar instruction and stringent requirements of reading and writing classes in the upper levels. Lauren persevered and passed both courses on her second attempt, her writing course with a “D” which is the minimum passing grade and her grammar course with a “C”, an average grade. After finally completing level 6, she had fulfilled the prerequisites for freshman composition courses. However, since she had received a “D”, the lowest passing grade, in her ESL writing course the previous semester, she was required to enroll in a composition course attached to an LC. Subsequently, she registered as a student in RLC. Because she was still on financial aid, she was required to enroll for a minimum of twelve credits. The table below illustrates the course sequences taken by Lauren in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.

Table 9: *Sequence of courses taken by Lauren in Fall 2010 & Spring 2011*

Fall 2010	ESL level 6 grammar (6 credits)	ESL level 6 reading (3 credits)	ESL level 6 writing (3 credits)			Total -12 credits
Spring 2011	Freshman composition- 3 credits	Freshman Seminar- 2 credits	Library course-1 credit	Psych 101- 3 credits	Math 101- 3 credits	Total- 12 credits

Lauren's transition from ESL to regular college courses increased her work load since these credit-bearing, content courses were now distributed across three departments.

Academic experiences during the LC. Lauren faced many challenges during the semester. In the three previous semesters, she had taken courses within the ESL program. In that program, she had twelve credit hours of integrated ESL courses (reading, writing, and grammar). Spring 2011 was the first semester where she was required to take academic courses across different departments. In addition, she also continued with her full time job at the factory. Lauren believed that she was able to cope adequately with most of her classes although her biggest challenge was with her psychology course. In her initial interview with me, Lauren commented on her classes:

- Lauren: It's good, except for Psychology classes. Is very hard for me.
 Researcher: Why is it hard? Is the reading hard for you?
 Lauren: Not really. Is because she always give us the paper but she doesn't take the time to make sure we are doing good. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, Feb 2, 2011)

Lauren was affected by the seemingly detached instructor. Surprisingly, Lauren revealed that she and her classmates did not believe that the reading required for that class was an issue even though most of them were former ESL students.

- Researcher: So, is it the material you are reading or the assignments that you are doing?
 Lauren: I think, it is as I say we read the chapter, she give us the paper that we have to read and the question and to find it out and that is it.
 Researcher: And does she tell you "This is what you should be reading, this is what you should be studying"?
 Lauren: Yeah, she does that and about the paper. So when we are doing the exam, she take out examples, and we have to decide... what is that, if it is hypothesis or something like that. That's what we don't understand.
 Researcher: So you are not familiar with the terms.

Lauren: She give us examples and then we have to decide [sic].

(Lauren, personal communication, Feb 2, 2011)

Lauren's experience in the psychology class reflects the issue of academic socialization that Lea and Street (1998) have discussed. Lea and Street have asserted that part of the learning experiences involves familiarizing students with the terms and conventions of particular disciplines. Analyzing academic articles and locating the hypothesis formed part of the academic conversation in Lauren's psychology class. However, Lauren had not received implicit directions either about commonly used terminology or on completing her assignments. Lauren faced the same predicament as do many second language learners, especially Generation 1.5 students who lack familiarity with subject-specific academic terms. As Leki (1999) notes, the gap between the inadequacy of their academic preparation in high school and the expectations of their college instructors is a source of frustration for both. At the same time, the lack of meaningful dialog between students and their teacher only aggravates an already unhelpful situation. Building on the principles of Community of Practice (CoP) espoused by Lave and Wenger (1991), Lea and Street (1998) insist that students should be initiated into the principles and vocabulary of that academic community by instructors and peers. In Lauren's case, this initiation had either not taken place.

Although Lauren's grades in her previous writing and grammar classes had not been exemplary, she was confident of her skills which she believed were adequate:

As a student I have some skills like I am good reading, and also I really like to study, so I really focus on my career (major) [sic].

(Lauren, personal communication, February 2, 2011)

She was, however, concerned about the time needed to balance work and the twelve-credit load she was carrying that semester. At this early point in the semester, Lauren did not believe that she needed to worry about any other aspects of her learning.

Lauren's experiences in the freshman seminar course. At the beginning of the semester, Lauren failed to see the benefits of the linked courses. In an interview with me, she reported her frustration at how the freshman seminar class was adding to her stress rather than helping her with her composition assignments:

The thing is that when we was in, was in the ESL level 6 (the final ESL class), somebody told us that we should take freshman seminar class because those class is going to help us with the composition class, so that's why we take them. But when we came here, we got homework from here, and homework from there, so that made us very stressed. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, February 2, 2011)

Like many of her classmates, Lauren initially did not understand the connection between the writing in the composition course and the techniques taught in the freshman seminar course. She resented having to take non-required course which seemingly added to her work load. Outwardly, however, Lauren displayed a calm demeanor in all her classes, showed up on time and made a sincere effort to hand in all her assignments.

Lauren's experience in the library course. Lauren was initially confused about the role of the library course because she believed libraries are physical repositories of books. Therefore, the library course, with its emphasis on online and database searches proved disorienting to Lauren.

In the library course, why we don't go to the library? We spend like all our time to find authors and different styles. We are here for three weeks, and that's what we do. But sometimes I think it's only one credit, so I don't care.

(Lauren, personal communication, February 2, 2011)

As Lauren revealed, she had not expected to be performing online searches in the library course. The insistence on repeating the same assignments over the first three weeks also seemed monotonous to Lauren. Nevertheless, the straightforward and stress-free nature of the course meant that Lauren was not overly perturbed by this course although she could not initially assess its worth.

Thus, Lauren started the semester with an initial distrust of the freshman seminar and the library courses while also struggling with her psychology course. However, her attitude in my class as well as the seminar and library courses remained positive.

Composition assignments. The first essay in the composition class was a comparison/contrast essay where students had to discuss the similarities or differences between their lives and those of their instructors (Appendix 6). The essay prompt was based on one created by Reid and Kroll (1995) who suggested that an ideal essay prompt, while fulfilling course objectives, should be approachable to students, both in terms of their phrasing and the content. It should encourage students to share their experiences and acknowledge complex solutions. In class, I had reviewed the structure of comparison/contrast essays, emphasized the need to write a focused introduction which stated the thesis clearly, and discussed some sample essays.

Lauren's essay, titled *Teacher vs. Students*, contained less than 500 words and started with the following introduction:

Become a teacher or student is one of the biggest challenges in the life. Some students believe that be a teacher is just wake up early in the morning, go to school, teach something and that is all. But all of this is not easy as we think. And sometimes teachers also think the same way as we believe. The most important thing is that everybody has a life, and there are many differences between teachers and students, and some of those are; family, work and professionalism. [sic]

(Lauren, Comparison/contrast essay, March 3, 2011)

In this introduction, Lauren stepped out of her customary role of a student and tried to empathize with her instructors. She drew parallels between the responsibilities of students and their instructors. She also tried to draft a thesis statement which attempted to employ parallel structure to highlight three points of differences between students and instructors.

Nevertheless, this passage demonstrated Lauren's difficulties with grammar, content, and appropriate use of vocabulary. Problems with grammar were most noticeable in the failure to use of gerunds in the first and the second sentences. In addition, the content of the introduction suffered from a lack of focus while the thesis statement neither followed logically from the initial part of the introduction nor did it articulate a central idea. Finally, Lauren struggled with problems of word choice as evidenced in the word *professionalism*.

In a mid-semester interview with me, Lauren discussed her perspective on her writing style. She realized that her writing was not perfect although she could articulate neither the specific challenges nor the appropriate process for working on them. She did feel, however, that the use of parallel structure had strengthened her thesis statement.

- Researcher: What do you think are the strongest parts of your essay?
 Lauren: The thesis statement
 Researcher: And the weakest?
 Lauren: The main points.
 Researcher: Do you create an outline before you start writing?
 Lauren: No.
 Researcher: Have you tried creating outlines?
 Lauren: Not really.
 Researcher: But you know about outlines, right. You've done prewriting strategies, right? So do you think an outline might help you?
 Lauren: Maybe?
 Researcher: So, if you create an outline, it may take more time in the beginning, but might be easier for you.
 Lauren: Yeah?

(Lauren, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Lauren was not being obtuse in her response to my question. As evident in her conversations with me, it was simply too difficult for her to find the time or the energy to use pre-writing strategies, write her essay, and then revise her writing. Her writing process was straightforward, though it probably took a lot of effort. In that same mid-semester interview, she continued to describe her writing process:

Lauren: I just start writing and writing and writing all my ideas and then I try to um...

Researcher: Revise?

Lauren: Yeah and then put it into order the way I like

Researcher: How much time do you spend?

Lauren: Like 2 hours?

Researcher: 2 hours. So, once you finish, do you go back and look at it and make changes?

Lauren: Yeah

Researcher: And do you make changes the same day or do you wait for a couple of days?

Lauren: The same day.

(Lauren, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

With all the responsibilities Lauren had, the courses she had to study for, and her work, she could not get used to a process which required her to spend a lot of time going over the same assignment multiple times over the course of a week. It was simply more efficient to finish everything at one sitting. The fact that she could devote that amount of time to a single challenging activity was a testament to her tenacity and reflected her self assessment that she liked to study. Yet, during the writing process, she did not use the sample essays I had given her or look at the notes she had taken in class. Her conversations with me revealed little effort on her part to do any reading that could support her in her writing.

In that first essay, at the compositional level, Lauren made an attempt to organize her ideas. She followed the five-paragraph format with three body paragraphs in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. Each paragraph started with an appropriate topic sentence, and words of transition separated ideas. In addition, Lauren made an effort to weave her own experiences into the essay and empathize with her instructors. For example, in the second body paragraph, Lauren discussed the toll inflicted on both teachers and students by their respective jobs:

Second, we know that everybody has to work and make money. Some of us have easy jobs to do or hard work to do, but I believe that in this case the teachers have the easy work to do. Despite the fact, teachers have to deal with students, who sometimes are rude; they already know how to handle the situation with them. When the teachers finish with their classes, they spend some part of the day thinking about the next lesson [sic] and being ready for the next day. But for us it is not so easy because we can't bring the homework to work and sometimes we go direct from college to work. So it can be the worse part for the student and the best part for the teachers.

(Lauren, comparison/contrast essay, March 3, 2011)

In this excerpt, Lauren's opinions and therefore, her voice, were clear. Lauren acknowledged that teachers face problems at work but stated that they eventually do not compare with those faced by college students. The point she made here was valid, yet she failed to adequately develop it or provide examples. For the most part, punctuation and occasional spelling errors did not detract from the meaning of her writing although towards the end of the paragraph, she gradually lost control over the syntax.

Lauren's writing reflected issues with punctuation, syntax, organization, and the use of transition words, issues faced by many Generation 1.5 writers. As Crosby (2007) and Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) have discovered in their respective longitudinal studies,

Generation 1.5 writers struggle to express their thoughts accurately because they lack adequate vocabulary, which, in turn, stems from their issues with reading.

Although Lauren believed she had strong reading skills, I realized, on reading her essays and talking to her, that she had limited critical reading skills. She found it difficult to refer to the most basic notes and include them in her writing. For instance, she could have developed ideas in her essays had she at least read her class notes. Part of the preparation for writing essays included discussing the prompt in class and attempting to create an outline. In addition, while Lauren was comfortable working in groups, she did not feel confident having anyone else apart from her friend Maria reading her essays, and nor did she ask to read her peers' essays even on my recommendation. Yet, she insisted that her strength as a student lay in her reading skills, not writing or speaking.

For her second essay, Lauren had to rely more extensively on her reading skills. In this argumentative essay, she had to argue for or against the need for a college degree. After discussing argumentation and its structure in class, I had distributed two readings from the *New York Times*. In one, David Leonhardt (2010) had elaborated on the advantages of a college degree. This essay was a response to an article by Jacques Steinberg (2010) who argued that the time and money spent on earning a college degree could not compensate for its advantages. After discussing the two essays, I had asked students to explain and support their position on the need for a college .

Lauren asserted that a college degree was essential, and used this introduction:

Many students do not want to graduate in 6 years because for them those years will be a waste of time. Finish high school and then enroll in the University is what many are doing; however, many of them have had problems in basic skills as a writing, reading or listening. Therefore, two years in college is important and necessary to have a solid base; also, to have better opportunities.

(Lauren, argumentative essay, March 31, 2011)

Lauren's introduction started with the position opposing hers, but the following sentences seemed random and unfocused. She had continued with her errors in the use of gerunds. Her thesis statement expressed her position and support but once again, lacked parallel structure. She continued:

The life in college will help any student who wants to create success both in college and in life. For example, in college the students improve the essential skills such a reading, note-taking, studying, memorizing, test-taking and writing. Each course has a way of teaching; but the teachers put into practice those methods in the students to have a rich base. In addition, they also learn the empowering process of critical and creative problems in the common life. Many colleges offer courses to involve students with everyday life.

(Lauren, argumentative essay, March 31, 2011)

A quick reading of this body paragraph seems to indicate that on the surface, class discussions, instruction, and peer interaction seemed not to have helped Lauren much with grammar or control over language. There was not a single reference to any of the readings even though we had worked on using quotations and paraphrasing passages in class. And yet, a closer examination reveals that Lauren had internalized some of the topics covered in the freshman seminar course when she talked about the values of note-taking, studying, memorizing, or writing. Her language demonstrated minimal errors in the use of articles and spelling; however, her comprehension and metacognitive skills seemed to be improving. Where earlier she had complained about getting homework from each course in the LC, now she perceived a connection between the two as evidenced by her allusion to critical thinking. Her attempt to engage with the topics seemed an important step in Lauren's journey towards acquiring academic literacy skills.

Purposeful interventions. Lauren's writing was characterized by first language interference at the level of grammar. At the compositional level, it was marked by lack of

organization and development. Her inability to develop the content of her essay probably stemmed from her weak reading skills. The limited time she could devote to her homework was also a factor. In order to address these issues, her other instructors and I worked with her in class in one-on-one sessions. In addition, Lauren was persuaded to work with a tutor in the ALC. Finally, the LC counselor worked with Lauren help her improve her time management skills. In addition, we asked a former student of the LC to give a short presentation about time management.

Instructor-led sessions. After Lauren had worked on her second essay, Lauren and I decided to work on improving her introduction. One of the required textbooks for the composition course was *A Writer's Reference* co-authored by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers (2011). This writing handbook is divided into sections, each focusing on separate areas of writing such as grammar, the writing process, the citation process, among others. Lauren located the sections on writing introductions and using parallel structure. We practiced creating thesis statements on a small variety of topics, and the more we applied the rules, the easier the structure became for Lauren. She realized that her earlier attempts at writing thesis statements had been stymied by her lack of familiarity with word forms. She believed that she could now use dictionaries to help her with identifying word forms. Her growing awareness of the usefulness of the handbook and the dictionary as tools was a pivotal event in her learning process. When I again recommended the Academic Learning Center (ALC), she agreed to visit a tutor in spite of her busy schedule.

Tutoring sessions with Regina. Lauren visited the ALC on my prompting to meet Phuong, the designated tutor for her LC. However, Phuong's work hours did not match

Lauren's availability for tutoring. Instead, she started working with Regina, a paraprofessional tutor.

In the first session, Regina worked with Lauren as she had worked with her other students. As mentioned earlier, Regina was interested in helping her tutees develop their reading skills. She specified the ways in which she helped Lauren improve her reading:

Well, Lauren read a section, and then I asked her to explain it back to me as she understood it. And then if I saw she didn't understand it correctly, I discussed it with her till I thought she had got it. I sat with her for however long it took.

(Regina, personal communication, June 17, 2011)

Thus, Regina guided Lauren through the reading materials for the argumentative essay. She also showed Lauren how to navigate through the index of her writing handbook to search for information. She also actively used dictionaries with Lauren. Like other tutors, Regina was not allowed to access the internet when tutoring unless absolutely necessary. So, she stressed the importance of a dictionary and modeled its use.

I asked her to look for redundancy and use different words. I have a dictionary on my desk, and we would look through the dictionary and look for synonyms. I tell my students, I am an English tutor and I need the tools. I need my dictionary.

(Regina, personal communication, June 17, 2011)

In helping Lauren work with the writing handbook and the dictionary, Regina was reinforcing skills which I had taught Lauren in class. Finally, in working with her essays, Regina had Lauren read out her draft out loud. Regina knew that reading essays aloud helped students to locate some errors. She recommended that Lauren write her sentences down exactly as she said them, and not try too many ambitious constructions. At the ALC in Windsor Community College, tutors and students are not bound by time blocks, so Regina did not rush Lauren. She was prepared to spend however much time Lauren

needed. The tutoring logs I received from the ALC indicated that the first session between Lauren and Regina ran for almost an hour and thirty minutes.

Unlike Regina, Lauren was always in a rush. She had to go to work from school and when she returned home, she was tired. She realized that school provided the environment most conducive to doing her school work, and her visits to the tutor were helpful, but did not always have time to stay back in school after classes. In the following passage, Lauren explained her dilemma to me.

The worse thing is that I have to work in the afternoon and when I go home is not enough time to do everything that I have to do. I don't really have some solutions for my situation because I took the decision to study full time, work full time.
[sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, March 28, 2011)

In fact, like many other students, Lauren had forgotten to allot time for actual studying and completing homework when she was making up her schedule. From Monday through Thursday, she spent a total of twelve hours at school. When classes finished at 10.40 am, she would go home for a quick meal and get ready for her shift which started at 1 pm. She worked six days a week from 1 pm to 9 pm, with two short breaks. Lauren admitted that her work was not exhausting, but that on week days, she had little time to herself. Sunday was the only day that she had for herself, but she had to go to church with her family. Thus, between her classes and work, she did not have time for other activities. The only option was for her to take fewer courses which would lead her to lose her financial aid.

This lack of time prevented Lauren from visiting Regina more than two times over the semester. Many of Lauren's peers have faced this problem. When they leave the shelter of the ESL program, they are often unprepared for the time they need to devote to

out-of-class preparation. Therefore, one of the topics covered in the freshman seminar class is time management. Professor Martin, who taught the freshman seminar class, had students chart their tasks over a period of twenty four hours, and most of them were shocked to see how little time they had to study or even to relax. For Lauren, too, this activity was an eye-opener because she discovered that she was overbooked.

Doing this assignment make me feel so bad because I found that I don't spend enough time in what really important, my family or even taking care of me. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, March 28, 2011)

The counselor for the LC, Allison, too visited each student, in class and outside, many times, and helped them with their time management issues on a more personal basis. Where Professor Martin used class activities and group discussions, Allison worked with each person to suggest how they could squeeze time from their busy days.

Professor Martin and I explored other avenues of explaining time management to the LC students. One day we arranged for Wilson, a Taiwanese student from a former LC, to talk about time management. Wilson used the analogy of a glass filled with stones to describe how he found time for his activities. Where most students looked for big chunks of time to do their homework, Wilson would look for little pockets of time, represented by the small spaces of air between the stones, in which he could do parts of his assignment, rather than the whole activity. He advised the students to use their time efficiently:

If you come to class fifteen minutes before time, do some reading for your psychology class. Even if you can't do whole reading, you can do some reading or review something.

(Wilson, class presentation, March 22, 2011)

For most of the students, Wilson's idea, though novel, appeared realistic. Coming from a student rather than their teachers, also made it seem more practical.

Incidental interventions: peer interactions and surrogacy tutoring. Lauren had met Maria, who became her closest friend, when she first came to Windsor Community College in 2007. Their shared nationality was an initial factor in their friendship, but Lauren slowly came to rely on Maria's tenacity and outspokenness, qualities she herself lacked. Maria, a single mother of a young child, too treasured Lauren's support and friendship, and the two often tried to register for the same courses.

Lauren and Maria helped each other with their papers. They each wrote their essays at home and then had the other peer-edit and make suggestions. The designated tutor Phuong had visited their classroom and talked about the tutoring services available. Maria had visited her once, but Lauren did not meet her before writing her essay because she felt that she had done a fairly good job with it. However, Maria did encourage Lauren to make time to visit the tutors, and in doing so, reinforced my appeals for students to seek tutoring help.

As a result of taking classes in the LC, Lauren became friendly, not only with Maria, but with a larger group of students. As Tinto (1997a, 1997b) has asserted, a successful LC encourages collaboration and cooperation among peers, thus strengthening their social networks and easing their transition into college courses. Because Lauren and her peers took three classes together, they became more comfortable with each other, and Lauren developed greater confidence in contributing her ideas to the class. She believed that her membership in this community had helped her to improve her speaking skills.

I learn a lot because they always corrected us, because they have more English to speak. I feel I can understand now better and speak more too. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

Final writing assignment. In the composition class, students started working on their research paper during the seventh week of class. This assignment is one of the most challenging ones since it involves locating, analyzing, and synthesizing information. Writing research papers is a requirement in most content courses, and is a familiar concept to most graduates of American high schools. For many Generation 1.5 students, however, library research and source-based writing remains, however, a novel writing assignment (Asher, Case, & Zhong, 2009) because they spend more time in their language learning process.

For their research paper (Appendix 10), I had continued with the theme of education and asked students to consider the role of technology in education. I had given them three options on which to focus their research: distance education, assistive technology, or gaming in education. Professor Martin and I have often talked about the role of technology in education and the attitude of our students towards it. Therefore, through this research paper, I hoped that our students would have an opportunity to develop their understanding of technology, its scope, and its ever-expanding boundaries. By this point in the semester, Professor Feng had already trained them in basic internet searches and evaluation of websites. When we started working on the research paper activity in class, she worked on helping them look through academic databases using Boolean searches.

Lauren chose to research distance education. As a time-saving option, this topic seemed relevant to her as well as her friend Maria. This time, they worked with three other classmates. Together, they looked for articles, talked about them, and helped each

other with creating their outlines. Students were required to write at least five pages, but Lauren only managed to do four. Here is her introduction to the research paper:

Do you believe that distance education is a good option for everyone? Well, although there has been too much controversy about it and many people are not agreed about this new way of teaching, it has become as a good option for many college students and even for high school students. The technology is helping people in many ways and the most important thing is that it became really useful in the education. Over the time the internet has increase popularity and schools and colleges have tried to take advantage of it. In this way of study there are much more flexibility, convenience and inexpensiveness. [sic]

(Lauren, research paper assignment, May 2, 2011)

Of her all her assignments, this was the first one where Lauren had used a hook, albeit not completely original, background information, and an acceptable thesis statement.

Unlike the introductions of her previous essays, this one demonstrated a continuity of ideas as well as a strong central thesis. She approved of the word *controversy* and looked for ways in which she could include it. Lauren went on to present issues many have had with distance education. She stated:

The big dilemma about of this new way of teaching is how people can have the same level of education if they do not go to school or a college and do not see a personal teacher (Smith, 2003). But the answer is very easy; although people may not believe they get the same level of education as any other person who is personally in a classroom, they have homework to do, projects and many other things as a regular student who have attend to a school, they receive the same things and sometimes they have to make more than a regular student. So distance education is not as easy as some people believe, and these classes can be more complicated than a regular class. [sic]

(Lauren, research paper assignment, May 2, 2011)

This paragraph is notable for her effort to include not only information but also vocabulary, such as *dilemma* from her readings. This word was part of the title of the article by Smith whom she cited in this passage. She also demonstrated a greater control over her sentence structure; in fact, this paragraph contained compound and complex

sentences instead of the simple sentences she relied on in her previous writing. Of course, this passage, like the rest of her paper, contained grammar errors, but they were minimal and did not hamper comprehension.

Lauren was pleased with the way her paper had turned out, undeterred by its less than required length and aware of the benefits of working with others.

We got confidence. There was Catherine (another student in the class), she gave good advice. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

This new group, while principally composed of Spanish speakers, also had a Brazilian student, a very confident and sincere young man, because of whom, everyone had to speak in English. While Lauren would rarely volunteer to speak publicly, membership in this group was extremely beneficial. She realized that when she did use English, people responded positively to her ideas and engaged her in discussions. Catherine, an older, single mother, often corrected her pronunciation, an action Lauren found helpful.

Summary of Lauren's experiences in the LC. At our last interview, Lauren gave a frank assessment of the LC and her learning process over the semester. She was still worried about her psychology classes, but her attitude had become more realistic. She had earlier planned to take two courses over the summer to shorten the time needed to complete her degree, but now felt that she needed a break. At the same time, she acknowledged that the freshman seminar class had helped her to organize her time better and as a result, feel less nervous. She realized that the awareness of her schedule gave her more control over her time management. She could use this knowledge to plan her next semester more wisely. In addition, Lauren reflected on the positive classroom experience (PCE) that resulted from the LC. Lichtenstein (2005) has commented on the PCE that

results in well-planned LCs where each instructor collaborates actively with others in order to create truly linked assignments. Lauren commented:

In essays, to make a better essays, and I think the most helpful is that you and her (Professor Martin) are connected, so when we are doing something here, we are doing something different there, but connect to what we do here.[sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

Most importantly, Lauren realized her problems with reading. She had always insisted her strength lay in her reading skills and that her problems, even in her psychology class had stemmed from the teacher. On reflection, Lauren admitted that she was not a visual but an auditory learner and part of her problems lay in the fact that she could not understand long, densely written passages. Lauren had also realized how beneficial the sessions with the tutor had been. Regina, her tutor, had exposed the gaps in her reading skills and taught her concrete ways to improve them. Working on her reading skills led to improvement in other areas of composition such as organization because she could now read sample essays and other texts. In addition, increased reading would lead to an improvement in her critical reading skills. She had already demonstrated her growing ease at doing source-based writing, and it was hoped that she would continue to improve in this area. In areas of grammar, Lauren had a long way to go; however, she now had some tools. She could continue to visit the tutor for additional help, and her increased reading would also work to her advantage.

Lauren admitted that the network created by shared classes and the tutor had expanded her understanding of her metacognitive process because in the future, even if she were to struggle with her courses, she would know how to deal with those hurdles and what resources to access.

Table 10: *Sample analysis of Lauren's writing*

Essay	Excerpt	comments
Comparison/contrast, (from introduction)	1. Some students believe that be a teacher is just wake up early in the morning, go to school, teach something and that is all.	Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerund missing in sentence 1 • Error in verb tense in sentence 1 • Punctuation (use of ;) in sentence 2 • Use of parallel structure evident
	2. The most important thing is that everybody has a life, and there are many differences between teachers and students, and some of those are; family, work and professionalism.	Compositional (evident in sentence 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas in this sentence seem unconnected • Support, although listed, is not clear • Not source-based Vocabulary <i>Professionalism</i> used inappropriately
Argumentative Essay (introduction)	Many students do not want to graduate in 6 years because for them those years will be a waste of time. <u>Finish</u> high school and then enroll in the University is what many are doing; however, many of them have had problems in basic skills as a writing, reading or listening. Therefore, two years in college is important and necessary to have a solid base; also, to have better opportunities.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening sentence confusing • Lacks coherence • Ideas in thesis statement not made explicit • Not source-based writing Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base verb form used instead of gerund • Thesis statement lacks parallel structure
Research paper (introduction)	Do you believe that distance education is a good option for everyone? Well, although there has been too much controversy about it and many people are <u>not agreed</u> about this new way of teaching, it has become as a good option for many college students and even for high school students. The technology is helping people in many ways and the most important thing is that it became really useful in the education. Over the time the internet <u>has</u> increase popularity and schools and colleges have tried to take advantage of it. In this way of study there are much more flexibility, convenience and inexpensiveness.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted hook • Introduction more coherent with logical progression of ideas • Thesis statement displays parallel structure • Source based writing Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect auxiliary in simple present • Past participle missing in present perfect

From isolation to community: Marsha's experiences in the RLC

Profile and previous academic experiences. Marsha, the second participant from my LC was a native of the Philippines. She appeared to be a proficient speaker of American English and on the first day of the semester, I believed that she had been misplaced in the ESL freshman composition course. Her journey during the LC is marked by her initial lack of confidence to a slow appreciation of her own abilities.

Marsha's story was complicated. In 2003, her mother and she landed in JFK airport to join her brother and cousins who had already settled in Midland Park, a busy town in Windsor County. It was the day before her thirteenth birthday. In school in her native Philippines, the language of instruction was Tagalog but, like many of her compatriots, she had also learned some English. She did not remember doing any extensive reading or writing activities in the Philippines, but did recall an emphasis on memorization. On the first day of the semester, when introducing herself to her classmates, she listed her major as nursing.

Marsha met me for her first interview in February. In this interview, she primarily shared information about her schooling in the Philippines and in the United States. Marsha started school in Midland Park Middle School as a seventh grader. At thirteen, she was already a year older than most of her classmates. Surprisingly, given the absence of any previous instruction in English, she was placed, not in an ESL class, but in a general education one. She remembered her first year in this country as being difficult because she could not communicate with anyone.

It was hard because I understood, but it was hard for me to let it out.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Lacking encouragement, and because she felt she could not express herself adequately, she stopped trying to do so. This situation had not improved over time. Eight years later, in college, she still had a problem communicating with people in English.

Like when someone speaks to me, I have to put it in my head. I have a hard time trying to understand them. I have to envision them.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Marsha repeatedly alluded to her problems with listening comprehension. In fact, as she recounted in that first interview with me, she was worried that she had dyslexia because of similar problems with processing aural input in Tagalog, her home language. She had never confided this belief to anyone, and therefore, had never been tested.

Marsha's narration of the struggles during her middle school experiences was revealing. None of her teachers in middle school assigned her a study partner or buddy, and no one paid attention to her problems. She tried to make herself invisible because she was afraid of drawing attention to herself and copied down the homework the teacher put up on the board without quite understanding it. This is her account of her class activities.

I would just sit in my little corner and then later I would go to their (Marsha's cousins) house and ask them to read it for me and tell me the assignment.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Marsha's continuing dependence made her cousins, some younger than her, regard her with condescension.

After finishing middle school, Marsha's family moved to Lakewood and Marsha enrolled in Lakewood High School. Academics here were less rigorous than at Midland Park Middle School and Marsha felt more comfortable with her writing and mathematics assignments. After graduating high school, Marsha decided to take a break from

academics. Between the time she left high school and enrolled in Windsor Community College, she had also become a single mother.

I took a break, but now I have a baby. We, the baby's father and I, we are separated. That too, is another issue. We keep going to court, back and forth, back and forth.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Her cousins and brother had all established themselves in their careers by then, and convinced Marsha to go back to school. They believed that she should already have graduated from college by this time, a view which further weakened her self confidence.

I guess, I don't know, my family, they downgrade me a lot. Because I am the last one in my family in college at the age of 23, I should have graduated already, so they always tell me, always downgrade me, like I'll never amount to anything.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Marsha came to Windsor Community College in Fall 2010, ostensibly to major in nursing. However, privately, she revealed she had decided that the nursing program might be too challenging, and that it might be more realistic to major in phlebotomy, a course which trains individuals to draw blood for laboratory work. In Fall 2010, she had taken the college ESL placement test and been placed into a freshman composition class, but had not felt particularly engaged there, and soon dropped the course. She explained her reasons for her doing so.

I stopped going because I guess I thought I couldn't finish with it.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Academic experiences in the LC. Marsha started the semester in our class burdened by her previous educational experiences in middle and high schools. However, in the first week of the semester, none of us, her three instructors, had recognized the issues with which she was dealing. For instance, Marsha revealed when she started her classes in the

LC, her confidence in her own abilities continued to decline as she struggled to follow and keep up with school work. She believed that her pronunciation was faulty and her choice of words was generally inappropriate. She reported:

I am not pronouncing it very well and I am not saying it the way I should be saying it, I guess. There are times when people, like my cousins, will make fun of me because there are words, words I can't say and words that I just say wrong.

(Marsha, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

This self-doubt contrasted sharply with Marsha's speaking skills; unlike many of her peers, she was fluent and used fairly sophisticated vocabulary. Her delivery at a short class presentation, on February 10, 2011, had seemed deliberate and confident. She had not fumbled for words, and her explanations, though short, were clear. In fact, based on her conversation skills, no one would have guessed that English was her second language or that she had reservations about her speaking. However, both Professor Martin, her freshman seminar instructor, and I noted that in the first few weeks of the semester, Marsha worked largely on her own, even in group activities. Marsha blamed her family's constant denigration for preventing her from working with others.

I think, Prof. Martin asked me a question on one of our journals, and I said I like to work by myself because I feel shy. It's hard for me be confident with others.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha took some time to settle down in my class. Her first essay was due on the fourth class meeting, but Marsha did not hand it in although she had worked attentively on the prewriting assignments in class and on her initial draft. Part of the reason for this was her lack of certainty:

Marsha: That too, I am not very confident about writing. I believe when I was in high school, here, I was much better.

- Researcher: Why?
 Marsha: I don't know. I was noticing, I stopped school for 3 years, and then came back last semester and I noticed the difference.
 Researcher: Can you give me some examples?
 Marsha: Like when I am writing, you keep telling me about the grammar and the thesis statement, but I think that I put the thesis statement there, but I don't know why, it's not there when you check it.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha agreed that she had failed to include a thesis statement in her initial draft but had not realized this when she was working on her own. Yet, she was too timid to visit a tutor for help. Additionally, she realized that she had never been taught writing. She noted:

You know, I think it's because of all the changes. Like when I left the Philippines, they never told me, you know, I never really started writing essays at that time and when I came over here, I don't think we started writing essays in 7th grade and then I went into high school.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Seven years had elapsed between Marsha's school life in the Philippines and the freshman composition course in which she had enrolled in spring. In between, she had persisted in her middle and high schools in the United States, albeit as a silent, invisible student. As Marsha pointed out, she did not remember receiving any foundational instruction in writing academic essays. Moreover, different expectations from different teachers only made matters worse for Marsha.

Because every school is different, like for example, in Math class here, when I do Math, every answer is wrong. But in high school, that's how they taught us.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha felt overwhelmed by the pressures of her assignment and helpless because of the seeming lack of tools with which to accomplish them. Marsha's difficulty in solving

mathematical problems is again indicative of a lack of academic socialization. She was not familiar with the conventional methods of college mathematics; likewise, she failed to find an anchor she could use as a base for learning new skills. Tutoring did not seem like much of an option either because of Marsha's self-confessed lack of listening skills.

- Researcher: Do you think a tutor could have helped you?
 Marsha: I don't know
 Researcher: Is it also because you are shy?
 Marsha: Yes, and because I have a hard time listening.
 Researcher: What do you mean?
 Marsha: I mean like trying to understand and trying to listen at the same time. Like now if you were explaining something, I would have to take notes.
 Researcher: So what kind of a learner do you think you are?
 Marsha: I am visual and kinesthetic. [sic]

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha admitted that part of her problem in focusing stemmed from the constant criticisms and slights she had received from her family members, including her own mother. Moreover, because of the legal situation with her baby's father, Marsha had become completely dependent on her mother for babysitting. She did not have a job, so she became an unpaid babysitter for her cousin's little daughter and her own child. She believed her family expected her to fail and considered her redundant around the house, good only for odd jobs.

Marsha's experiences in the freshman seminar course. Marsha was struggling not only in my class, but in Professor Martin's as well. Professor Martin required them to submit weekly page-long journals on the various topics she covered in class, and was getting frustrated by what she perceived as Marsha's indifference. Professor Martin explained her annoyance in the following email communication to me:

Here's what Marsha sent me for her time management journal. Do you think she really understood what time management means?

(Professor Martin, email communication, April 8, 2011)

I learned that I am studying 4 hours a day and absolutely not having enough time for myself. I spend more sleeping than actually taking care of my own responsibilities. Family fits in between school and homework and I don't have much time to relax besides sleeping. I think sleeping is my relaxation. I think the better way to use my time is to continue what I am doing because I manage to control my time with my family and school at the same time...but studying while spending time with them isn't easy.[sic]

(Marsha, journal excerpt, sent via email from Professor Martin, April 4, 2011)

Professor Martin's email continued on:

I emailed her and told her to do it again, at least 1 typed page. She's kidding herself.

(Professor Martin, email communication, April 8, 2011)

In this journal, Marsha was honest about her lack of quality time at home and her neglect of responsibilities. However, Professor Martin had asked them to reflect on how they managed their time and fulfill their responsibilities, and Marsha had not addressed this issue. Professor Martin gauged Marsha's work as inadequate and attributed this to a lack of investment on her part. While discussing passages from the course text book, Professor Martin also discovered that Marsha could barely read aloud and had difficulty summarizing even short passages.

At around the mid-semester mark, the situation had not improved in Professor Martin's class. In another email, she complained:

On her journals, Marsha has only written at the most a half page for all her journals. She obviously hates to write. I am going to tell her from now on to write at least 1 page or she gets 1/2 credit for the remaining journals. In general, I have to say that many of these students are amazingly ill-prepared for college. I mean, do we really have to tell them to number their journals or put them in the correct order in a folder? It's so exhausting. I really don't want to lecture them again tomorrow, but I can feel one coming.

(Professor Martin, email communication, April 11, 2011)

In this email, Professor Martin realized the under preparedness of many of the students in the RLC. In her assessment, she was confirming a crucial conundrum of freshman academic courses in community colleges, one of a conflict between student aspirations and skills. As Patthey, Thomas-Spiegel, and Dillon (2009) have observed, open access policies at community colleges makes them a destination for students of diverse academic backgrounds. Often, community colleges attract a majority of immigrant and minority students. Although these students have academic aspirations, they are also most likely to be underprepared for academic courses. Marsha's skills in writing and organizing her work, as Professor Martin had noted, were weak although she clearly wanted to continue with her college work.

The freshman seminar course was designed as an adjunct course for the freshman composition course and to address the issue of skills needed by students to succeed in college. Ironically, as Professor Martin's email reveals, some of elements of the course had themselves become challenging for many students. For example, Professor Martin assigned journals to support the development of metacognitive thinking. She wanted them to learn how to organize their materials by order of date. However, these very assignments, which were supposed to aid students to become more efficient learners, became further obstacles in their learning process. For Marsha, especially, the issue of writing journals had become a stumbling block partly because she could not understand how to complete them, as Professor Martin's earlier email indicates. Thus, by the mid-semester mark, Marsha was demonstrating her difficulty in coping with both the composition and the freshman seminar courses.

Marsha's experiences in the library course. One encouraging aspect of the semester for Marsha was the library course. Professor Feng, the library instructor, met the class for an hour every week and trained them to evaluate websites and gave them short assignments. These assignments, unlike writing essays or journals, consisted mostly of online searches, and students worked in groups. Although she struggled slightly at the start of the semester, Marsha adjusted to the demands of this course more quickly than to the composition or the freshman seminar courses and worked diligently. Professor Feng, too, appreciated Marsha's input and attitude in class.

Marsha, she always did her assignment. At the beginning, she was often very confused although she is very quick. In the end, she picked up a lot.

(Professor Feng, personal communication, June 6, 2011)

In addition, by the mid semester mark, the students had begun to develop friendships because the same group met for each of the three classes. Marsha, in spite of her aloofness, began working with Damni, a confident, young woman from Thailand. Marsha's role in the library course and her subsequent friendship with Damni were pivotal events in helping her gain a more positive attitude towards her classes.

Writing assignments. The second assignment for the composition class was the argumentative essay. Marsha did manage to submit this essay on time. This became the first essay that she completed for the composition class. It was a sparse essay, about 400 words in length, low on details and lacking any connection to the two readings. Her writing style did not seem carefully planned; rather it seemed to be a juxtaposition of random thoughts. Here is the introduction to Marsha's essay, titled *College*:

People tend to question themselves why is college degree important on people's lives? Being educated is not only important but it is also something you keep for the rest of your life. Education is also one of the things you can past a long your

children and grandchildren. Having a degree is an achievement; it is something you should be proud of. College degree is necessary because knowledge is a strong tool that anyone can use for everyday life, college gives people an opportunity to grow, and be exposed to whole other aspects of life. [sic]

(Marsha, Argumentative Essay, draft 1, March 31, 2011)

Apart from spelling mistakes and run on sentences, Marsha's writing style was fluent. Her introduction, though unfocused, did present a central thesis. She followed the dictum of opening her introduction with a question but it failed to be thought provoking. The remainder of the introduction was a collection of commonplace sayings, laid together in a stream-of-consciousness manner. Her thesis statement included her position but the phrasing of her support remained ambiguous and it was difficult for the reader to discern the difference between them. For instance, the phrases, "...college gives people an opportunity to grow" might be construed as meaning the same as "... be exposed to whole other aspects of life."

Marsha was unable to elaborate sufficiently on any of the points of support for her essay. For instance, her first point of support centered on the value of college education in everyday life. She explained it in the following manner:

College graduates may sometimes fail on finding their new career; it is hard for them to find a good job that they all expected to get. Students tend to do well for their own good in school but what happens to the people who are good in academic but low in common sense or being creative? Many high school graduates find jobs with a good pay and they very good at what they do for example Bill Gates who is the world richest person and internet inventors had no college degree and succeed. There are many business and famous people who are successful in what they do, who I would say lucky to be where they are today and very financially stable with no college degree. College degree is necessary for those people who wanted to be a perhaps a doctor, nurse, or a scientist.

(Marsha, Argumentative Essay, draft 1, March 31, 2011)

In this paragraph, Marsha was expected to discuss the value of college education in everyday life. A close reading of this paragraph indicates that Marsha approached this point in a roundabout manner and only reached it in the last sentence. Like her introduction, this paragraph was characterized by a meandering style where Marsha focused more on college dropouts, exemplified by Bill Gates, rather than on people who have found success through college. Thus, from a compositional perspective, Marsha failed to develop the main idea in this paragraph because she neither used a suitable topic sentence nor did she provide adequate explanations or examples of the central idea.

Interventions. Although Marsha had started the semester burdened by the weight of her own perceived incompetency, she was proactive in locating tools to help herself. In effect, she staged her own interventions by responding to class events and interactions. Even though she could not write appropriate journal assignments for her freshman seminar course, she responded actively to class readings in that course. She also reacted positively to the structure provided in the library course as well as the peer interactions.

By around the sixth week of the semester, both Professor Martin and I noted that Marsha seemed somewhat more involved in class work. In the freshman seminar class, especially, her journals continued to appear fragmented and short, but she found herself responding to the text book. *On course: Strategies for creating success in college and in life* by Skip Downing is a popular text book used by many colleges across the country. Through a combination of core principles, inspirational stories, and targeted journal assignments, Downing (2006) has created a seemingly-easy-to follow approach to succeeding in college. For example, one of his core concepts is that of victim-creator. Students who blame circumstances, professors, peers, and bosses, and never take

responsibility for their failures, are victims. Downing suggests that students move from being victims to creators who create opportunities from seemingly impossible and difficult situations. The language in this book is easy-to-read, and the anecdotes he includes are carefully chosen to appeal to struggling students. Once Marsha forced herself to start reading this book, she started relating to the situations described there. Her reaction to the chapters in the book was positive.

It was a book turner (page turner) for me like reading someone else's experiences. I couldn't believe that these other people had similar experiences. [sic]

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

She soon realized that her experiences at home, which had always made her feel isolated, were not so unique and that there were steps she could take to help herself. In addition, she enjoyed engaging with a text, even an academic one, simply because the author, Downing, had acknowledged the experiences of students like her, struggling, but not willing to give up on college entirely. For a student who had struggled with reading texts aloud in the seminar class, this was a major achievement and another pivotal event. At that stage, her interactions in class were still subdued, but her interview with me revealed the level of interest in this book. Earlier in the semester, Professor Martin had observed Marsha's difficulty in decoding, so this revelation was particularly encouraging for her instructors.

Peer interaction and surrogacy tutoring. A positive impact of the linked courses had been the feeling of camaraderie that developed between this small cohort of students. Though Marsha appeared a loner at the start of the semester, she gradually became friendly with Damni, Marsha's peer in the RLC. Damni had come to the United States because she wanted to attend business school in this country. She was an

accomplished chef, and had also trained as a dancer and a model in her native Thailand. Before coming to Windsor Community College, she had enrolled in a neighboring private university and taken composition courses. She decided to transfer since tuition at a community college was significantly lower than at the university. Marsha was a more fluent speaker, but Damni had a stronger academic foundation in reading and writing. Marsha realized this when they were working in the library together, and therefore approached Damni to collaborate with her on class assignments.

Purposeful interventions. Thus, Marsha began the second half of the semester on a stronger note. Buoyed by her friendship with Damni and encouraged by Downing, Marsha decided to visit the ALC (Academic Learning Center) to work on her final assignment, the research paper (Appendix 10). This project was the most challenging one because of its emphasis on identifying and reading large quantities of information before organizing and writing about it. However, students were guided through the entire process by Professor Feng, the library instructor as well as Professor Martin and me. Professor Feng helped them with searching for information and doing annotated bibliographies, and I reinforced those skills in my class. Like other students, Marsha worked gradually on her project by creating an outline. At this point, well into the seventh week of the semester, Damni convinced Marsha to visit the tutor.

Experiences with tutoring. Marsha too could not meet Phuong, the designated tutor because of a scheduling conflict. Instead, she worked with Tanzie, a peer tutor, originally from Bhutan, and asked her for help with the research paper. Marsha found the research paper and its requirements a daunting challenge.

It's too many things, and I am a little nervous about the articles. I have many, but now I have to read all of them.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Tanzie had earlier worked with many ESL students, and had been impressed by the way they organized their essays. She reported:

When they (ESL students) write, they have some sort of, the ESL students, they have some sort of introduction, body, conclusion. But Marsha, she just started writing about the topic. That's what I noticed.

(Tanzie, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

Tanzie noted Marsha's lack of organization skills in writing. So she decided to guide Marsha through the process of organizing her material and locating a focus for her essay.

OK, first I asked her, 'What is this paper going to be about? Not just the introduction, but the following paragraphs, what is it going to be about?' So whatever it was about, we tried to work on a thesis statement according to that.

(Tanzie, personal communication, May 30, 2011)

For her research topic, Marsha had chosen to talk about assistive technology, especially for learners with visual disabilities. In the freshman seminar class, Marsha had discovered that she was a visual and a hands-on learner. This insight into her own learning gave her additional insight into the plight of visually impaired learners. With the help of Tanzie, Marsha composed this introduction:

Have you ever thought of how people with disabilities manage to get through with everyday life? Being blind is no joke, but if being strong is the only choice you have there is nothing much you can do but get adjusted and learn to live without a sight. There are many technologies today that are required for people who have visual impairments such as low technology and high technology, which allows the users to read electronic, documents, and surf the internet. They must know how to use the tools that they may need for their project or everyday life. This essay will provide information about vision problems people have and assistive technology to help visually impaired people.

(Marsha, research paper assignment, May 2, 2011)

Like her introduction in the argumentative essay, Marsha started her research paper with a question, one that Marsha drew from her own strengths as a student. The tone of this introduction was matter-of-fact, and introduced the reader to the different resources available to visually impaired people, in terms of low and high technology. Although the introduction in the previous essay had been unfocused and rambling, it was much more focused in the research paper. When I asked Marsha how much time she had spent working on her introduction, she said simply, “A long time!” (Marsha, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

In her research paper, Marsha attempted to develop her thesis and used information from different sources and examples. In the library course, she followed Professor Feng’s instructions and completed her assignments diligently. She worked hard to locate articles from college databases. She also worked on creating her citation list, using *Noodle Bib*, the online citation manager. In my class, she, along with other students worked on creating an outline, paraphrasing appropriate sections, and building the paper section by section. Marsha also followed my instructions and made a conscious effort to use signal verbs for her in-text citation. The following is one excerpt from her paper:

How seeing happens? Brain and eyes work together to function. The outer layer of our eye is called sclera and the front part of sclera is called cornea. The retina is the part of the eye that converts images into electrical impulses that sent the message to the brain. Low vision can occur in various places such as central vision resulting in blind spots, impairment of the cornea or lens resulting in blurred vision and sensitivity to glare. Lopatto (2011) stated, people continue to question for researchers. It wasn’t clear how this early structure formed, and some scientist thought some outside force was needed to induce it. Today’s study shows that stem cells can create the optic cup on their own. Being able to develop eye precursors may lead to new treatments for degenerative eye diseases. According to Freedom Scientific, Infants and toddlers may need an eye exam at or before being six months of age, Six to nineteen years they may get checked annually and adult to sixty five and older may also get checked annually. There are tests that every person should get and it is called Glaucoma tests. Glaucoma test is a fluid

pressure inside the eye is called intraocular pressure (IOP). This is a balance, called tension, between the production and the drainage of the aqueous fluid inside the anterior chamber of the eye. It is measured with tonometry. In the non-contact procedure, a puff of air is blown onto the eye and an instrument calculates pressure from the change in the light reflected off the corneas as the air puff is blown stated Douglass (2001).

(Marsha, research paper assignment, May 2, 2011)

This section is largely coherent with Marsha demonstrating adequately her ability to read and understand complex, slightly technical passages, and explain them. She cited two sources in the introduction. Marsha demonstrated persistent errors in the use of capitalization and grammar, but compared to her previous essay characterized by unfocused rambling, this section showed greater evidence of both organization and interesting content, a marked improvement from her argumentative essay.

Marsha, however, found it difficult to gauge any change in her writing process. She was not sure if her writing itself had improved, or rather, if she would get any positive feedback on it since she had become accustomed to getting negative reviews. In a class discussion towards the end of the semester, she exclaimed, quite surprisingly in light of the work she had put in for her research paper, “It’s really difficult for me to read. I am almost an illiterate.” (Marsha, class discussion, May 5, 2011)

Reflecting on her research paper, she noted:

It was really hard because reading someone else’s information, and understanding it, and trying to put in my own words and summarizing, that was really difficult for me.

(Marsha, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

As Professor Martin had noted, Marsha had earlier demonstrated problems with decoding. It is possible that Marsha’s reading skills were more advanced than she imagined and her initial hurdle in completing her assignments had stemmed from her

own lack of confidence and self esteem. Her breakthrough with reading came through her engagement with Downing's (2006) text book when she realized that texts could be engaging. This was a pivotal event which lowered her resistance to reading. Marsha's tenacity in reading information-dense passages and synthesizing information in her research paper is commendable. She recalled reading the same passages multiple times to understand them completely. A significant part of her persistence also stemmed from her interest in the subject, and in her ability to sympathize with visually impaired learners. Additionally, part of her persistence was born from a sense of survival and determination. She recognized that she could learn to ignore criticisms and continue to work hard, building on her previously ignored skills and strengths.

It's hard for me to try and try to achieve something once someone keeps bringing me down even if I am trying. But, I've learned that the negatives that people are saying about me, I should look at in a different way, in a positive way and use that as an excuse to better myself.

(Marsha, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

In an effort to do so, Marsha started blogging, and found that activity extremely helpful. In this exercise, she partnered with her friend Damni, whom I had assumed to be self-assured. Damni, as Marsha confided, also felt isolated because she had no family in this country and was terrified of not being able to fulfill her dreams. Marsha explained:

I gave the site to Damni, because she was going through some of the same stuff in her personal life, and she said that when she read about my pain, it was amazing for her to be going through that and that she could feel my pain and she now feels better about herself because she is not alone.

(Marsha, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Marsha adopted blogging as a method of dealing with her emotions. Although she did not realize it, blogging also helped her improve her writing. It was also her way of asking for help and support and proved to be another pivotal event for her.

Interaction with counselors. One final component in the LC was the counselors. The role of counselors was to ease any non-academic problems that students faced and also to advise students on their schedules. In the LCs, counselors played a particularly important role since they could often mediate any miscommunications between professors and students in addition to guiding them through various confusing situations. For those reasons, a special counselor had been designated to each LC. In addition, the counseling services at Windsor Community College also hosted the Center for Student Success. This center, coordinated by Juan Santos, provided student services such as conducting job searches, preparing resumes, and training students for interviews. Many students at the college benefit from its services.

At around the mid-semester mark, Marsha had started looking for a job. On my advice, she approached Juan. Unfortunately, Juan was in a hurry on the day Marsha went to meet with him. She recalled:

He was rushing that day. I spent ten to fifteen minutes and he was rushing for most of it.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha felt so intimidated that she failed to ask for a follow-up appointment. This was the lowest point of the semester for Marsha. Approaching the counselor had taken some courage, and feeling rebuffed by him made her confidence suffer.

Marsha's second interaction with a counselor was with Allison, the designated counselor for her LC. Allison would visit students two to three times and talk to them.

Her brand of proactive counseling was generally helpful, especially with delinquent students. One of her important responsibilities was to help students draw up academic schedules for the following semester. Allison offered many incentives to induce students to visit her for academic advisement. Marsha visited Allison to ask for help in drawing up her schedule. When Marsha showed me her schedule, I was quite surprised. Marsha had failed freshman composition in Fall 2010 before she registered for the RLC where she had been struggling for the first part of the spring semester. In spite of that, Allison suggested that Marsha take two courses each in the two summer sessions. Summer sessions run for six weeks at Windsor Community College and are therefore, extremely intense. Only the most competitive students are advised to take courses over the summer, and not more than two courses, one in each session. Allison drew up the following schedule for Marsha to follow over the summer:

Table 11: *Marsha's summer schedule*

Summer session 1 (May 23-July 7)	Summer session 2 (July 12- Aug 18)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshman composition, semester 2 (3 credits) • Introduction to Biology (3 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English: Introduction to literature appreciation (3 credits) • Intermediate mathematics (3 credits)

The second semester of freshman composition was the follow up to the freshman composition course that Marsha was taking with the LC. This writing course, like its prerequisite, required intensive writing and reading skills. Introduction to Biology was a requisite for all Allied Health programs. It was a very intense course as well, and many students reported being overwhelmed at the amount of memorization required. Since this was a credit course, and negative grades showed up on the transcript, students were often advised to take a preparatory biology course which covered some of the same material as the more challenging biology course.

When Allison, the counselor, made up schedules, she did not consult the professors, nor did she ask Marsha for her input or for her previous grades. Had she done so, she would have realized that Marsha could not cope with four labor intensive courses over the summer. Marsha's recollection of that day was of a rushed counselor.

I don't know, she was very tired that day, she was pregnant, and it was her last day, I think. She was always very fast, asked me what I wanted to study, and she give me the schedule. [sic]

(Marsha, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Marsha was sympathetic to Allison's pregnancy and decided that her own scheduling concerns took a backseat to the counselor's problems. For that reason, she did not think of questioning the schedule that Allison had made for her. Marsha had initially registered as a Nursing major, but on going over the requisites had realized it might be a difficult program to complete. Therefore, she had decided to switch to Phlebotomy, but had not officially changed her major. She had earlier told me of her change in plans.

I worked as a home-health aide before, and now I want to work in Phlebotomy, something like that. I got training for that, so it's not too difficult to study.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Allison had not verified Marsha's major with her, and made up an unrealistic schedule, partly because she was unofficially directed by counseling services to ensure that students completed their course requirements as soon as possible. Thus, there was a conflict between student interests and abilities on one hand and institutional interests on the other.

Summary of Marsha's experiences in RLC. The objective of this study was to explore the effect of LCs on the acquisition of academic literacy skills of Generation 1.5 students, both from the perspective of students and the instructors.

At the beginning of the semester, Marsha had little confidence in herself or in her writing abilities. Her low self esteem proved to be a deterrent in the completion of her academic assignments, leading her to produce incomplete assignments or not submit them at all. Gradually she began to be receptive to some of the resources within the LC.

One important aspect of the LC was repetition of themes and reinforcement of skills across the three courses. For example, she spent time in the library course searching for articles she would need in the composition course. Thus, the library course acted as a support for the more challenging composition course. The freshman seminar course, too, eventually provided valuable support to Marsh when she responded actively to the course readings, which in turn, triggered her interest in reading.

In addition, the linked classes in the LC engendered friendships among students which, as Tinto (1997a, 1997b) has stressed, is crucial to academic success. Marsha found a study partner in Damni. This partnership was equal because of contributions by both members. In addition, Marsha was encouraged by her newfound ability to help her peer and the absence of any denigration. Marsha's friendship with Damni also encouraged her to visit Tanzie, the tutor, who played a critical role in shaping Marsha's writing.

From her own perspective, too, Marsha believed she had benefited from the RLC. She was more confident and voluble at the end of the semester than she had been at its start. She had begun to think and reflect on her learning. In a reflection essay, she noted:

Dealing with different teachers and different direction every time I start a new English class is frustrating. Sometimes, I ask myself why do I even stop and not finish something I started if going to a different teacher will just confused me. This semester, I learned that writing with direction shouldn't be as hard, it shouldn't frustrate people as it frustrated me. I learned that writing an essay by hand and reading it and then typing it helps me a lot. I asked myself as you also

mentioned to me that I should ask for help. Use the ALC or talk to the counselor. Well, guess what I did. Yes, we all know that I am not the best student in your class and not the best when it comes to writing or participating or even being on time. But I try; I try my hardest this semester to actually stayed, finished and reach the next semester so I can continue to climb my ladder to success. I will now ask for help, re-read my essay, continue to practice writing, and hopefully be better writer one day. I need to make me an audience of my writing. [sic]

(Marsha, Reflection essay, May 5, 2011)

Marsha had still not overcome the urge to downplay her abilities, but this passage is indicative, not only of her increased fluency but also of the change in her writing process. As she indicated in this passage, she had adopted a writing process that seemed feasible. She first hand-wrote her essay, took it to the tutor for advice, and then typed the final draft. She had begun to believe that she could achieve her goal. For someone who believed that she was dyslexic and illiterate, this was an important realization. Thus, her attitude towards her learning became markedly positive. In addition, her composition skills in terms of organization, ability to incorporate sources, and present a thoughtful analysis of a topic also underwent a transformation. Finally, Marsha's skills in grammar did not improve dramatically, but she had learned to use the tools that would help her to work on this issue over time.

Table 12: *Sample analysis of Marsha's writing*

	Thesis statement	Support outlined in thesis statement	Comments on essay
Essay 1 (Comparison/ contrast)	Missing because essay not submitted.		Essay missing
Essay 2 (argumentative essay)	College degree is necessary because knowledge is a strong tool that anyone can use for everyday life, college gives people an opportunity to grow, and be exposed to whole other aspects of life.	i. Anyone can use for everyday life ii. Gives people an opportunity to grow iii. Be exposed to whole other aspects of life	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic sentence fails to outline main idea of paragraph. • Main idea inadequately developed • Insufficient examples • Counterargument alluded to, but not explained fully • Writing style is rambling, not focused. • Not source-based writing Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuation: run-on sentences
Research paper	This essay will provide information about vision problems people have and assistive technology to help visually impaired people.	i. Vision problems people have ii. Assistive technology to help visually impaired people	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic sentence alludes to one of the two main ideas in this paragraph • Detailed explanations for thesis • Greater focus evident here than in argumentative essay, although the tendency to lose focus of the main idea still persists • Cites multiple sources, incorporates information appropriately Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect question formation (missing auxiliary verb) • Capitalization

Complementary LC: LC2

In this section, I will describe the organization and the components of the second LC. I begin this section with profiles of the three faculty involved in LC2. I then introduce Chrystal, the designated tutor for LC2. Next, I discuss the two participants, Rafael and Liang. For each participant, I describe their previous academic experiences before joining the LC and their academic experiences in the LC, including their freshman seminar and library courses. I proceed to discuss, in detail, their composition assignments during the semester and devote a section to peer and surrogacy tutoring which affected their work during the semester.

Faculty profiles

Composition: The instructor and the course. The freshman composition teacher of the second LC was Professor Judith Cohen, a veteran ESL college instructor. Her first master's degree is in Teaching English as a Second Language and since 1975, she has worked with adult, college, and university students as an ESL instructor. She had earlier worked in an ESL program in a public university before moving to Windsor Community College where she has been teaching for over 17 years. She is deeply interested in history, especially on the Holocaust, and has, in fact, completed an additional Master's on that subject. She is actively involved in "Facing History and Ourselves", a not-for profit organization that encourages ethical discussion and raises awareness of racism, anti-Semitism, and prejudice in today's society. In her classes, too, Professor Cohen wants her students to consider each of their roles in our society. She uses the themes of history, injustice, and moral ambiguity as discussion points for her essays.

Professor Cohen's assignments for the freshman composition course reflected her knowledge and beliefs in the power of history. In the freshman composition class, she

focused on the hero/monster theme for the semester. She had students choose from a list of controversial world leaders and celebrities. Each student explored the history and biography of the person of their choice, and wrote a biography essay and then both a monster essay, focusing on the negative aspects, and then a hero essay, which explores the positive characteristics of that person. The final assignment of the semester was a persuasive essay where students had to argue if their leader was a hero or a monster, and why. Professor Cohen organized her classes as workshops and seminars where students worked actively on their writing, occasionally collaborating with each other and their instructor. Here is a chart of the major essay assignments in Professor Cohen's class.

Table 13: *Professor Cohen's writing assignments*

Assignment 1	Choose historical character
Assignment 2	Biography essay
Assignment 3	Hero essay- present your character as a hero
Assignment 4	Monster essay- present your character as a monster
Assignment 5	Position paper-was your character a hero or a monster?

Professor Cohen distributed the essay prompts at appropriate times in the semester. She outlined each requirement of the essay clearly in these prompts (Appendices 12 to 15) and provided detailed grading rubrics. She stressed that students pay special attention to crafting introductions, especially the thesis statements. She also encouraged students to use quotations to make their essays more interesting. Finally, she was interested in students' reactions to the personalities they had chosen to describe and looked for insightful descriptions and analyses.

Professor Cohen's writing assignments encapsulated the Academic Literacies paradigm (Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006) which includes academic skills, academic socialization, and academic literacies as integral for students. In

emphasizing the importance of creative introductions, focused thesis statements, use of quotations, and synthesis of information, she acknowledged the need for academic skills in student writing. By establishing a workshop environment that encouraged peer collaboration and instructor input, she promoted academic socialization, which was further enhanced by the other players in the LC, namely the two other instructors, the tutors, and the counselor. Finally, through her assignments, Professor Cohen asked her students to judge their choice of historical figure in the light of the research they unearthed. She ensured that students pushed aside their preconceived ideas and evaluated these characters through the lens of historical context and current evidence. Thus, she asked them to make meaning for themselves and provided academic and social scaffolds which enabled students to do research and develop opinions on their topic.

Freshman seminar: The instructor and the course. The freshman seminar class in this LC was taught by Professor Brenda Andrews. She is an experienced ESL teacher, having taught at Windsor Community College for over twenty years. She has also co-authored ESL books for adult learners which focus on work place literacy skills. In addition, she is one of two coordinators of the freshman seminar program at Windsor Community College. She worked with publishers to develop course materials and customize text books. As a freshman seminar teacher, she was concerned not only with teaching study strategies, but helping students understand their own behavior and then work forward from there. She believed that only an understanding of student behavior could lead to successful interventions and changes in study habits. She described the thinking that led to the eventual design of the freshman seminar course at Windsor Community College.

I kept saying, I am teaching it (freshman seminar), but there is something missing in the way I am teaching it and I kept saying that it's pointless to teach students time management when they don't know *why* they are procrastinating. It's pointless to teach them the vocabulary "procrastinate" and teach them to identify it when they don't know *why* they procrastinate.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

Professor Andrew's goal was to use materials that provided answers to the *why*. She began by creating her own materials till she attended a conference from where she was given a copy of *On Course: Strategies for succeeding in college and in life* by Skip Downing. She recounted her efforts to locate the perfect material to use in freshman seminar courses.

So I kept creating my own materials because I'd go, "They don't know why they procrastinate." And coincidentally, I happened to have taken home from a conference, a copy of *On Course*, and I happened to, out of desperation, flipping through the book and realizing that, this guy is doing, in a far better manner, what I am trying to teach them, and it's all in a book, and it's talking about victims and creators and the reason they keep sabotaging themselves is because they think that they can't succeed, and it contained all the ideas that I was slowly creating materials for.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

Professor Andrews recognized the potential of Downing's book in identifying common challenges faced by students and providing realistic solutions based on behavior changes. Therefore, she recommended its adoption as a text book for the freshman seminar course

The library class: The instructor and the course. Professor Elizabeth Feng who taught the library course in the RLC also worked with LC2. Her goals for both sections of the LC were the same: to introduce students to the basics of internet and print research. Professor Feng worked with the students in this LC to help them locate materials on the historical character they had chosen to research.

Chrystal: Designated tutor for LC2. Chrystal was also a peer tutor, and had been assigned to Professor Cohen's LC. She was originally from Colombia, and had taken ESL classes with Professor Cohen in her final semester of ESL. Professor Cohen was impressed with Chrystal's language learning abilities and with her enthusiasm for her course work. At the beginning of the semester, Professor Cohen believed that Chrystal would make an effective tutor.

However, Professor Cohen's class met on Fridays, which was Chrystal's day off. Therefore, there was little interaction between the tutor and the instructor. In addition, her students preferred to visit tutors on Friday, and not have to make a trip to the college simply to meet with the tutor. Therefore, neither of the participants from Professor Cohen's class visited Chrystal or any other tutor in the ALC.

This was the schedule of classes for LC 2:

Table 14: *Schedule of classes in LC2*

Monday		Friday
11 am -12.05 pm	12.15 pm- 1.05 pm	11 am – 1.40 am
Freshman seminar	Library	Freshman composition

LC2: Demographic profile and participant selection. I asked to observe and participate in the second class meeting of the semester. I introduced myself to the students and discussed my dissertation study. I then gave out a questionnaire that would help me to identify participants for this study (Appendix 1). Like the other LC, this cohort too was small and had only fifteen students. Of the fifteen, six fit the profile of Generation 1.5 students. The two students who ultimately participated in this study were Rafael from Portugal and Liang, originally from China.

Table 15 : Profiles of participants in LC2

Name	Country of origin	Native language	Year of arrival in the US	Age on arrival in US	Grade on arrival in US	Age at the time of this study
Rafael	Portugal	Portuguese	2007	15	10	19
Liang	China	Fuzhou, Mandarin	2001	11	5	21

Going from strength to strength: Rafael's journey as a Generation 1.5 student

Profile and previous academic experiences. Rafael immigrated to the United States with his parents and older brother in 2007, and settled in Lakefront. At that time, his parents, especially his mother, spoke almost no English, and had not finished high school in Portugal. However, four years later, when we spoke, Rafael's mother had begun to speak some English and could converse at a basic level. Rafael's brother, then 23, was also a proficient English speaker. Before immigrating to the US, he had already graduated high school and spent two years in a Portuguese polytechnic institution. On coming to the United States, he found a job in Lakefront while Rafael enrolled in Lakefront High School as a sophomore.

Rafael recalled his years of schooling in Portugal as being very thorough. In his Portuguese language classes, he had been asked to write essays, and do intensive reading. In his writing classes, he remembered writing essays, though as he explained, the template for essays was quite different from the one used in American schools.

The essay we had to do, in tests, to write about certain thing and it wasn't like over here, like five paragraphs, like we just write as much as we can. We still had paragraphs, but not exact or like a minimum. [sic]

(Rafael, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Thus, while Rafael had not been exposed to the traditional five-paragraph format in Portugal, he had been encouraged to write fluently and knowledgeably on a topic. Rafael had also received intensive instruction in reading. He remembered having to read novels and poetry, a lot of which he had to memorize. Although his teachers had emphasized the importance of reading, especially classical literature, Rafael did not enjoy reading for pleasure, except for comic books.

In addition to his school work in Portuguese, Rafael had also received five years of instruction in English. In these five years, he had studied grammar, reading, and writing. Rafael also had access to English from one other source. He liked watching movies, especially American ones, which further helped him to become familiar with the nuances of English. He did not get too many opportunities to practice his speaking skills.

Because of the instruction he had already received in English, he was placed in the highest level of ESL classes in high school when he arrived in the United States in 2007, and was mainstreamed the following year. In his first year in high school, he had little difficulty with the content area subjects. In fact, he realized that in some areas, like mathematics, he possessed greater proficiency than his peers.

Math was easy, because math in Portugal is way more evolved than here. Like what I learned in 9th grade there, was enough to take me to 12th grade here.

(Rafael, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Rafael had to learn American history, which he had never studied in Portugal, but that was not too difficult because of his reading skills. Although Rafael had admitted that he did not like reading recreationally, he realized that he excelled at academic reading.

Reading for me is easy. Like, if I read the stuff, I can actually remember it. But if I hear it, I just forget about it.

(Rafael, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

The most difficult aspect of school seemed to be speaking and understanding English. In his first year in high school, Rafael, expectedly, found it difficult to make friends because of his lack of oral proficiency. His listening skills, particularly in his interactions with his teachers, were also tested. His high school attracted teachers of different nationalities, and Rafael was initially confused by some of their dialects. These were minor hurdles; he soon made friends with a fellow Portuguese student who gave him friendship and support. After one year of ESL instruction, Rafael moved into mainstream English classes with classes in literature and academic writing.

Rafael was introduced to the five paragraph essay and open-ended questions as a junior (student in eleventh grade) in high school. He believed that he had trouble with organizing his ideas in paragraphs and adding sufficient details. Rafael described the process his English teacher followed to work with him and show him how to add details to his support.

Like even in my English class, that I had in my junior and senior year, I had the same teacher, and she focused on the same thing, like she want, she want me to be good in open-ended, so she actually helped me out so I got to be a little bit better. She told me that I had to talk a little bit more, like go straight to the point, like talk and talk and talk and then go to the point. [sic]

(Rafael, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

Rafael believed that he benefited from his teacher's exhortation to add more details while remaining on topic. That same teacher also taught literature, and insisted that everyone do their required reading at home. She gave them quizzes to ensure that no one came unprepared to class. When she met them in class, she would guide them through the material, locating main ideas and identifying support.

She would say, and then in school, we would go over it, and then go over another part of the book and read in class, and then look for main points and then go home and read a bit more, and then next day, talk a bit about it, and read a more in class.

(Rafael, personal communication, February 7, 2011)

As Rafael noted, his high school English teacher ensured constant and intensive engagement with reading material by visiting the same passages over and over again. Rafael believed that his teacher taught him how to read and analyze texts, and as a consequence of her teaching, he was not afraid of dealing with longer passages. When confronted with a complex passage, Rafael would read them multiple times in order to understand them completely. He enjoyed the structure his high school English teacher provided, and would often go to her after class if he needed help with reading or revising his essay drafts. His experience with his high school English teacher can be considered a pivotal event since she helped him, not only with the material they were currently studying, but also because she taught him study strategies which would serve him later.

Academic experiences in the LC. After graduating high school, Rafael found a job in a local health club. He was encouraged by his family, especially his brother, to enroll in college. Rafael was interested in obtaining a degree in Computer Information Systems (CIS), so he decided to enroll in Windsor Community College which offers an Associate Degree in that area and has an articulation ¹²agreement with many public universities in the state. Rafael started his classes in Spring 2011. On the basis of his performance in the college placement test, he was not required to take ESL classes. However, he was placed

¹² An articulation agreement involves an arrangement through which four year colleges or universities honor and accept certain courses taken by a student in a community college towards a degree. Because community colleges offer open access and significantly lower rates of tuition, students throughout the state prefer to take courses in a community college and then transfer to a four-year college.

into a developmental reading class. He registered for five courses that semester. This is what his schedule looked like:

Table 16: *Rafael's schedule in Spring 2011*

Spring 2011	Freshman composition- 3 credits	Freshman Seminar- 2 credits	Library course-1 credit	Developmental reading- 3 credits	Mathematics high beginning - 3 credits	Total- 12 credits
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In addition to the twelve hours he spent in school, Rafael was also working five hours a day, six days a week in the health club. He had managed his schedule at school so that he came to college three days a week, and had generally completed all his classes by 2 pm. He started work at 4 pm, and therefore, had time to devote to his homework and other study assignments. Thus, when he started his classes in Spring 2011, he had already organized a schedule in which he had allotted time for his classes, homework, and job.

Rafael's experiences in the freshman seminar course. Rafael's experiences in the freshman seminar course exemplified his interactions with the other instructors in the LC. Professor Andrews, the freshman seminar instructor, designed assignments which would prompt students to reflect on their performance in the other classes and their goals for future assignments. This is how she described her journal assignments:

I asked them, "What are you going to do when your paper back? How did you feel when you got your grade?", and we did a journal process, and we talked about the next step. They worked in groups, and it was a group activity, and they problem solved. I asked them, "Are you going to a tutor, are you going to meet the professor?"

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

Professor Andrews had already explained that her role in the LC was to encourage students to reflect on their work and their grades. In other words, she intended to initiate a process of metacognitive thinking about their assignments and their writing. Through this group activity, Professor Andrews encouraged students to think, not only about the

grades they had already received, but about steps they could take to do better on future assignments. She believed that individually, students might not have all the answers, but in groups, they could brainstorm appropriate steps and arrive at appropriate solutions. Later, they could write their individual journal assignments through which they could consolidate their plan of action for future assignments.

In the first few weeks of the semester, Professor Andrews believed that Rafael took the composition class far more seriously than her freshman seminar course. Her belief stemmed from Rafael's performance in her class, where Rafael seemed to be putting minimal effort as reflected in the quality of his work.

Rafael couldn't understand why he wasn't getting A's in my class. He really didn't put the extra effort in, because he knew he was a good student, a really good student, especially in the composition class and once he realized that he wouldn't get an A in my class unless he put in that effort, he did start working much harder.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

Thus, at the beginning of the semester, Rafael's grades in the freshman seminar class did not match his capabilities. However, when he realized that he could not be complacent, he put in more effort and managed to get good grades in this class for the remainder of the semester, thus bearing out Professor Andrews' assessment of his skills.

Rafael's experiences in the library course. Rafael had never taken library courses in high school, and was not particularly fond of pleasure reading. However, in the LC, he realized that the library course would be a valuable resource, especially for his assignments in the composition class. The library instructor, Professor Feng, was impressed with Rafael's attitude and abilities. A more detailed description of Rafael's involvement in the library course follows in a later section.

Composition assignments. On the first day of class in the freshman composition course, Professor Cohen explained the nature of the assignments and elaborated on monster/hero theme that she would use for the semester. She then handed out the list of historical figures and asked students to choose any one of them. Rafael was already familiar with the story of Joseph Stalin, so selected him as the focus of his research. In high school, while working on a paper on tyrants, he had written an essay on Stalin.

For the first assignment, Rafael had to write a biography of Stalin. He started his essay with the following introduction:

“Death is the solution to all problems. No man- no problem.” (Brainy Quote). This was the notorious words said by Joseph Stalin which would be the example of his life as well. Stalin is known by one of the most oppressive and tyrannical dictators in the world history, as well as the enforcer of the Russian industrialization, killing millions during that process. Stalin rose as a poor violently beat child and grew up as a high power politic with a ruthless face in the world history, dying of a health problem. [sic]

(Rafael, Biography essay, draft 1, February 24, 2011)

This excerpt revealed Rafael’s competence in creating an engaging introduction. Rafael used this quote, suitable to the topic, to provide some background information about his subject. Rafael’s vocabulary was appropriate and impressive as evidenced by adjectives *notorious*, *oppressive*, and *tyrannical* to describe Stalin. Errors in grammar included the use of *this* instead of *these* in the second sentence and errors in word forms, where he used *violently beat* instead of *violently beaten* and *politic* instead of *politician*. His thesis statement, too, seemed to have lost focus with its allusion to Stalin’s death.

When Rafael received his first draft from Professor Cohen with her comments, he knew he could improve on it. Part of his problems with his writing was an aversion to doing revisions. He was a competent reader who did not like to read his own writing.

I just, just don't like to read it. I just don't like it. I just don't like reading even my own work.

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

However, Rafael was determined to improve his grades, so he revised it a few times and asked his classmate Leo for his opinion. He then met with Professor Cohen who suggested ways of improving it. This is what the revised introduction looked like:

“Death is the solution to all problems. No man-no problem.” (Brainy Quote). These were notorious words said by Joseph Stalin, serving as the perfect example of his life as well. Stalin is known as one of the most oppressive and tyrannical dictators in the world history, as well as the enforcer or the Russian industrialization, killing millions during that process. Stalin grew up to be a high power politician with a ruthless face in the world history. [sic]

(Rafael, Biography essay, draft 2, March 15, 2011)

In this revised introduction, Rafael retained the quote from the earlier draft since it adequately depicted the violence associated with Stalin. Next, he provided background information about Stalin and linked it to the quote. Finally, he listed the major traits he would go on to discuss in the essay: the tyranny and the emphasis on industrialization associated with Stalin. In this introduction, Rafael used adjectival participial phrases and appropriate adjectives in this passage. The error in the use of articles, as evidenced in the phrase, “... in the world history” in no way obstructed the meaning of his passage.

Rafael was pleased with this introduction, which he believed was easy to compose since he already had a template in mind.

The introduction is easy because you know you have to get a catchy thing and say what you are going to write about.

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

Rafael continued his biographical essay with a competent discussion of Stalin's childhood and rise to power. He included details about Stalin's relations with international powers as well as his family life, and concluded with Stalin's death.

The second assignment required Rafael to present Stalin as a hero. Although this assignment was not a surprise, he complained bitterly to me and to Professor Cohen that he would not find enough material to write a four-page long essay. To me he said that he did not think he could produce much more than a page to write this essay.

One to one and a half pages maximum. Never four pages. Nobody can get four pages about Stalin. Unless it's a hero, nobody can get four pages.

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

Professor Cohen commented on Rafael's difficulty with this assignment.

Rafael had a terrible time doing this paper. For his first draft, he gave me only one page instead of four. He had such a hard time wrapping his mind around the fact people can have two sides and some might have seen him as having done positive things. I told him to look at what the Russians said about him.

(Professor Cohen, personal communication, June 2, 2011)

Because Rafael wanted to get a good grade, and was nervous about not getting enough material, he visited Professor Feng, the library instructor many times before writing the second draft of this essay. Professor Feng was impressed with his tenacity and his strong reading skills, and helped him to find information. She, too, reinforced Professor Cohen's suggestion about the impression Stalin made on his countrymen.

Rafael was very good, especially good. He did Stalin, and he tried to find the good part about him. It's really hard, this project, and he came several times to the library to find positive parts about Stalin, and I suggested to him that, "Probably you can read something what he did for the whole country. Most of the stuff about Stalin is negative, but he won the war. Probably that is one of the positive things about him."

But his reading level was ok, so we dug out some really scholarly databases and

articles. We went to JSTOR. You know that's quite difficult, but we went to those databases.

(Professor Feng, personal communication, June 6, 2011)

Although Rafael struggled to find information for his essay, he utilized the resources available to him to help him with his assignment. He knew that he could approach his professors, his tutors, or his peers in the classroom, and decided that the person most able to help him was Professor Feng. As Professor Feng remarked, they discussed possible angles of searching for appropriate information, including her suggestion of exploring the aspect of Stalin as a war hero. She herself felt confident in his reading skills and introduced him to articles with more scholarly information and vocabulary than she had discussed with his peers. Rafael described the process he used with all the information he obtained from the articles:

What I do is, I read all the information and then I try to put in my own words and I use a lot of quotations. And I read and I spend a lot of time writing that in my own words.

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

Rafael claimed that he usually needed three hours to synthesize information and complete his essay. Because he felt so challenged by the idea of having to present Stalin as a hero, he needed almost an entire day to complete his essay. Even so, the essay lacked the required length, and Rafael himself was not satisfied with it. His introduction to this essay read as follows:

“Stalin made Russia a superpower and was one of the founders of the coalition against Hitler in World War II”. These were words said by Sergei Malinkovich, leader of the St. Petersburg Communist Party. Stalin was a hero during his reign in Russia until his death.

(Rafael, Hero essay, draft 2, March 30, 2011)

This introduction, which started with a quotation, was however, markedly different from the earlier one that Rafael had written for his biography essay. Rafael's lack of engagement with the topic, that of presenting Stalin as a hero, was evident in the dry introduction which made little attempt at providing context. The second draft, at almost four pages, was a huge improvement over his one and a half-page long first draft. Nonetheless, this assignment was a pivotal event for Rafael since it was notable for the strategies he employed to locate appropriate information in spite of his disengagement from the topic and the paucity of available material.

In this situation, it is important to note the manner in which Rafael used the resources available to him. Rafael clearly saw a hierarchy in the personnel involved in the LC, with the academic instructors at the top and the support people such as the tutors and the counselors at a lower level. In fact, he associated visits to the tutor with the stigma of being a less than competent student. Within many cultural models in higher education, peer tutoring prompts questions of power struggle and negotiation. Colvin (2007) has observed that while peer tutors perform a valuable function by supplementing classroom instruction, their positions are hardly absolute. Students often consider peer tutors their equals and resist giving them the power to instruct them because they do not want to acknowledge that peer tutors have more knowledge or skills than they do. Rafael bore out this observation because he did not consider Chrystal, the designated tutor for his LC, as possessing the knowledge or the ability to help him improve his writing, principally because she was a former ESL student herself. He declared that he had never consulted Chrystal just as he had never visited tutors in his high school.

Rafael: I am doing really well in every class, like I am not struggling, so I never needed a tutor.

- Researcher: In high school, did you ever visit a tutor?
 Rafael: Yes, my English tutor- she was my English teacher and she was tutoring too, so in lunch time so I go take my lunch and visit her.

(Rafael, personal communication, May 31, 2011)

Based on his experiences in high school, he had deduced that tutors generally helped students who needed help outside the class simply to keep up with the course requirements. He believed that teachers were the best source of help for advanced students like himself, especially since each of used different styles of teaching.

- Rafael: It actually helps a lot. If the teacher is a tutor, then I can get to know more the teacher and what she wants. Because teachers teach different matters and if a teacher teaches something different, then the other teacher is completely different and then you get an F.
 Researcher: So, have you ever visited a tutor in the ALC (Academic Learning Center)?
 Rafael: No. I just don't ever struggle in class, never.
 Researcher: I know you don't struggle.
 Rafael: If I had a struggle, I would go, you know.
 Researcher: Right.
 Rafael: I just understand the things, so I don't go.

(Rafael, personal communication, May 31, 2011)

In fact, Rafael had been a mathematics tutor in high school. His experiences with his tutees reinforced the conviction that tutoring was only for underprepared students. He did not believe that his problem finding material meant that he might benefit from consulting with a tutor and looking for ways to organize his essay.

Throughout the semester, Rafael did not visit any of the tutors even once. He relied primarily on his instructors and partly on his peers to help him and advise him on the content and organization of his work. When he completed the drafts of his essays, he would ask one or two of his friends to peer edit it for them. This was an equal but limited collaboration where each helped the others out. However, Rafael was not open to ideas

regarding style or use of vocabulary from his friends, mainly because each of them was writing about a different character.

For the next assignment, Rafael had to describe the monster aspect of Stalin. He had less difficulty with this assignment, and actually wrote a six-page essay this time, with the following brief introduction:

“The death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic” (Joseph, 2). This was words said by one of the ruthless tyrants in the World History, Joseph Vissarionovich, also known as Joseph Stalin. During his time as Union of Soviet Socialist Republics leader, Stalin made multitudinous people die, including his own son. [sic]

(Rafael, Monster Essay, draft 2, April 15, 2011)

In this passage, Rafael started in his customary manner with an appropriate quotation. He repeated his mistake from his first draft of the first essay in the use of *this was the words*, but overall, he displayed control over his grammar. He also continued with his use of expressive vocabulary with *multitudinous*. With regard to content, Rafael had little trouble, and found much information to support his points.

The final essay of the semester required Rafael to write a position paper about Stalin. This assignment was reflective in nature, and by now, Rafael had learnt and thought deeply about Stalin. His paper was concise, to the point, and personal. The introduction to this essay, the only one that lacked a quotation, started thus:

During this semester I worked on Stalin a tyrant that commanded Russia during World War II and made millions of people die because of his ideas. Before start writing about Stalin, I had a really bad idea about Stalin, and thought he did nothing good but kill and suppress. For me, he was a complete monster that no one liked and everyone wished that he never existed during world history. During my research, I learned that Stalin is not actually hated by everyone and he made some really good stuff for the country and some people actually see him as a hero in Russia.

(Rafael, position paper, May 13, 2011)

Rafael effectively explained the progression of ideas, from his initial opinion of Stalin to the one held by many of his supporters. It was possible for Rafael to come to this conclusion principally because he had gone through the arduous process of getting information on all aspects of Stalin. In the remainder of the essay, he had reiterated Stalin's strengths as an administrator and cited polls which listed Stalin as the third most revered hero in Russian history; at the same time his writing emphasized the darker, more prominent side to his character. Rafael employed a straightforward, almost conversational writing style in this essay, and like his earlier work, the few errors in grammar and sentence construction did not affect his ability to communicate his intended meaning.

Conclusion. Rafael's journey in LC2 was smooth. He started the semester equipped with academic skills appropriate for the college courses for which he had signed up. His previous learning experiences in his native Portugal coupled with the academic support he had received from his high school English teacher and his family had played a critical role in helping him to become an independent learner. In other words, he knew what methods to employ to improve his performances. Therefore, his work on his assignments was generally exemplary. If he was challenged by any activity, he was adept at using selective resources in the LC to his advantage. These resources included the various instructors, especially the freshman composition and the library instructors. Additionally, he had planned his course work for the semester in an optimal manner by dedicating ample time to his work and school. The LC provided additional scaffolding to his already impressive academic literacy skills. His attitude towards his academics had always been positive. As a result of his experiences in the LC, he developed a greater awareness of the multiple resources at the college.

Table 17: *Sample analysis of Rafael's writing*

	Thesis statement	Support	Comments
Essay 1 (biography) Draft 1	Stalin rose as a poor violently beat child and grew up as a high power politic with a ruthless face in the world history, dying of a health problem.	i. Poor violently beat child ii. High power politic iii. Ruthless iv. Dying of a health problem	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of quotation as hook • Background information connects hook to thesis statement • thesis statement unfocused Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word forms (<i>beat</i> instead of <i>beaten</i>, <i>politic</i> instead of <i>politician</i>) • Number (<i>this</i> instead of <i>these</i>) Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notorious, oppressive, tyrannical
Draft 2	Stalin grew up to be a high power politician with a ruthless face in the world history.	i. High power politician ii. Ruthless face in world history	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hook, background information leading to focused thesis statement Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word forms used appropriately
Essay 2 (monster essay)	During his time as Union of Soviet Socialist Republics leader, Stalin made multitudinous people die, including his own son	Stalin made multitudinous people die	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate quote as hook • Focused thesis statement Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number (<i>this</i> instead of <i>these</i>) Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multitudinous, ruthless, tyrant
Final essay (persuasive)	During my research, I learned that Stalin is not actually hated by everyone and he made some really good stuff for the country and some people actually see him as a hero in Russia.	Before, I had a bad idea and thought he did nothing good. During my research I learned he made some really good stuff.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformative (Lillis, 2007) • Introduction presents both, the hero and the monster aspects of Stalin.

Learning in isolation: Liang's journey as a Generation 1.5 student

Profile and previous educational experiences. Liang was the second student in the LC led by Professor Cohen. Originally from China, Liang had been in the United States for almost ten years when he joined Windsor Community College. Of all the participants, Liang seemed to have the greatest awareness of his language learning process and made conscious decisions to avoid attrition of his heritage language and yet improve his proficiency of English.

Liang moved to Flushing, New York, in 2001 when he was eleven years old. He had grown up in the linguistically diverse province of Fujian in China (French, 2005), and had learned Fuzhou, the local dialect, as well as Mandarin. His memories of school in his home country were blurry; all he remembered was reading stories of great men and memorizing and copying passages from his text books. The only language of instruction had been Mandarin.

When Liang moved to the United States, he was a fifth grader, and knew no English; therefore, he was placed in an ESL class. Although difficult, Liang handled his initial years in the US with equanimity. He laughingly described the first days of school:

Well, it was pretty hard. I knew nothing, nothing at all. So when kids start speaking and I couldn't understand anything, so they would kind of bully me. So that was ok, that was ok. [sic]

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Fortunately, two of his teachers in that school were from China and helped him with language and classroom issues. Yet, this support was short-lived as, later that year, his family moved to Queens where there were no students or teachers from China. Liang believed this move worked to his advantage.

No one spoke Mandarin and I learned. And in 6th grade, I went to Buffalo, New York where there was again no Asian, I was the only one.

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Again, Liang considered the lack of Mandarin speakers to his advantage in his language learning process. He recalled:

Over there I improved a lot, speaking skills and my reading skills too because I was forced to learn because if I do not learn, I cannot make friends and I cannot talk to anyone.

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

He stayed on in Buffalo for two more years, and because of the small ESL population in the school, was placed in a pull-out ESL class where he was the only student. So, in essence, he received one-on-one tutoring in ESL for the two years he was there. He enjoyed this time with his teacher who rewarded him for each milestone that he crossed. For example, she would give him tokens for each passage that he read. He could then exchange a certain number of tokens for a small reward.

Before Liang moved to Lakefront the following year, he had completed the ESL program in his school in Buffalo. In Lakefront High School, he could take regular English classes beginning from his freshman year. However, in Lakefront High School, Liang found regular English classes challenging and failed tests given early on in the school year. He realized that he needed more intensive instruction in English. Therefore, he asked to be moved back into an ESL classes.

Well, when I was in NY, I sort of slacked off because I could not understand everything that much. I thought I did but I failed a class and that made me realize that my English may not be proficient so I have to improve so when I came here.
[sic]

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

In making the decision to transfer voluntarily to an ESL class, Liang was not influenced or coerced by anyone. It was a decision taken by a teenager in a new school, to go back to the confines of an ESL classroom although he could have stayed on in the regular English classroom. Liang's action assumes significance in light of the fact that the ESL label is often viewed as a stigma by many second language learners (Blanton, 1999; Marshall, 2010; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). In fact, Marshall has asserted that college students who have to return to the ESL classroom in spite of being mainstreamed in high school often deal with a deficit identity crisis, in that they feel that a significant portion of their identity, linked to their achievement of acquiring English, has been taken away. Therefore, Liang's assessment of his own skills and his subsequent action is a pivotal event, which indicates his willingness to work hard to master English as well as he could.

After one year of ESL instruction, Liang went back to regular classes, and graduated high school on time. By this time, his parents had moved back to Buffalo. Liang began to live with a married couple who owned a Chinese restaurant and lived over it. He worked hard to maintain his ties with his native country which he had not visited since coming to the United States. Although he had last studied Mandarin almost ten years earlier, he continued to try to read Mandarin language newspapers which were delivered to the restaurant. He remarked that he found reading in Mandarin quite easy.

Well, I started, it kind of came naturally to me. I have 2nd level Chinese, so I can read basically all the books, and newspapers. I forgot to write but I can still read.

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

At home, with his hosts, Liang continued to speak Fuzhou, his native dialect. In addition to speaking and reading, Liang also attempted to increase his vocabulary in Mandarin by using an online bilingual dictionary as a translator.

But in Mandarin, I want to understand what it is, right like in a car, the engine. Like it is a component, in English I will know what it is but in Mandarin, I will say what it is because I never learned it in Chinese but I can read it. So I will type it in English and they will translate and there are choices so I can do it. [sic]

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Liang was personally invested in improving his proficiency in all three of the languages in his repertoire. His actions, such as retaking ESL classes, working on his Mandarin skills, and attempting to maintain Fuzhou are examples of an independent learner, one committed to language learning.

In spite of his endeavors, however, Liang's description of his linguistic journey is one of a lonely traveler, working hard, but with little expert guidance, except in school, and little social interaction. An absence of language socialization is evident in Liang's experiences learning English, when he had one-on-one instruction from a teacher, and also in his efforts to maintain Mandarin, the dominant language in China. Liang did not get an opportunity to use Mandarin in conversation any more since his landlords spoke Fuzhou. As Schechter and Bayley (2004) and Ochs (1986) have asserted, language communities, both intergenerational and peer, play a crucial role in shaping linguistic and socio-linguistic competence. Intergenerational linguistic interactions contribute to language maintenance, while peer interaction is especially relevant in language acquisition. The lack of social interaction became a pivotal event. In English, too, Liang attempted to improve his reading proficiency, but found it difficult.

To tell you the truth, when I read, it sometime go in from one ear and come out from the other. [sic]

(Liang, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Liang made his own choices with regard to his reading material. He could name the occasional Sherlock Holmes novel, but did not read any magazines or other books.

Academic experiences in the LC. Liang applied to Windsor Community College and registered as a Business major. It took him some time to save enough money for college, so he could not register for the Fall 2011 semester. By spring, he was ready and had signed up for his courses. In addition to the three courses in the learning community, he had also registered for introductory psychology and sociology courses.

Table 18: *Liang's schedule in Spring 2011*

Spring 2011	Freshman composition- 3 credits	Freshman Seminar- 2 credits	Library course-1 credit	Introductory psychology- 3 credits	Introductory sociology -3 credits	Total- 12 credits
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Professor Cohen's LC had fifteen students. This group of students was diverse ethnically, and hailed from Portugal, Chile, Peru, China, Ecuador, Brazil, Nigeria, and Haiti. This ethnic diversity contrasted with the homogeneity of the students in terms of their ages and educational backgrounds. Six of these fifteen students had graduated from American high schools and fit the description of Generation 1.5 students. In addition, three other students had just completed high school in their countries of origin and come to the United States as international students. Thus, there were nine students ranging in ages from nineteen to twenty three. Liang was not the only student from China in this group; an older lady called Margaret had also enrolled in LC2. Margaret, who had a degree in Biology, had emigrated from China two years earlier with her husband.

Experiences with the freshman seminar course. Liang did not believe that the freshman seminar course served any useful purpose. He certainly did not appreciate the relevance of the assignments that Professor Andrews assigned them. Most of her

assignments were reflective in nature. She wanted students to consider instructor comments as building steps to a better second draft. Liang was confident enough in his abilities to regard these journal activities as irrelevant.

I think I am doing good in my classes. Freshman seminar course is not too difficult, actually quite easy. I know what to do for the composition class, so maybe I didn't need the seminar course.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

On the other hand, Professor Andrews believed that Liang was over confident and did not think that he needed to work hard at all.

Liang's problem was that he thought he was better than he was and he didn't apply himself at all. There are always those who plug along and do what they have to do the best they can, and learn from their mistakes and those who just don't try or think they need to try.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

In her comments, Professor Andrews revealed her frustration at the fact that Liang was unwilling to work harder in class. Her assignments were designed to prompt student reflection and thinking, and she was discouraged by the fact that Liang seemed not to take them seriously. She believed that Liang's attitude typified his attitude towards learning in general, of taking short cuts and not committing himself to his work. Liang's earlier actions in high school and his independent efforts at language maintenance seemed inconsistent with his attitude toward his freshman seminar class.

Writing assignments in the LC. Professor Cohen handed out a list of well-known leaders, and asked her students to choose one. Liang was not enthusiastic about any of the names on that list, which included notable figures like Stalin, Marilyn Monroe, and Fidel Castro, none of whom was relevant in his cultural world. Instead, he asked if he could write about Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of unified China, who had established the

Qin dynasty and ruled till his death in 221 BC. In China, Qin Shi Huang is a controversial figure, admired for uniting the country and using economic and political reforms, while at the same time, abandoning ethical or moral considerations in enforcing his rule (Loewe, 2007). Thus, Qin Shi Huang seemed an appropriate choice for the class assignments which revolved around the hero/monster theme. Professor Cohen agreed to his request.

For the first essay, Professor Cohen had them write a biographical essay on their topic. This is how Liang started his essay:

Qin Dynasty was one of the earlier empire of ancient China. The nation was not founded in a day. During the descending of the East Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BC) follows the era of the warring states. The Warring States was a period of time in China, when former dukes and lords of the East Zhou dynasty, fought each other for land and power. There was seven territories that dominated the battle fields. After years of war, finally, in 221 BC, all the territories fell under Qin and China at last unified. His conquest continued as he went south and extended the boundaries to current day Vietnam. With the empire unified, it came with the first emperor, Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Qin Shi Huang was an exceptional man, his birth was a mystery, he was the first person in the Chinese history to come up with the universal standardization and rewarded himself with a vast wealth and power. [sic]

(Liang, Biography essay, draft 1, February 24, 2011)

In this excerpt from his first draft, Liang had included many facts of Chinese history, but had made little attempt to link them together or provide a context for many of the events. For example, Liang started off by mentioning the Qin dynasty, but provided no link between that family and the East Zhou dynasty, or indeed, to Qin Shi Huang. His thesis statement, too, was a collection of random facts, which he did not adequately discuss further in the essay. In addition to the organization of the introduction, Liang displayed errors in grammar as well. First, the tense usage in this paragraph was inconsistent, moving between simple present and simple past. Secondly, Liang also had trouble with agreement as evidenced in *There was seven territories*. However, Liang's

interest in this period of Chinese history does shine through, as does his effort to synthesize information. This introduction, packed densely with information about Chinese figures, time periods, and regions, seems particularly confusing to those unfamiliar with the specific period of Chinese history.

Liang followed this paragraph with a random narration of a legend which described the birth of one of the ancestors of a king from the Zhou dynasty. What followed was an attempt at writing a biography of Qin Shi Huang, but the facts were thrown together in a random fashion that made the narration difficult to follow. In addition to the disorganized content, there were numerous examples of fragments and errors in the use of verb tenses. For example, at one point, Liang wrote:

As Qin Shi Huang enters middle age, the emperor became more and more afraid of death. He became obsessed with finding a method to live forever, one of them is to find the elixir of immortality. Sending people all around the known territories, and in 219 BC, some people were even send to Japan to search for the elixir. [sic]

(Liang, Biography essay, draft 1, February 24, 2011)

In the first sentence, Liang moved between simple present and simple past tenses. The second sentence lacked a conjunction, and the last sentence remained a fragment.

Professor Cohen believed that her students were motivated and had good writing skills. In fact, when I interacted with her students, I agreed with her. Liang's fluency and his ability to cull facts from multiple texts and synthesize them for this essay seemed impressive. However, Professor Cohen also observed that the biography essay did not adequately reflect Liang's actual writing skills. She felt that because this was the first time Liang was working and studying at the same time, he did not have enough time to focus on his homework. This was her comment on his first draft:

You write clearly, using mainly correct grammar, but you must remember that the reader does not know Chinese history. The different names are very confusing. Fix the thesis statement. Fix fragments.

(Professor Cohen's comments on Liang's 1st draft of Biography essay, February 28, 2011)

Liang received a grade of "C" for this assignment and agreed with Professor Cohen's assessment of his writing. He remarked to me:

I tend to have a long first paragraph. It's a paragraph, but like a whole page and a half and then my body is shorter. Like I say a lot of things, but it is getting shorter, shorter, shorter. I don't know, it's just me.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Liang believed that his writing revealed his inability to organize his essay into effective introduction and body paragraphs. In fact, he believed that the composition course was the only one with which he had trouble. His assertions revealed both his knowledge of the metalanguage of composition writing as well as his trouble with the process.

For the other courses I am doing, no trouble in them. I think I do think I need a little more help with writing. I am a little messy at times. My ideas will be all over the place.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Liang's insistence that he was doing better in other classes than in his composition class appeared to be an attempt on his part to position himself as a competent student. With no means of corroborating his statement, neither I nor his LC teachers knew if indeed his performance in his other classes was stellar.

Peer interactions and surrogate tutoring. Although Liang realized that he needed help with both grammar and organization, he did not actively seek guidance from the multiple resources available to him. He had never visited the ALC, although he claimed that he would visit it the following semester when he had to take the second course of

freshman composition sequence. The designated tutor, Chrystal, had visited their class once, but Liang never considered visiting her for help either. None of his peers had visited her, so Liang did not think that he would benefit from her help.

By this time, Liang had become friendly with one of his LC peers, a Brazilian woman of his own age called Claudia. Claudia's writing skills were strong, and she consistently received high grades for her essays. Liang approached Claudia to help him with his grammar. His other area of concern was organization. Surprisingly, as the following excerpt demonstrates, Liang did not feel the need to ask anyone for help with this aspect of his essay writing.

- Researcher: And who helps you with the organization of your essays?
 Liang: Organization? Well, I just read it over and over again and see if it makes sense. If it does, then I just hand it in. If I find odd terms, for example things that people might not know, say the Hang dynasty, and that people might not know, then I explain it.
 Researcher: So you are basically working on your own, right, so to speak?
 Liang: Well, I can work in teams. I am good at that also. I just like working by myself. It really does not matter.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

In this excerpt, Liang revealed his preference for working on his own, using peer support only sparingly. Claudia worked with Liang on the second draft of his essay. Ostensibly, her role was to minimize grammar errors. However, as Liang recounted, she was confused by the subject matter of the essay, and asked Liang many questions to understand the topic clearly. In the process of explaining his introduction, Liang streamlined it substantially. He reported:

Well, she kept asking, "I don't get this" for every sentence. It took long time. So I tried to explain, and then I wrote down the changes, and when I read it again, it made more sense.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

After his interaction with Claudia, Liang wrote this introduction for his second draft:

Qin Dynasty was one of the oldest empires in China. The nation was not founded in a day. Many kings and emperors in China fought wars to get control. The East Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BC) followed the era of the Warring States. This is when former dukes and lords of the East Zhou dynasty fought each other for land and power. After years of war, finally, in 221 BC, all the territories fell under Qin and China at last unified. With the empire unified, Qin Shi Huang become the first emperor of China. Qin Shi Huang was an exceptional man. His birth was a mystery, he was the first person in the Chinese history to come up with the universal standardization, and he made a lot of wealth.

(Liang, Biography essay, draft 2, March 15, 2011)

Compared to the introduction for his first draft, this introduction was certainly more focused. Liang had eliminated many confusing details and focused mainly on Emperor Qin Shi Huang. Using Claudia as a sounding board had helped Liang craft a more polished introduction. However, Claudia could not help him with the entire essay since just working on part of the essay had taken up all the time she could spare. Therefore, Liang worked on the remainder of the essay on his own without making substantial changes.

Professor Cohen appreciated the changes that Liang had made in the second draft, but was expecting greater improvements in the organization of the entire essay. She did not believe that he had put in too much effort and told him so. Liang, once again agreed with her, and resolved to work harder.

In the next assignment, Liang was required to portray the heroic aspect of Qin Shi Huang. In his interview with me, Liang appeared confident of his ability to write a good paper. He described the process he followed in crafting this paper:

Liang: I have idea. I read stories about him, previously, I saw documentary. I had a clear sense. I started researching things I know, and when doing bibliography (biography), I found out

- other things, and it was, I had a lot of information.
- Researcher: And when you were looking for information, you had an idea of how you wanted your essay to be?
- Liang: Yes, some of it, I felt it was necessary what he did. And he did do some good things, he did some changes for China.
- Researcher: So there was some justification for what he did?
- Liang: So you understood him in a different way. [sic]

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Liang seemed to have a definite idea about how he wanted to depict the positive side of Qin Shi Huang. However, in doing his research, he relied on his own searches instead of asking for guidance from Professor Feng, the library instructor, even though he had unearthed a surplus of information. Moreover, he did not always screen his sources, and used Wikipedia and newspaper reports with equal regard, as evidenced by his citation list. In fact, as with his earlier essay, he did not work from an outline. This is his description of how he organized his essay:

- Researcher: So, how do you write?
- Liang: I said thesis, the things he did that were good, and then I elaborated.
- Researcher: And you had your notes in front of you?
- Liang: Notes? You mean what I copied from the website? Yes
- Researcher: And how about the paraphrasing and the summarizing. How much time and effort did that take?
- Liang: That was not a problem. I can put them in my own words.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Liang seemed confident of his abilities to write this essay, and to deal with the usually cumbersome activities of summarizing and paraphrasing material from sources. This confidence, however, did not match the quality of his writing. Instead of the required four pages, he had written only three pages. This is the introduction to his essay:

Qin Shi Huang became emperor of China in 221 BC. China was finally united. With the nation united, it means he will be the first emperor, his sons and

grandsons will carry on the titles as Qin the second, third, fourth till forever. He issued a “universal standardization” from weights and measures and Great Wall of China was being constructed under his rule. [sic]

(Liang, Hero essay, draft 1, March 30, 2011)

Compared to the introduction from his first essay, Liam showed less control over the syntax of this introduction. Liang had specified the two most crucial achievements of Qin Shi Huang’s rule, but the opening sentences were less than engaging and, once again, Liang had not provided much of a context to his central character. In the remainder of the essay, he described the building of the Great Wall of China and the start of standardization of weights, measures, and currency, Qin Shi Huang’s two major achievements. However, he had not provided many details. In fact, he had merely reiterated the same points he had made in his biography essay.

Professor Cohen was disappointed with this essay, especially because she had high expectations from Laing, based on his own account of his hard work in learning English. She exclaimed:

I had high expectations of Liang, actually from all of them this semester. He does work with Claudia, but really that does not reflect in his writings. Claudia was excellent. Liang did only the bare minimum. It’s as if he did not move forward at all, just stayed on in the same place.

Professor Cohen, personal communication, June 2, 2011)

Professor Feng also expressed her disappointment in the fact that Liang had not made more of an effort in the library class to locate information. Although she had shown them the academic databases and demonstrated the use of Boolean search tools, she did not feel that Liang had made an effort to use her instruction appropriately. She commented:

I give them all suggestions, but Liang, he is, I think, he is a little lazy. He never asks questions in class and he never sees me after class.

(Professor Feng, personal communication, June 6, 2011)

The final assignment from Professor Cohen required the students to write a position paper where they had to argue if their historical personality was a hero or a monster. Liang's introduction to this paper was thoughtfully crafted. He wrote:

When I first started writing this series of research paper, I always had thought Emperor Qin was a really bad man. He burned books, killed scholars and built many structures that in result the death of thousands. He put heavy taxes on the people, and capital punishment for anyone who goes against him. In his later years, he became obsess with immortality. Finally, in the end, Emperor Qin was killed by mercury poisoning. [sic]

(Liang, introduction, Position paper, May 13, 2011)

Liang had opened his introduction by stating the commonly held views about Qin Shi Huang of being a monster. Liang also listed some of this emperor's more horrific qualities. However, once again, he had ignored Professor Cohen's exhortation to write a strong thesis statement. Grammatically, he again displayed problems with consistent tense usage. He attempted to use the passive voice two times in this short introduction, and succeeded the second time.

In the position paper, Liang attempted to provide justification for Qin Shi Huang's actions, listing the state of chaos that followed years of war, which necessitated the use of force to ensure law and order. Liang also realized that Qin was not entirely to blame for his actions because he had been influenced by his deputy, Li Shu.

While Liang made pertinent points in his position paper, it was marred by his lack of attention to details and his inability to articulate his position clearly. The three paragraphs in this paper included his introduction, a short biographical sketch, and some reasons for his actions. He ended his paper by stating:

The greatest of all revolution was the standardization of all measurements. This benefits the nation's economic, trade and the wellness of people. [sic]

(Liang, conclusion, Position paper, May 13, 2011)

Conclusion. Liang's experience in LC2 was characterized by contradictions. In his conversations with me and his instructors, he categorized himself as an independent learner, keenly aware of the culture of his native country, and proactive in maintaining his native languages through whatever means available. At the same time, he had taken steps to assimilate in his high school community and was worried enough about his English skills to return to ESL classes even though he had been mainstreamed.

Through the series of assignments in Professor Cohen's class, Liang remained engaged and responsible to a degree. He requested to write about a historical figure from China whose name was not on the original list. He made a genuine attempt to explore the reason behind the actions of Qin Shi Huang. In his choice of topic and his research efforts, Liang paid tribute to his home culture and introduced an important historical though largely unknown character. He ensured that his voice as an amateur Chinese historian was heard. However, his improvement in matters of academic skills like grammar and organization was minimal. Moreover, he made little attempt to move from a peripheral to a more legitimate position (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in his LC or beyond. Most striking is the fact Liang made little effort to access and exploit the multiple affordances (instructors, tutors, and peers) offered in the LC.

Table 19: *Sample analysis of Liang's writing*

<i>Essay</i>	<i>Excerpt</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Essay 1- biography essay</i>	Qin Shi Huang was an exceptional man, his birth was a mystery, he was the first person in the Chinese history to come up with the universal standardization and rewarded him self with a vast wealth and power.	<p>Compositional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction lacks unity and coherence • Introduction contains too many facts that rightly belong in the body. • Source-based writing <p>Grammatical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number (<i>one of the earlier empire, there was seven territories</i>) • Inconsistent use of verb tenses
<i>Essay 2- hero essay</i>	Qin Shi Huang became emperor of China in 221 BC. China was finally united. With the nation united, it means he will be the first emperor, his sons and grandsons will carry on the titles as Qin the second, third, fourth till forever. He issued a “universal standardization” from weights and measures and Great Wall of China was being constructed under his rule.	<p>Compositional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unoriginal opening • Focused introduction • Thesis statement outlines important points but lacks parallel structure <p>Grammatical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent use of tenses • Uneven mastery of passive voice
<i>Position paper</i>	The greatest of all revolution was the standardization of all measurements. This benefits the nation's economic, trade and the wellness of people.	<p>Compositional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source based writing but • Lacked details • Inarticulate position <p>Grammatical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word forms used incorrectly (<i>economic</i>) • Error in use of number (<i>the greatest of all revolution</i>) <p>Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate use of vocabulary (<i>wellness</i>)

Outside LCs: Non- LC participants and their experiences

In this section, I describe two participants from a stand-alone composition class that I taught. This class, with twenty six students, was the largest of the three composition classes in this study and ethnically diverse. Eight students from Haiti made up the largest group, followed by three students each from Poland, Brazil, and Argentina. The remaining nine students hailed from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and Uzbekistan.

The profile of six students from this class, including three from Haiti, fit the description of Generation 1.5 students. Of these six, two students, Marivia, from Haiti, and Lisbeth, from Venezuela, agreed to participate in the study. As I mentioned earlier, I was the instructor for this course, and the students completed the same assignments as the students from RLC.

Table 20: *Profile of participants in stand-alone class*

Name	Country of origin	Native language	Year of arrival in the US	Age on arrival in US	Grade on arrival in US	Age at the time of this study
Marivia	Haiti	Creole	2006	16	9	21
Lisbeth	Venezuela	Spanish	2004	13	7	20

From a reader to a writer: Marivia's journey as a Generation 1.5 student. This section opens with a description of Marivia's profile and previous academic experiences. An account of her experiences in the freshman composition class comes next, followed by a summary of her writing assignments. I next discuss the incidental interventions of peer and surrogacy tutoring that Marivia encountered and their impact on her final

writing assignments. Interspersed in this narration is also a list of references to pivotal events in Marivia's language learning experiences.

Marivia's profile and previous educational experiences in Haiti. Marivia grew up in Haiti in an extended family with her parents, her grandmother, two younger brothers, an aunt and cousins. When she was ten, her parents divorced and her mother moved alone to the United States in search of better career opportunities. Marivia stayed back in Haiti in her grandmother's home and continued with her schooling, funded partly by the remittances sent by her mother.

Marivia was proud of the fact that both her parents had attended college. She was even more proud of the fact that her father traveled to other countries on work.

My mom went to college in Haiti too. My dad went to college in Haiti. He went to a seminar in Israel and some other countries. He is a doctor and a urologist.

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Marivia was less sure of her mother's profession.

My mom, she studied, I forgot what she studied. Some sort of public relations stuff. She worked with non-governmental organization.

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

In Haiti, Marivia spoke Creole at home and began to learn French when she started school. In addition, she also had to study Latin. Marivia's recollections of her language classes in Haiti indicate that her teachers used some form of grammar translation method.

We did grammar, vocabularies, and then we had to translate phrases and sentences and they also showed when you translating a sentence you don't do it word by word. You try to understand the whole meaning of the sentence and then translate it. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

In her English classes, Marivia also remembered reading stories from a reading book and working on vocabulary exercises.

- Marivia: We had a book. That was a study book and a workbook. In the workbook, we had different stories. In the stories we had different things, like they told you stories from the USA or from England and we would read it loud. Then also we had to do the suffixes.
- Researcher: And what else? Prefixes and suffixes?
- Marivia: Prefixes and suffixes, opposites, contrary, synonyms, and antonyms.
- Researcher: OK
- Marivia: And we also studied some people. Example, we studied Marilyn Monroe. We studied what was the KKK and what else?

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

The emphasis on grammar and word drills helped Marivia develop an awareness of cognates.

Therefore when you study Latin, French and English they (words) are more easy and less difficult because some words you already know them in Latin and they have almost the same words in French. Therefore, it was easier to study them in English and also French because some words are similar or have the same meaning.

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Marivia's language learning experiences in school reflect the linguistic conundrum in Haiti. Although Haitians consider themselves bilingual in both French and Creole, recent research, notably by Dejean (2009), reveals that Creole is the lingua franca in this country, and the language used in conversations across most businesses, schools, and households. However, until recently, Creole was not taught in schools and did not possess its own orthography. Instead, students in primary schools are routinely taught in French. The mismatch between the home language and language of official instruction has significantly impacted high school graduation rates in that country; approximately

only forty percent of students graduate high school (Dejean, 2009). Dejean has also noted that while many Haitians consider themselves bilinguals, their proficiency in French is limited to being able to recite passages which they have memorized. Even school officials cannot always conduct conversations in French. Although Marivia believed she was bilingual, her description of her language classes prove that her instruction of French and English was limited to word forms and readings on superficial cultural markers.

In addition, Haiti's impoverished economic situation has also affected the educational system negatively with schools being too expensive and lacking adequately trained teachers (Armuedo-Dorantes, Georges, & Pozo, 2010; Dejean, 2009).

After Marivia finished middle school, she and her two brothers came to the United States to join their mother. Her mother had settled down in Linden, a town with a predominantly Polish population. Marivia was in ninth grade, and placed in an ESL class meant for high beginners. The first year was chaotic for Marivia.

It was strange because I wasn't used to that kind of environment. And you know when you first came to a country you may think you know English but when people are talking around you it's like you don't know anything. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Marivia's words indicate that her English classes in Haiti had not made her proficient in that language. Marivia faced a problem familiar to many immigrants, including Generation 1.5 students, when they realize they cannot communicate in a language they had already studied in their native countries. However, Marivia was concerned about her grades, studied hard, and progressed with her ESL classes. By the time she was in twelfth grade, she had graduated from the ESL program and was

mainstreamed into regular English classes. In these classes, her biggest challenge was with the reading required of her.

Marivia: We read a book *Ender's Game*. I don't remember the other book because I was not really interested in the books. Well, another book, that was a kind of a difficult English author.

Researcher: Did you have to read Shakespeare?

Marivia: I don't think it was Shakespeare, but it was a difficult author. That was a old English book. Well, there was a king in it, oh yes, King Lear! [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Ender's Game, a science fiction novel by Orson Scott Card, is a popular choice of textbooks in many high school English classes. Marivia had read French translations of romances by the popular British author Barbara Cartland and the American romance novelist Danielle Steele. In contrast, the content of *Ender's Game* thus did not appeal to her. Shakespeare's works, too, did not form part of her existing framework for literary work, as is evident from her mention of King Lear and the language of his plays was particularly challenging to Marivia. In addition, she was the only Haitian student in a class with Spanish and Polish-speaking students. Marivia believed that the lack of French and Creole speaking classmates was another reason for her struggle with English.

Marivia enrolled in after-school tutoring provided by her school to help students prepare for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Marivia found these classes as well as the teaching methods of her instructor extremely helpful.

There I had to speak English, and I had to write in English. One of the good thing the teacher did she helped me to find a word that in my head. She said if I didn't know a word I know it in French or any other language, I put it in quotation mark. So I just put it like that. I don't know if she get the word she not get the word, I put it like that. So that help me a lot. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

In the SAT classes, Marivia did not miss not having any Haitian friends. In fact, she now relished the challenge of using her English to communicate. In addition, her teacher encouraged her think across languages. When Marivia could not think of a word in English, her teacher encouraged her to think of its counterpart in French for the time being and retrieve it later. Marivia's confidence in her English language skills grew, and she passed the English section of the HSPA on her first attempt.

Upon finishing high school, Marivia applied to Windsor Community College. As a non-native speaker of English, she was required to take the ESL placement test even though she had exited the ESL program in her high school. The results of the placement test indicated that she be placed in Level 4 of the ESL program at the college, which is appropriate for students with high-intermediate proficiency.

In her final level of ESL instruction, or Level 6, Marivia decided that she was interested in one of the many Allied Health majors offered by the college. Therefore, she signed up for a preparatory non-credit biology course while still in the ESL program. The non-credit biology course was offered by the Biology department to prepare ESL students for the more intensive, rigorous, three-credit introductory biology course mandatory for all students interested in an Allied Health major. Marivia completed the final level of ESL instruction and the additional biology course she had taken in Fall 2010 with a grade of C+ average, that indicates her average performance in those courses.

Academic experiences in the freshman composition class. The following semester, in Spring 2011, Marivia finally took her first credit courses in Windsor Community College. In the previous semester, she had expressed an interest in a major related to Allied Health; however, she had now changed her mind. She now wanted to

explore her options in two majors: journalism and English, without being quite certain of possible careers for which she could use these majors.

Researcher: So who helped you to sort of plan your courses? Or who helped you to choose your major?

Marivia: Kind of my own. I just look around.

Researcher: Did you talk to anybody?

Marivia: I speak to somebody that was an English major.

Researcher: Right. And what is that person doing now?

Marivia: Right now, she is like kind of funny. She think she will go to graduate school for her law, that's what she doing. But when I went to the internet and I searching for information for English major and I saw that it is kind of more writing and stuff. And I know with an English major you can be a journalist or something or you can also be an English teacher. You can be a writer or you can be a lot of things. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

In this exchange, Marivia revealed that she had explored possible career options by using a limited portion of her learning network (Nelson, 2004). First, she had inquired about the preparatory biology classes from her peers, and later, she asked her friend for advice regarding a new choice for major. Her friend's experiences were not specific and she had not yet spoken with counselors either in her high school or at college, so her searches were random and unguided. She did not believe that she had easy access to career counselors, which is probably why she did not approach them. She believed that with a degree in English, she could be a teacher or a journalist, but was unsure of the process required to actually become a professional or the job descriptions entailed in these fields. She was unable to articulate her attraction to the field of journalism except as an extension of childhood practices and its resultant appreciation she received, as this excerpt illustrates.

Researcher: What part of journalism do you like?

- Marivia: I don't know, that's something I really like. I love journalism since I was young.
- Researcher: Do you like reading newspapers?
- Marivia: No, but, like when I was back in Haiti, I was the journalist of my house for a lot of people. Like when something happened, they call me or my dad on his cell phone and ask, "Did you hear what happen?" I knew everything that was going on. I knew everything. Like when people were on the street, I would say, "Don't go in there."
- Researcher: Did you continue that here as well?
- Marivia: I continue it, but not the way I used to. I really don't have time now.

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Marivia equated her role as a purveyor of information in her childhood home with the duties of a journalist. Haitian society has one of the highest illiteracy rates among the Latin American and Caribbean nations (Amuedo-Dorantes, Georges, & Pozo, 2010). In that context, Marivia's contribution as an interpreter of information or "para-phraser" (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003: 508) is notable. In their research Orellana et al. have referred to the translations and communications performed by children of immigrants. Regardless their age, these children are compelled to act as intermediaries for their parents who do not speak the dominant language of the host country. However, the work of the children is not limited to mere translation; they are required to interpret policies and practices. Similarly, Marivia, by virtue of her father's status and her education became an unofficial para-phraser and performed a valuable role in her social networks in Haiti, supplying and possibly interpreting important information to children and adults. The network to which she disseminated information was not one of immigrants but the local people who seemingly benefited from her input. As such, she occupied a noteworthy position in her community in Haiti. Her circumstances changed after her arrival in a middle school in the US when she became a silent, invisible student.

Marivia's desire to capture the prominent status she had enjoyed in Haiti led her to consider journalism as a possible career. Marivia did not indicate whether she liked searching for facts and looking for answers as much as being in a position of knowing what was going on around her. She reported that she hardly ever read newspapers and never watched television, even the news programs.

If I see something interesting in it (the newspapers), then if I can read what I want to read, then. Sometimes I just go and see what information they have. I read like CNN, online newspapers very rarely. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

To Marivia, news items pertained to the community and were shared in the network. Her interest in other news media like newspapers and television were perfunctory.

Marivia was slightly more certain of jobs she could get if she majored in English. She had started working as a volunteer tutor in an after school program. Every evening, she helped fifteen children with their English and mathematics homework. As a tutor to younger children, Marivia was once again in a position of power. By her own admission, she believed she could become a teacher with a major in English.

With largely undefined ideas about possible future careers, Marivia started taking her first year of credit courses in the college. The requirements of financial aid demanded she take twelve credits which she divided among the following courses.

Table 21: *Marivia's schedule for Spring 2011*

Freshman composition -3 credits	Introduction to sociology -3 credits	Introduction to Mathematics for beginners -3 credits	Communication in English -3 credits	Total- 12 credits
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Composition assignments. In the first assignment of the composition course, students had to compare lives and experiences between students and their instructors (Appendix

6). Here is the introduction to Marivia's essay:

Today I have been ask to write about something I had never thought about in the past, how my life could has been different if I got to exchange it with any of my college professors. When I think about it deeply, I arrive at the point I started to ask myself, what about my life will be better, what will be worst, what will remain unchanged and what would I enjoy doing the most. [sic]

(Marivia, introduction, for comparison/ contrast essay, draft 1, February 8, 2011)

Marivia's introduction, which characterized her complete essay, can be analyzed both at compositional and grammatical levels. From the compositional level, Marivia's introduction lacked a traditional opening as well as a focused thesis statement. In fact, her thesis statement was a repetition of the essay prompt. In addition, her introduction indicated a lack of sustained thought about the differences between teachers and students. This omission is puzzling given Marivia's earlier assertion that she would like to be a teacher and her current work as a tutor. On a grammatical level, this introduction exposed inconsistencies with verb tenses, both in the first and the second sentences, and the misuse of the superlative form of *bad* in the last sentence. Her issues with grammar, especially with the morphological endings, resulted from first language interference. Simplification is a common feature in Creole languages where content words from the original European languages remain but morphological endings are deleted (Muysken & Law, 2001).

In the remainder of the essay, Marivia discussed what she perceived as the advantages a college instructor had over a student. The principal advantage, according to Marivia, was that instructors had mastery over their subjects, and did not have to worry

about bad grades. She also mentioned that student grades reflected the effectiveness of teachers. The style of the essay was conversational, and Marivia had not made much of an effort to explore each idea fully or use adequate support or details. The second paragraph of this essay read like this:

First of all, what in my life would be better from being a college student to a college instructor? I think it will be the fact that I won't have much subjects to study in a roll. Because when you are a student you have a lot of lessons to study for the next day or the next two days, sometimes you feel overwhelm and do not have the same amount of capacity after spending more than 30 minutes in one subject while when you are a college instructor you have at least the subject in your mind and you are doing it for a while and you began to have it more fluid semester after semester. [sic]

(Marivia, 2nd paragraph for comparison/ contrast essay, draft 1 February 8, 2011)

As this paragraph demonstrates, Marivia was thinking on paper rather than elaborating one specific area of difference between instructors and students. She drew from her own experiences, but clearly had not edited any of her writing in this draft. Apart from the topic sentence and the second sentence, the rest of the paragraph was one long sentence with little punctuation, which became incomprehensible. The remainder of the essay was similarly ill constructed, with no appropriate topic sentences, and many assumptions, including the following statement:

As a student when you miss a class sometimes your grade goes down and if it is repeated you can fail the class, while when you are an instructor they do take out some money in your paycheck.

(Marivia, comparison/ contrast essay, draft 1, February 8, 2011)

Marivia had definite ideas about her writing process. In the ESL program, and the freshman composition course, the instructors at Windsor Community College reinforced the idea of using prewriting strategies, outlines, and reviewing essays for editing purposes. Although Marivia was familiar with these strategies, she avoided using them.

You know for the essay you give us, you told us to make the outline, I don't know, but personally, I don't like outlines. Because when you have outlines, you want to stick with the outline. But sometimes when you go back and thinking, and you have the outline, you can't stick to the outline. For me, the outline and what you want to write, they not related at all. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Marivia explained that she had never used outlines because she felt that her creativity and originality were restrained if she had to work on outlines before writing the essay.

Similarly, she resisted proofreading her work and editing any mistakes.

Researcher: When you finish writing, do you go back and check what you have written?

Marivia: I don't really like to do that. Because when I do that, sometimes, I have an idea and it's good, then I have to go back and erase it and then fix it again. Sometimes when I finish something, I just skim it, I don't read it. Because if I read it, I don't want to do it anymore, I erase it and I have to do it again.

Researcher: Don't you think that when you do it over, it sometimes becomes better?

Marivia: Sometimes, it just gets worse because I have to go back and make change in the body, or in the body and the conclusion, I have to switch things or I say I like this idea better, and I fight with myself to know what I want to write or not. So, I just see it and see if there is any mistake or sometime I send it to a friend to proofread it for me and they say maybe this isn't the right place to put it so I go to dictionary.com and thesaurus and find the right words to make it better.

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

As Marivia explained in this passage, she was familiar with the process of writing a composition but was reluctant to follow the steps she had been taught. Part of her reluctance to work on outlines and proofreading stemmed from the realization that these activities led to additional work. While writing an essay was not easy, finding and fixing mistakes was not only time consuming but confusing. At the same time, Marivia was

invested enough in her work to ask for proofreading help from friends and consult online dictionaries.

Implicit also in her conversations with me is Marivia's belief that her fluent writing approach resulted in her essays being authentic and that she had discovered the system that worked best for her. Although outlines and prewriting strategies were necessary for other students, she believed that she did not necessarily benefit from them. For these reasons, Marivia disliked working on second drafts of her essays. She limited changes in the second draft only to the errors which had been marked by her instructors and or ignored them altogether and simply added new information. Her focus on highlighted errors underscored her belief that instructors were responsible for all editing.

When you make a proposition (comment) at the side of the paper, I want to satisfy you what you want, therefore, I have to make an extra effort to go back and think what I wanted to say and is it the same thing and do I have to change it a little bit the paragraph and all that. Sometimes, I don't finish with the draft. I just add new things and don't make any changes. Sometimes, I just look at the errors and fix them.

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Marivia's attitude is reminiscent of Festina, a student Vásquez (2007) described in her study. Festina, like many Generation 1.5 students, used her oral proficiency and understanding of class dynamics to position herself as an academic expert to her peers and even her instructors in spite of actually being a mediocre student. Marivia, too, indicated in her conversations with me that she was knowledgeable in matters of language learning and writing, and she chose to ignore conventional strategies like writing outlines because she did not need those scaffolds. Her confidence in her skills also stemmed from her history as an interpreter of information in her community in Haiti and her work as a tutor during the time of this study.

Marivia and her classmates received their first drafts with my comments, and I asked them to work on their second drafts. As a class, we reviewed writing introductions and body paragraphs, and some students shared their writing with the class.

Marivia handed in her second draft on time. She had not made any changes to the introduction at all, but had worked partly on the body paragraphs, focusing mainly on the sections I had underlined and commented. Here is the revised second paragraph from the comparison/ contrast essay.

First of all, what in my life would be better from being a college student to a college instructor? I think it will be the fact that I won't have much subjects to study in a row. Because when you are a student you have a lot of lessons to study for the next day or the next two days. Sometimes you feel overwhelmed and do not have the same amount of capacity after spending more than 30 minutes in one subject. However when you are a college instructor, you have at least mastered the subject after doing it for a while and it becomes practical semester after semester. Also if I were an instructor, going to school would be more motivated because I know that I would have tip spend coming soon instead of having scores from a quiz. [sic]

(Marivia, Comparison/ contrast essay, draft 2, February 16, 2011)

As Marivia had explained to me, she had only changed the errors I had marked. These changes have been underlined in the excerpt above. In addition to working on the word forms and word choices, Marivia had made a genuine effort to write more coherent sentences. She had also made use of her vocabulary and included words like *mastered* and *practical*. In this paragraph, she described the advantages an instructor had over a student, and in the next paragraph, she discussed the disadvantages of a teacher's life. In addition to these changes, Marivia had attempted to draw on her experiences as a student and used multiple examples throughout her essay. She had made a thoughtful effort to empathize with college instructors as she discussed their responsibilities at home, their

need to reflect on their teaching methods, and finally, reading student papers, which she considered the most rewarding aspect of a teacher's job. Marivia had also attempted to cite an article, although incorrectly, from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In this second draft, Marivia expressed her opinions clearly and added ample support.

The second draft was thus an improvement on the earlier one in terms of both content and organization. However, the conclusion was repetitious and unfocused and Marivia continued to make errors in punctuation and verb tenses.

Teaching can be one of the wonderful careers in life, if you use it the way you suppose to. When you become an instructor it helps you to take more responsibilities. However there are some instructors who do not care about their students' .However being a teacher has a lot of responsibilities in your own life and you have to learn how to respect each and every one of the students individually. Besides in everything in life there are things that you really like to do, things you hate and what you enjoy doing the most in this position. Life in the teacher hood do not seem so exciting because there is no real major difference between the life of a student and the life of an instructor. Also the laws are the same for the student and the instructor, they applied them in different context. If I were really in a position to execute this opportunity I would enjoy correcting the papers because on based on some experiences the writing of a student can be hilarious and also on it you can learn something for your life that you have not paid attention to. After doing this analyze, how many people would double think before they decided to exchange their place from being a student to an instructor? [sic]

(Marivia, Comparison/ contrast essay, draft 2, February 16, 2011)

A reading of Marivia's conclusion reveals that Marivia's reasons for exploring career options in teaching. Nonetheless, it is marred by lack of organization, repetition of phrases, and inclination to make assumptions not based on facts. At the same time, Marivia also displayed her appreciation for a teacher's job which she had failed to do in the first draft. Marivia enjoyed writing this essay because it prompted her to think about teachers' experiences.

That make you think is not really different. The only difference is that the teacher really has to do more than we have to do, such as correcting the papers, preparing the materials, and make sure that they present it well to the students to make them understand. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Paradoxically, although Marivia resented writing essays, she claimed that she enjoyed writing poetry to express her feelings. Thus, it appears that Marivia's connection to writing and to language was organic and spontaneous which might explain her reluctance to use specific tools in her compositions.

When I have ideas, I just like to write. Anything that come out, I write. Sometimes I feel good when I write. Because you can think and forget about everything when you write. Just write, write, write. You know poetry, I write at home. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Another aspect of language that Marivia relished was increasing her vocabulary. She believed that the key to increasing language proficiency was to increase her vocabulary. She worried about learning more English words and getting confused between English and French cognates.

To focus more on ideas, to use, how do you say that, I have to use more vocabulary, I have to gain more vocabularies. There are some words in English and French that are the same. They have the same pronunciation. And when it go through your head, you don't even think about what language it is, just write it down. So, therefore, that's where the mistake comes from. You know some words in French and English, they not the same, so you have to adjust yourself, and your brain, you have to work really hard. Sometimes, you have to think both ways to get your essay done. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

In this excerpt, Marivia projected herself as somewhat of an expert in vocabulary acquisition, especially with her input on cognates. Her interest in vocabulary again underscores her awareness of language, especially, of the importance of vocabulary and

the relationship between cognates. Her metalinguistic awareness prompted her to consider the role of first language interference in writing essays.

Peer interaction and surrogate tutoring. While Marivia realized that her writing skills were inadequate for the course she was taking, she continued to resist either visiting tutors or using prewriting and editing strategies we discussed in class. However, now she admitted that if she did proofread her paper, she could find some mistakes.

Sometimes, when you go back, sometimes there are some mistakes you can see.

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Marivia's assumption, here, was that her errors were made out of carelessness, not out of ignorance. However, by this time, Marivia had taken a step towards improving her work. She had started to rely on a network of friends to proofread her work and make suggestions.

- Marivia: Sometimes when I go back, well, I go to my friends, and I say, "Can you read that for me?" They my age, and sometimes, they write for me, they underline for me or they ask me what I want to say exactly, and after they send it back to me, I see the mistake I made and I try to do it better. When I finish it again, I send it back, and they correct it for me.
- Researcher: Are these friends also in college?
- Marivia: No, I knew them since they were in Haiti.
- Researcher: Did you grow up together in Haiti?
- Marivia: Yes, they in Canada.
- Researcher: In Canada?
- Marivia: Yes, I send it to them.
- Researcher: That's nice. How about your friends in class?
- Marivia: Some of them, I met last semester and I am not the kind of person that just , I mean, I am a people person, but I am not a people *people* (emphasis Marivia's) person. I have friends from way back, and sometimes, I don't like to go to person just like that. That's the way I am, therefore, I just don't show them my work.
[sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Marivia depended on the social network that she had created in her former life in Haiti. Her network of friends did not live in the same area as Marivia, and she did admit that they were not in college. Nevertheless, Marivia believed that she could rely on this network more than her peers in college who were taking the same courses as she was. Again, her tendency to rely on her friends in Haiti underscores her reluctance to engage with her peers in her classroom, who as she admitted, were an important resource and could have provided crucial academic support. In fact, Marivia admitted that she gained insight from class discussions, especially when working in groups.

- Marivia: Like in class, we share ideas, we talk, that's about it.
 Researcher: Does that help you, working in groups and sharing ideas?
 Marivia: Yes, it does.
 Researcher: In what way?
 Marivia: I like to express myself. Yes, and it give you better idea of what you are reading.
 Researcher: Do you get any ideas from your group discussions?
 Marivia: Sometimes, you have the idea yourself, but you don't really open it, therefore, when they come and explain it to you, I say, yes, I had that idea! [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

As evident in this exchange, Marivia did gain from class discussions, especially confirmation of the validity of her own ideas. Nevertheless, she was hesitant to become more involved with her classmates. Unlike her classes in high school where she had been the only Haitian student, the freshman composition class had eight Haitian students, including her. However, Marivia did not feel comfortable with them.

The other Haitians in the class, they too loud. I don't like loud people. Like I don't mind if they talk. But if they too loud, I don't like the way they talk. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, April 4, 2011)

The students that Marivia was talking about were high school graduates like her, and their behavior did seem immature at times. However, there were two other Haitian students whose work was exemplary and who were role models both in terms of their conduct and academic performance. While doing group work, Marivia chose not to work with her fellow Haitians, but instead with another group, ethnically diverse, within which her own participation was minimal.

For the second writing assignment, I had asked students to use two articles from The New York Times and argue for or against the need for a college degree. Before this assignment, the students had discussed argumentation and the role of counterarguments and rebuttals. As a class, we had also read sample argumentative essays, and practiced paraphrasing from the two readings that formed the basis of this essay.

Marivia wrote two drafts for this essay. The first draft was short, and had listed support for both positions instead of just one. She had mentioned the benefits of a college degree while also pointing out that many jobs did not require these degrees but had not elaborated on any of the points in the essay. In other words, she had misunderstood the role of a counterargument, and indeed, the nature of argumentation on the whole. Her introduction, a collection of sentences thrown together indiscriminately, read as follows:

College is a step that everyone has to take sooner or later in their life. Although it helps to make some decisions with your life and understand what life reserves you. A Bachelor is an academic award that you work for in an undergraduate college. Should college degree be really necessary? [sic]

(Marivia, introduction, Argumentative essay, draft 1, March 31, 2011)

In her initial interview, Marivia had hinted at parents' college education although she did not know if her mother had actually attended university or merely graduated high school. At any rate, going to college equated to a certain level of accomplishment, a

sentiment which informed her introduction. Nevertheless, in spite of repeated instructions on the structure of an introduction, Marivia had not included a thesis statement, nor had she linked her opening sentences to the sentences that followed.

Based on comments and individual discussions, Marivia worked on her second draft. Even at this point, she resisted working with a tutor or with any of her peers. Part of her problem was that she had no time. Although she was taking only four courses, her classes were split up in two shorter sessions instead of a longer three-hour session. As a result of this, her days in college were long and she had committed five hours a day to her volunteer tutoring activity. Another factor that held Marivia back was her positive self-assessment of her proficiency in English. However, she worked on crafting an introduction which was more focused than her earlier attempt.

After spending some times in High school, some people find it really important to pursue their education to the highest level. However everyone is not able to make it at the time they want to do it but they have to wait for a while. The college life is a step that an individual has to make sooner or later in their lives. Although, it helps you as a person to better understands what life reserves to you. Should a college degree be necessary?

(Marivia, introduction, Argumentative essay, draft 2, April 14, 2011)

In this draft, too, Marivia had not demonstrated her understanding of the counterargument and rebuttal. She continued to list the advantages of a college degree in one paragraph and jobs that did not need a college degree in the next one without asserting her position on this issue. When describing her writing process, she recounted:

I just sat down in front of the computer, I listened to some music, I chatted with my friends for ideas and I made the changes to the essay. I got the idea and wrote like one page, two pages. I just have to do it, I get an idea and I just wrote and wrote. [sic]

(Marivia, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

Marivia made no mention of class notes, references, text books, or even her first draft. She had remembered to make the necessary changes to the introduction, but again, since she had not used notes or referred to class readings, she did not make significant modifications to the rest of her essay.

Final writing assignment. The final project for the class was the research project in which I had asked students to explore the role of technology in education. I had directed them to focus their research on either distance education, assistive technology for learning disabled students, or gaming in education (Appendix 10). Students worked on this project over six weeks, while working on other assignments. Marivia, along with her classmates, labored to find articles which were informative, reliable, and accessible, and identify information which they could use. Most of them chose to research technology in education, something they had experienced in their credit courses. For example, many students in that class had already taken or planned to take online mathematics or psychology courses. In addition, they were all familiar with various grammar and reading software used in the ESL program. Thus, through this project, I intended students to assess their own experiences using technology through the lens of their research. In the years in which I have assigned this project, I have discovered that students feel overwhelmed at the beginning, but later begin to get involved in readings which describe different types of educational technology. Many of them have produced insightful papers, and the interest they discover in this subject often overcomes initial hurdles in the copious amounts of reading necessary.

Marivia was initially distrustful of online journal articles and wanted to use regular books in her research. Later, she realized the academic databases were easy to

navigate and contained a wide variety of articles. She decided to focus on distance education and organized her paper by introduction, history of distance education, benefits for students, benefit for faculty, benefit for institution, and experiences.

In the research paper, Marivia demonstrated her understanding of the topic. She made a valiant effort to synthesize and organize information from various online journal articles. However, her attempts were stymied by two factors. First, she lacked control over the syntax of her sentences to the extent that their meaning was completely unclear at times. For instance, in a section titled *Education at distance and education in an actual campus*, Marivia pointed out the lack of distraction in an online classroom:

Sometimes, when you are attending a regular classroom and you into what you are doing there is someone that is always to ruin that moment of learning whether by disturbing the class by either be a fool or ask a lot questions that finally misroute you from the main objective of the class were [sic].

(Marivia, Research Paper, May 8, 2011)

In this segment, Marivia was referring to students who often diverted attention to themselves intentionally or unintentionally. Her point was well made, but its import was lessened by the colloquial tone of writing, and more importantly, by the weak grammar of this long sentence. Some sentences in this assignment, like the example included below, were too confusing to convey any meaning.

However, some instructors are against the education at distance, they will have a little time before or after they have upgraded or changed online software program. [sic]

(Marivia, Research Paper, May 8, 2011)

Marivia's intent in crafting this sentence remains unclear. She believed that some instructors do not approve of distance education, but her explanation was unclear and the reference to upgrading and changing software programs is puzzling. In other instances in

the research paper, Marivia seemed to lack control over her sentence structures and left them incomplete. In discussing the benefits of distance education to the institution, Marivia declared:

Distance educations help the classroom to do not be as overwhelmed as it used to be. And also the professors [sic].

(Marivia, Research Paper, May 8, 2011)

In addition to technical problems, Marivia's paper was also characterized by a lack of supporting details. While she had attempted to explore the issue of distance education from multiple angles, she failed to adequately explore any of them in any depth. The following section from Marivia's paper is titled *Benefit for faculty*.

From the faculty point of view, distance educations facilitate a higher level of education and concentration when it is done at distance. Students learn how to become more familiar with the technology. Also Professors had realized that the students are more involved, some students feel more open to express their opinion when they are chatting and blogging online. Online classes are based on more writing whether it is communication or visual because it is a way to assimilate what they learned since they won't have the opportunity to present themselves in person and to be graded from their postures (Liang and Creasy, 2004). The professor has to cultivate patience especially when works are due because it's not everyone that can afford to have a computer at home, therefore they have to go to the public library and the work might not be handed on a specific date.

(Marivia, Research Paper, May 8, 2011)

In this section, Marivia did not cite any actual benefits to faculty. She did mention two ways in which distance education could benefit students. She also acknowledged the problems caused by students not having access to a computer, but here, too, she assumed that students would simply hand in their work late, rather than on incorporating facts from her sources.

Marivia's paper, therefore, was characterized by weakness in organization, content, and grammar. Many of these problems might have been addressed to some

degree if Marivia had followed instructions and used outlines and worked with tutors. In fact, her paper might have improved from a closer proofreading by Marivia herself.

Marivia, however, was content with her research paper. She believed that she had devoted ample time and effort to it. She commented on this process:

I didn't mind doing the research paper, but the time it took! Almost a month. Every time I was trying to write something, I had to erase it. Like when I thought I had finished the paper, I had to erase a lot of thing. Even I erase a lot of thing, some sentences were not done.

(Marivia, personal communication, May 11, 2011)

As her words reveal, Marivia grappled with the different issues in writing her research paper. The amount of critical reading and analysis required for this assignment was challenging as was the synthesis of information into her research paper. It must be noted that Marivia had failed to synthesize information from readings in her earlier essays and had rarely consulted her notes. Since Marivia had not used the earlier assignments to develop skills in integrating information from sources, she found the research paper particularly challenging. The complex nature and the demands of her paper might have contributed to her incomplete sentences.

Conclusion. Marivia's conversations with me made it clear that she had enjoyed a special connection with words and language. She was interested in education and thought actively about her academic work and languages. She had a relationship with words that few of her peers did. For instance, she wrote poetry recreationally and had thought deeply about the similarities of words in English, French, and Creole.

Marivia's interest in language had been born from her special position in her home community in Haiti. Her father's position as a doctor and her own interest in local affairs had enabled her to become a person of focal interest in her community. She was

considered the bearer of news of all kinds. In addition, she also belonged to a network of close friends. These comfortable circumstances were interrupted by her immigration to the United States and the subsequent hardships she endured to master English in her middle and high school years.

When Marivia started her composition classes, she was a confident student with average abilities. However, her faith in her own abilities and memories of her status in Haiti prevented her from improving her writing even though she had access to free tutoring at the ALC. She also displayed a reluctance to interact with her peers inside the classroom, preferring instead to rely on her social network from her childhood. Throughout the semester, Marivia displayed an inability to fit in with her classmates. As a result of her isolation, she was unable to create and access a supportive learning and social network, the very networks that she had used to great advantage in her native Haiti. As a consequence, her writing and learning skills stagnated and her progress over the semester was minimal.

Table 22: *Sample analysis of Mariviva's writing*

<i>Essay</i>	Excerpt	Comments
Comparison/ contrast (Introduction) draft 1	...how my life could <u>has</u> been different. When I think about it deeply, I arrive at the point I started to ask myself, what about my life will be better, what will be <u>worst</u> , what will remain unchanged and what would I enjoy doing the most.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction lacks traditional opening • Thesis statement merely repeats prompt. Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of past modal incorrect • Inconsistent verb tense use • Use of superlative form of “bad”
Comparison/contrast, draft 2	1. Also the laws are the same for the student and the instructor, they applied them in different context. 2. If I were really in a position to execute this opportunity I would enjoy correcting the papers because on based on some experiences the writing of a student can be hilarious and also on it you can learn something for your life that you have not paid attention to.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear about what laws • assumption Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comma splice (in 1) • appropriate use of conditional (2) • tenses used consistently Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • execute, hilarious
Argumentative essay (introduction), draft 1	College is a step that everyone has to take sooner or later in their life. Although it helps to make some decisions with your life and understand what <u>life reserves you</u> . A Bachelor is an academic award that you work for in an undergraduate college. Should college degree be really necessary?	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lacks traditional opening • ideas not connected • thesis statement inadequately articulated Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd sentence is a fragment Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phrase <i>life reserves you</i> incomprehensible • Inappropriate use of <i>award</i> for <i>degree</i>
Argumentative essay (introduction), draft 2	After spending some times in High school, some people find it really important to pursue their education to the highest level. However everyone is not able to make it at the time they want to do it but they have to wait for a while. The college life is a step that an individual has to make sooner or later in their lives. Although, it helps you as a person to better understands what <u>life reserves to you</u> . Should a college degree be necessary?	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More coherent introduction, but few changes • Essay lacked counterargument/ rebuttal Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in phrase <i>life reserves to you</i>

Stability and success: Lisbeth's journey as a Generation 1.5 student

In this section, I present Lisbeth's story, the final case study of this dissertation study. A narration of her life in her native Venezuela is followed by her academic experiences in the United States following her emigration from her native Venezuela. In this section, I also describe the contribution of various family members to her acquisition of English. Finally, I describe her academic experiences in the freshman composition class.

Life in Venezuela. Lisbeth was born in Venezuela in what she portrayed as a middle-class family. Both her parents were university graduates; her mother had completed a degree in chemistry while her father worked in the information technology (IT) industry. In addition, Lisbeth's father's family operated a family business and owned property in and around Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela.

The situation for many families including Lisbeth's began to change after Hugo Chávez was elected president in 1998. Chávez's growing faith in what he termed Bolivarian socialism (Easterbrook, 2001) has led to an increasing degree of government intrusion in areas of higher education in Venezuela. This intrusion is evident in the attempt by government led factions to both change curricula and control public universities economically and politically, which earlier had catered to primarily the elite class of Venezuelans. In addition, Lisbeth recalled her father's concern that the family property and business would soon be seized by the government as had happened with some of their acquaintances. Like many other affluent Venezuelans who were equally apprehensive about Chávez's interest in private enterprise (Semple, 2008), some

members of Lisbeth's family decided to sell their business and move to the United States in order to protect their financial interests.

Initial academic experiences in the United States. In 2004, thirteen-year old Lisbeth moved to Westgate, New Jersey, with her parents and six-year old brother. Lisbeth did not know any English and neither did her mother or her younger brother. Her father, however, had learned English which, in addition to his training as an IT professional made it possible for him to find a job in his field. His job ensured a level of comfort in their new lives in this country.

Lisbeth started middle school in seventh grade in Westgate, and was required to take two classes of ESL instruction daily in addition to other courses like social studies and mathematics. The population in Westgate was predominantly Polish, so Lisbeth did not encounter many Spanish-speaking peers or teachers. As the following quote reveals, Lisbeth remembered those early years of middle school as being challenging but not discouraging.

It was so hard to speak English and make friends that first year. I was ok in math and I could learn quick. At home, my mom, she made me do my homework and helped my little brother too. [sic]

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

Lisbeth's words indicate that the most difficult aspect of her school life in seventh grade was learning English, which led to a degree of isolation. Her skills in mathematics, however, gave her a feeling of confidence, and her mother's efforts to create a nurturing academic environment provided the required level of stability.

In seventh grade, Lisbeth struggled to learn English, particularly with the assignments in her writing class. Although she had written essays in her school in

Venezuela, the expectations from her writing teacher seemed to be different in her middle school in New Jersey. In addition, Lisbeth found grammar and vocabulary to be constant sources of challenge.

I remember doing some essays in Venezuela, but that was a long time ago. Their rules were so different from here. I wanted to use nicer words and be specific in certain things but it was so hard.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

As Lisbeth explained, she knew the importance of vocabulary in her writing assignments, but struggled to expand and make appropriate use of her repertoire of words. In addition, she worked hard to express her ideas accurately, sometimes without much success. Noteworthy, however, is Lisbeth's awareness of the factors that contribute towards good writing, namely vocabulary and articulate explanations.

Lisbeth continued studying hard and was promoted to eighth grade. She believed her language skills were getting stronger, in part due to her mother, Noreida's efforts.

My mother could not speak English. So I had to translate for her in stores. So, that was good for me in a way and tough too. But she got tired of asking me for help because my brother, too, needed help with homework sometimes. So she started ESL classes here (in Windsor Community College). That way, she could learn English fast. We did homework together, and that was good.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

Lisbeth listed the two ways in which her mother became a catalyst in improving Lisbeth's English. First, Lisbeth became a "para-phraser", a term created by Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido (2003, p. 508) to describe children of immigrants who assume the role of translators and facilitators for their parents. Orellana et al. have contended that these young translators do much more than translate between languages; they interpret the nuances of conversations and the larger messages. By acting as a translator for her

mother, Lisbeth was forced into using English at a more sophisticated level than she had done in school or even in the way she used Spanish.

Moreover, when Noreida, Lisbeth's mother, started taking English classes herself, she created a learning partnership with her children. In her interviews, Lisbeth never indicated that she was overwhelmed by her language learning experiences. Added to that, her mother's efforts to learn English provided further positive reinforcement to Lisbeth. Unfortunately, Noreida could only study for a semester because she was worried that her tuition might prove to be a financial burden on their single income household. For Lisbeth, learning English at home with her mother was a pivotal event because it prepared her for the college level classes she would take.

By the time Lisbeth started high school, her English skills had improved sufficiently for her to be transitioned from an ESL section to a mainstream class. Nonetheless, Lisbeth did not feel confident of her speaking or listening skills.

Sometimes, when someone is talking to me, I tend to make them repeat twice so I can hear it again and understand better.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

Lisbeth admitted that her listening skills were weak, but she developed coping strategies, such as asking people to repeat themselves, to deal with her perceived weakness. In contrast to her listening skills, Lisbeth believed that her oral proficiency in English had improved because of the lack of Spanish speakers in her school.

It was good for me that there were not too many Spanish speakers because then I learned to speak English really quickly in two years. So, in high school, I did not have to take ESL at all.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

Lisbeth did not recall her high school years as being remarkable in any way. She worked hard and made more friends than she had in middle school. She worked hard in school, and found the reading and writing assignments demanding, but not impossibly so.

I still struggled but nothing like before. I was in high school all four years in regular classes so I got used to the reading and speaking. My problem was sometimes writing. We had to do too much writing and sometimes, I had to stay back after school for help. It was hard for me to put all my thoughts together. My friend, Sofia, she had the same problems. But our English teacher helped us after school.

Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

As Lisbeth explained, once again, she used her coping strategies to deal with her academic challenges. She approached her English teacher for help with her writing assignments. In addition, she created another partnership, this time with her friend Sofia, with whom she could compare notes. This ensured that despite her struggles, Lisbeth did not feel isolated nor did she feel that her academic problems were insurmountable. Lisbeth's parents, especially her mother, continued to push their daughter to work hard to perfect her English and to maintain her Spanish.

At home, we all spoke Spanish all the time, even my brother. But, outside the home, we went to the library and my mother would make me check out books and magazines. Sometimes we would try out recipes like for Thanksgiving.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

The English-partnership was nurtured by Lisbeth's mother, Noreida, who could no longer continue with her ESL classes. Lisbeth continued to develop her reading skills, aided by her mother who attempted to familiarize Lisbeth with a print-rich environment and encourage her to read magazines and follow recipes. Working with her teacher yielded positive results because Lisbeth was able to clear the New Jersey mandated HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment) on her first attempt.

After finishing high school, Lisbeth applied to Windsor Community College. By this time, her family had received their permanent residency or green cards, so both Lisbeth and her mother were eligible for employment. Lisbeth found a part time job in a bakery which she felt would help her practice her speaking and listening skills. She also made a decision regarding her career. She wanted to follow in her father's footsteps and find a job in the information technology industry.

After taking the ESL placement test, Lisbeth was placed in the final level or Level 6 of the ESL program at Windsor Community College. After completing the twelve credits of reading, writing, and grammar in Level 6, Lisbeth registered for the freshman composition course in Spring 2011 along with three other courses. In addition to the twelve hours she spent in school, Lisbeth continued to work part time at the bakery two days a week. That left her with ample time to focus on her school work. The following table displays the courses for which Lisbeth registered in Spring 2011:

Table 23: *Lisbeth's schedule of classes for Spring 2011*

Freshman composition – 3 credits	Introduction to computer systems- 3 credits	Introduction to accounting- 3 credits	Algebra- 3 credits	Total- 12 credits
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Because Lisbeth was interested in a career in information technology, she would be required to take only one other humanities course in addition to freshman composition. The majority of the courses she would need to take would be related to computer systems and mathematics. Lisbeth had been confident of her skills in mathematics right from middle school, so she began the semester with great expectations as is evident from this excerpt.

I think that this semester will be good for me. My parents are proud that I am in college and my father is excited. Every day, we talk at home about computers this and that. We have two computers at home and my father, he helps me a lot.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, February 1, 2011)

Thus, Lisbeth started college on a positive note. She had a clear vision of her academic goal. She was able to coordinate her work hours so that she had enough time to study. Finally, and most importantly, she had the support of her parents, especially her father, who had the expertise and skills to help her in her area of specialization. This out-of-school partnership proved a valuable adjunct to her college experiences.

Lisbeth's interactions with her family, especially her parents, typify the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) that shaped her skills and her attitude toward school. Her father's knowledge of English and his interest in computers impacted Lisbeth's experiences in college to a large degree. In addition, her mother's involvement also created a third space (Gutierrez, 2008) in her home. As Gutierrez has explained, a third space is an unofficial extension of school literacy practices where students receive additional scaffolding from mentors and tutors. Lisbeth's home became her third space, where learning practices met every day literacy practices, starting from her mother's language learning experiences to her father's expertise in computer science, both of which contributed significantly to Lisbeth's learning in the composition classroom.

Experiences in the composition classroom. The first assignment that Lisbeth completed in my freshman composition course was one where she had to compare the responsibilities and experiences of college instructors and students. She started with the following extended two-paragraph long introduction.

Most of the students believe that the lives of professors are far easier than their lives. Most professors do not have to worry about assignments, about spending endless hours studying neither they have to worry about following classroom rules and regulations. But by comparing how could be the lives of professors and the lives of students we can find this is not always true. It is true that most student these days work and study at the same time which is not an easy task when at the same time they have to find the time for studying and doing assignments.

We can say that professors just come to college and work. They do not have to worry about studying for various tests at the same week neither they have to worry about handling assignments on time. They may even change the course of the lecture or the way they were thinking of teaching any topic to the students, if they run out of time that is something students cannot do. Their lives can be really easy at work since they seem to do whatever they want. But is this always the case? Let see some challenges and situations that can make professor lives more difficult than students. [sic]

(Lisbeth, introduction, comparison/contrast essay, March 3, 2011)

In this introduction, Lisbeth displayed the effects of second language interference in some instances. Most of these errors were surface errors, common to second language learners, and did not obstruct the general meaning of the passage. The first error, for instance, signaled Lisbeth's attempt to connect two negatives with *neither*. In doing so, however, she left out the auxiliary *do*. Interference from Lisbeth's first language was also evident in the omission of commas to define prepositional phrases. Finally, run-on sentences are common errors with Generation 1.5 students who are typically aural learners and write as they speak. The phrase *Let see* in the final sentence in this passage also exemplifies Lisbeth's aural mode of learning since the verb *is* would be inaudible in an oral exchange.

Apart from the grammar errors, Lisbeth displayed a natural writing style, almost conversational in nature, where she attempted to draw the reader into a discussion. She had not opened her essay with a traditional hook, but had approached the topic as a student inviting her peers to consider the perspective of instructors. In the essay, she

highlighted some of the challenges she had seen instructors facing, including the presence of belligerent students in the classroom. Next, she talked about the numerous rules that instructors enforced in the classroom, rules which sometimes proved counterintuitive. Her conclusion included an adequate summary difference in their roles.

Although Lisbeth's essay lacked details, she had presented a sophisticated discussion of the topic. She had experimented with different grammatical structures, some of which were unsuccessful as is evident in the following table. She had refrained from making assumptions and her examples were pertinent. Her assessment of her writing seemed accurate as well.

I think the grammar is difficult, you know expressing my ideas well, more than organizing and putting the ideas together. I just expect that I can express myself with less difficulties in the future.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

As Lisbeth noted, the principal hurdle she faced in her writing assignments was in crafting grammatically accurate statements. In that respect, it is noteworthy that Lisbeth experimented with complex structures, including relative clauses, instead of relying on safer sentences, relying on simple rather than complex or compound structures. As the examples in the following table indicate, Lisbeth's errors grew out of her willingness to attempt more complex structures.

The second assignment in the composition course was an argumentative essay where students were asked to respond to two readings on the necessity of a college degree. Each student had to present their position regarding the value of a college degree, provide adequate support, and incorporate ideas from the two readings. Lisbeth's argumentative essay was concise but she made her argument with precision, included a

counterargument, and used statistics from news articles to support her position. Her focused introduction is indicative of her essay as a whole.

While some people believe that going to college in order to earn a degree is a waste of money and time, others are investing in their education. It is true that college education can become very expensive and the amount of time that is required to obtain that degree seems to be long. However, investing the money and time in getting that degree is necessary to obtain better job opportunities, stability in a person's professional life and the development of skills necessary to maintain a career.

(Lisbeth, introduction, Argumentative essay, draft 1, March 31, 2011)

Lisbeth began this introduction by presenting the two opposing positions on the issue. She acknowledged the validity of the counterargument before presenting her position and the necessary support in a well-crafted thesis statement. She also demonstrated her ability to use parallel structure competently as is evident from her thesis statement, the last sentence in the introduction.

Lisbeth, however, was not completely satisfied with her essay, partly because of its length, and partly because she had not incorporated material from class readings.

- Researcher: What, according to you, was the strongest part of the essay?
 Lisbeth: Well, I liked the introduction. I like writing introduction, but it takes so long.
 Researcher: Walk me through the process you used to write this essay.
 Lisbeth: Well, we talked about it in class. You talked about the introduction, and I took notes. And then we discussed in our group the points. And then we brainstormed. And then I thought about it and listed the support and the counterargument and all that.
 Researcher: What did you do next?
 Lisbeth: I started writing, first the body, like you told us. It took forever. I googled for ideas.
 Researcher: Did that help?
 Lisbeth: Sort of. I found this article from The Star Ledger that I used.
 Researcher: But you didn't use any of the articles that we discussed in class.
 Lisbeth: Yes, I know. I sort of forgot.
 Researcher: Anyway, what did you do next? After you read the article from The Star Ledger?

Lisbeth: I wrote down the body paragraphs, like I said. And then I showed it to Marta. We are sometimes help each other with our essays. And then she made some suggestions and I read her paper. But it took a lot of time and it was difficult for me to add anything. [sic]

(Lisbeth, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Marta was Lisbeth's classmate, a Polish student, who had also taken ESL classes with Lisbeth. Like Lisbeth, Marta, too, displayed proficiency in her writing and speaking skills, and the two peers often collaborated in group work in class. As Lisbeth pointed out, they had extended their collaboration outside the class as well.

Lisbeth's reflection revealed that she had used multiple resources in writing this essay, resources that were easily available to everyone. For instance, she had referred to her class notes, consulted with a peer, and used search engines for additional material. The utilization of such resources helped her at the compositional level where she had to demonstrate her ability to write in a new rhetorical style. Her conversation also revealed her knowledge of the metalanguage of composition writing in her use of terms like *brainstorming*, *support*, *counterargument*. Apart from the surface level grammar errors, Lisbeth's major drawback in this paper was her inability to use material from sources, which again, was a new skill that students were learning in that composition class.

The final paper for this course was the research paper where students had to use a minimum of five reliable sources to discuss the role of technology in education (Appendix 10). As mentioned earlier, I had given the students a choice of three topics. . These included distance education, assistive technology, and the role of gaming in education. Lisbeth decided to discuss the role of video games in education.

Before Lisbeth started working on the research paper, she had already demonstrated her ability to plan an assignment, articulate a strong thesis, and organize

her ideas competently. Her principal area of difficulty, in addition to occasional grammar errors, was in integrating ideas from sources, an area in which she was not alone.

However, when she started working on the research paper, she became more familiar with the concept of using and citing sources. Her research paper exhibited her new-found skills in paraphrasing ideas to support her ideas in the research paper. She continued to experiment with appropriate vocabulary and interesting sentence structures. In this case, punctuation became an issue, but never large enough to frustrate readers or interrupt the flow of ideas.

In addition to the introduction, Lisbeth had divided her paper into the following sections: importance of gaming in education, advantages of video games, disadvantages of video games, and different types of games used in the classroom. Her paper, too, reflected her stance as an expert on the topic, as is evident from this excerpt:

Why is the use of technological games important in education? Let's start by pointing out, the differences in the type of students that are sitting in the classrooms today from kindergarten to college. They have grown with technology around, from computers, videogames, cell phones, lab tops, net- books to e-books. According to Prensky(2001) these are digital natives a term that makes them part of a new era and consequently different from the previous era. If they are students from a different era the method of teaching and tools used to teach them should be upgraded or modified so that they can feel comfortable in their learning environment. Whether or not everybody agrees in the importance of introducing educational technological games in schools, the truth is that students from the digital era can learn better by using these types of games because they are accustomed using them. In addition, they prefer the use of technology not only it is part of their daily life, but also because they usually find it fascinating. Prensky explained the importance of introducing some of these modalities to schools, because the students from the era of technology tend to find boring and monotone the method of teaching from the era before.

(Lisbeth, research paper, May 8, 2011)

This section of Lisbeth's research paper involved the reader by inviting their opinions on the role of video games. Lisbeth continued to draw the reader in the conversation with her

words, “Let’s start by pointing out...” and later on, in this same passage, by admitting that not everyone would be equally invested in using games in the classroom. In referencing Prensky (2001) and his pivotal concept of digital natives and immigrants, Lisbeth displayed her new-found ability to use ideas from sources. Her use of pertinent examples, especially from the perspective of digital natives, made her argument compelling. In addition, her use of varied vocabulary (*era, accustomed, fascinating*) and clauses (*whether or not everyone agrees, the truth is*) made this paper interesting reading.

As this section of her essay reveals, Lisbeth displayed fewer instances of first language transfer than her previous work. The most significant one was her earlier confusion about the use of commas, some of which have been underlined in the preceding excerpt. Another example of transfer occurs in the last sentence, where Lisbeth had placed adjectives (*boring and monotone*) before the object of the verb (*the method of teaching*). This, however, could signal overcorrection, since in English, adjectives are usually placed before the nouns they modify. Another instance of first language influence is the use of *monotone* in place of the more appropriate *monotonous*.

Lisbeth was satisfied with her research paper for several reasons. First, she enjoyed working on a topic where her experiences and her research informed each other.

Well, before you gave us this assignment, I didn’t know that video games are use in classrooms. So that was interesting. My brother, he likes to play video games. And I see how quickly is he learn to play all the games. And I read about the game Immune Attack. If he play it, he learns so much from it. So, for me the paper was interesting because I can see myself the use of it with my brother. [sic]

(Lisbeth, personal communication, June 7, 2011)

Lisbeth realized that her research had given her an added perspective on her brother's favorite pastime and on a topic which was related to her career. Her prior interest in this topic also made her research more meaningful.

I read and read, and came across many interesting facts. I didn't know you could use video games like this. Of course, my brother can use the internet from the PS 3 (PlayStation 3). Now my mind is open to many uses.

(Lisbeth, personal communication, June 7, 2011)

This assignment, therefore, was intensely relevant to Lisbeth because it enabled her to use her home experiences and her career interest to support a major writing assignment. Thus, for Lisbeth, this assignment was transformative (Lillis & Scott, 2007) because it enabled her to use her existing skills and experience (of computers and video games) to develop new skills (writing a research paper and presenting an argument).

Lisbeth worked with her friend Marta and two other students on this assignment since they had all chosen the same topic for their papers. Their collaboration was manifold. First, they each searched for articles through the college databases which they then shared among themselves. They also worked on brainstorming and creating outlines. Finally, when they began writing their papers, they consulted each other and offered recommendations. Each student produced a unique paper; however, their collaboration strengthened their work while reducing the academic pressure on each of them.

Conclusion. Lisbeth's upbringing in Venezuela shaped her academic experiences in the United States and made her unique from the other participants in this study. Her home experiences and the circumstances of her migration to the United States helped her to ease into life as a college student.

Even though Lisbeth was a Generation 1.5 student, she had always had the benefit of a stable home atmosphere. Her parents, both of whom had college degrees, created a home environment where Lisbeth and her brother were encouraged to develop their academic skills. Her mother, Noreida, enforced homework and reading practices while helping them to maintain their Spanish speaking skills. Her father's training had enabled him to become gainfully employed, so Lisbeth's family had little financial problems.

Research has indicated the levels of literacy in first language are a precursor for second language literacy (Roberge, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Thonus, 2003). In her native Venezuela, Lisbeth had the advantage of a stable education which provided her with a strong academic foundation. When she arrived in the United States, she was a monolingual Spanish speaker, who, while unable to understand much English, could still excel in content area courses like mathematics. At the same time, her academic foundation had equipped her with tools to help her in her new learning experiences. Through her middle school experiences, she gradually progressed on to becoming an incipient and a functional bilingual (Valdés, 2006) as she worked on improving her vocabulary and grammar skills. As an incipient bilingual, Lisbeth went through the process of acquiring and developing her knowledge of academic English. As a functional bilingual, she gained awareness of English through the conversations she had inside and outside of her school. Because she had access to both aural and written input, Lisbeth was able to gain a metalinguistic awareness of grammar. Her writing displayed few instances of first language interference and she could use her awareness of grammar to constantly produce innovative sentence structures.

The critical or pivotal incidents in Lisbeth's life were all a series of partnerships in which she participated. Her mother's need for a translator, and subsequent efforts to learn English made her an important partner for Lisbeth. Secondly, she emulated her father, whose participation in Lisbeth's learning was as relevant as her mother's, though distinctly different. Her home partnerships encouraged her to forge successful partnerships and collaborations in class to help her with her project. Tinto (1997a, 1997b) has argued that cooperation and collaboration among students are critical to their eventual success. Lisbeth did not belong to an LC; however, she had access to a strong social network at home and in school which helped contribute to her success.

Like the other participants in this study, Lisbeth encountered an interruption in her academic journey when she left her native Venezuela and came to the United States where she had to resume her education in English. Unlike the other participants, however, Lisbeth possessed the tools (in the form of a strong academic foundation) and sufficient support (in the form of guidance she received from her family) to transition successfully to college classes in the United States.

Lisbeth started the course with a strong academic base. In each of her assignments, Lisbeth met or exceeded the expectations set to her. She successfully wrote in each of the rhetorical genres, namely comparison/ contrast, argumentation, and the research paper. Furthermore, she displayed her ability at the sentence level as well, with her use of varied sentence structures and interesting vocabulary.

Lisbeth's learning experiences reflect her successful acquisition of academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998; Lea & Street, 2006). Her skills in terms of grammar and organization were strong. In addition, her academic socialization with her peers enabled

her to function effectively, and she used her research paper as a starting point towards making meaning of her research paper topic. Her partnerships at home and in school enabled her to reach her academic literacies goals.

Researchers believe that LCs serve underprepared students by creating safe learning environments which nurture student abilities and provide necessary support networks consisting of peers, instructors, mentors, tutors, and counselors (Jehangir, 2009, Tinto, 1997). In addition, LCs contribute to the learning process of underprepared students through their format of linked classes which prompts them to extend their thinking and understanding of different concepts (Zhao & Kuh, 2004; Lardner & Malnarich, 2008; Jehangir, 2009). In fact, the structure of an LC, with its inclusion of counselors and learning networks, mimics a successful learning environment, an element that is often missing from the lives of many Generation 1.5 students.

Lisbeth came to her freshman composition course as a prepared student who had already become an independent learner, largely because of the strong educational foundations she had received as well as the academic, financial, and social support provided by her parents. From that aspect, LCs, with their goal of supporting underprepared students, would likely not have provided any crucial level of support to her. Lisbeth possessed a personal LC that helped her in ways that academic LCs help students who do not have access to similar resources outside of school.

Table 24: *Sample analysis of Lisbeth's writing*

Essay	Excerpt	Comments
Essay 1 (Comparison/contrast)	Most professors do not have to worry about assignments, about spending endless hours studying <u>neither they have</u> to worry about.	Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt at using double negatives, but • Missing auxiliary “do”
	But by comparing how <u>could</u> be the lives of professors and the lives of students we can find this is not always true.	Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awkward phrasing
Essay 2 (Argumentative)	It is true that most student these days work and study at the same time <u>which is not an easy task when at the same time...</u>	Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing commas for adjective clause and prepositional phrase • Run-on sentence • Repetition of the phrase <i>at the same time</i>
	...if they run out of <u>time that is something</u> students cannot do	
	According to Prensky(2001) these are digital natives a term that makes them part of a new era and consequently different from the previous era. If they are students from a different era the method of teaching and tools used to teach them should be upgraded or modified so that they can feel comfortable in their learning environment. Whether or not everybody agrees in the importance of introducing educational technological games in schools, the truth is that students from the digital era can learn better by using these types of games because they are accustomed using them. In addition, they prefer the use of <u>technology not</u> only it is part of their daily life, but also because they usually find it fascinating. Prensky explained the importance of introducing some of these modalities to schools, because the students from the era of technology tend to find boring and monotone the method of teaching from the era before.	Compositional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source-based writing • Presenting argument, its opposing side, and position
		Grammatical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of transitions (<i>consequently, in addition</i>) Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Modalities</i> • <i>Era</i> • <i>fascinating</i>

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY: RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

My experiences as an ESL instructor at Windsor Community College prompted this doctoral study. My colleagues and I have long observed the growing number of Generation 1.5 students in our program and the challenges they face. On the one hand, they are proud at having graduated high school and eager to deal with college level courses. At the same time, many of them are unable to deal with the content and expectations of college courses which are markedly different from those of their high school courses. At home and at work, they rarely have access to resources such as time, money, and intellectual scaffolds which equip them for success.

The dilemma posed by the entry of underprepared students is one faced by many colleges. LCs, with their network of support personnel and shared classes suggest possibilities for struggling students. The role of different LCs and their design prompted the following research questions of this doctoral study.

1. What changes were observed in the academic literacy skills of the participants over the course of the semester?
2. How did student participants assess change in their writing skills over a semester?
 - a. In what ways, from their perspectives, did the LC help students to acquire the necessary academic literacy skills?
 - b. In what ways did they find the LC unhelpful?
3. From the perspective of the instructors, how did the LC influence the academic literacies of the participants?

- a. What did they believe are the ways in which the format of the LC had a positive impact on the acquisition of academic literacies, including academic skills, of the participants?
- b. What changes did the instructors believe could be more helpful in future LCs?

Research question 1

The first research question explored the impact of the LC on the academic literacy skills of the participants over the course of the semester. It examined how student writing and participation changed over the course of the semester. To respond to this question, I first introduce the nature of the progress made by the participants in the RLC, Lauren and Marsha, then proceed to discuss Rafael and Liang from LC2, and finally present the experiences of Marivia and Lisbeth from the stand-alone composition course.

Lauren

Lauren had started the semester with a level of complacency that belied her actual skills. Her self-assessment stemmed from her belief in her diligence as a student rather than a more realistic sense of her capabilities in the writing class. As noted earlier, Lauren was not proficient in either her writing or her reading skills. Her weak reading skills were manifest in her reluctance to read her notes or proofread her essay as well as her difficulties with comprehending required reading materials. Her optimistic assessment of her academic skills further contributed to her difficulties in her credit courses. From the beginning of the semester, she was stymied by the demands of the psychology class, disoriented by the structure of the library course, and discouraged by what she believed was the irrelevance of the freshman seminar course.

Lauren's early writing attempts in the composition class were indicative of her reluctance to use either prewriting strategies or proofreading efforts. Hence, her writing exhibited faulty grammar and syntax, her introductions lacked hooks or thesis statements, and the ideas in her essays needed organization. Finally, she also demonstrated her lack of expertise in reading longer texts, and therefore, source-based writing.

The RLC, as discussed earlier, offered multiple resources from which Lauren benefited. Not only did her writing improve, but she also revealed her enthusiasm in participating in both the LC and in its activities. Her writing demonstrated her growing confidence in doing research, and her efforts to work on her reading skills were apparent. She had also become more competent in organizing the ideas in her essays as well as in proofreading her work so that there were fewer grammar errors.

A striking change also occurred in Lauren's attitude towards the other people in the LC. First, Lauren worked actively with the tutor and expressed her appreciation of the help that she had received. Additionally, she also became a more vocal contributor to class activities. Although Lauren's work still could only be described as adequate, the improvement in all areas was quite obvious. Her voice which had been subdued both at work and in school became louder as she engaged enthusiastically in her schoolwork.

Thus, Lauren's membership in the LC reinforced her existing skills in a way that prepared her more adequately for the rigors of credit courses. Lauren benefited, not only in terms of her language, but also in the way she learned to use resources. Moreover, in the time she had spent in her middle and high schools, Lauren had been content to remain silent and invisible, confiding only in her very close friends. However, the structure of the LC made it possible for her to become comfortable with a larger group of people.

Marsha

At twenty three, Marsha was the oldest of the six participants in this study. As her conversations with me revealed, Marsha had started the semester burdened by her own perception of her abilities which, in turn, led to her under-performance in many of her assignments in her LC courses. It was only through conversations with her that we, her instructors, learned of the depth of her poor self-confidence since her behavior in class and her oral proficiency did not match her self assessment.

Marsha's negative assessment of her oral proficiency in English played a significant role in her involvement in class activities. Her oral proficiency in English was native-like, and unlike many of her peers, she rarely stumbled for the right words. However, she believed that her pronunciation and oral language were flawed and that her instructors and peers could not understand her completely. Because of this assumption, Marsha was reluctant to participate in group activities or ask questions in class.

Marsha also believed that her writing and study skills were inadequate for the courses she was taking. Her lack of confidence and her inability to complete her college courses formed part of a vicious cycle which further discouraged her.

Although Marsha's academic shortcomings were not as severe as she imagined, she was, in fact, not adequately prepared for academic work. In the initial weeks of the LC, Marsha struggled with the demands of the various assignments. Her lack of necessary academic skills was demonstrated by her inability to complete her assignments satisfactorily or even complete them on time. She did not submit her first composition assignment, and her work for the freshman seminar class was inferior. At the same time, her strong oral skills masked her inadequacies, which led Professor Martin, her freshman seminar instructor, to believe that Marsha was an unwilling, not an incompetent student.

Marsha's writing at the start of the semester was not promising. Her earlier writing assignments lacked organization; hence her ideas were inadequately developed and the language was unfocused and rambling. She had trouble formulating appropriate thesis sentences, explaining the supporting ideas completely, or in using source-based information correctly. Her journal assignments in the freshman seminar course were short but not focused and did not fulfill the length requirements. In addition, Marsha seemed unable to work in groups, preferring to work mostly on her own.

However, again, like Lauren, membership in the LC yielded valuable dividends for Marsha. Her writing demonstrated an interesting progression through the semester. Furthermore, Marsha revealed her newfound willingness to use the various resources available in the LC to her advantage.

Marsha's writing improved in terms of organization, grammar, and ability to do source-based writing. First, she displayed a growing ability to organize her ideas and develop each of them in greater detail than she had in her earlier assignments. She had also begun to use thesis statements and topic sentences with greater facility. More importantly, Marsha's research paper showed her growing ease with incorporating sources in her writing. In her research paper, Marsha discussed the role of assistive technology in the lives of the visually impaired. A striking feature of this paper was the manner in which she had woven her own experiences and perspective with the research she had gleaned from her readings. The inclusion of her own opinion, especially her ability to empathize with visually impaired people and her attempt to link her friend's experiences to her paper, was particularly notable because it represented the progress made by Marsha not only on compositional and grammatical terms but also in terms of

academic self awareness and in her eagerness to display ownership of her writing and learning. Marsha had begun the semester convinced of her inability to read or speak well enough to participate in college courses. In light of her earlier timidity, her new-found confidence was remarkable.

In addition to her improvement on an academic level, Marsha also seemed to be more integrated within her cohort than she had been in the beginning. Initially, the only person with whom she had felt comfortable was her peer Damni, whose support and friendship had triggered Marsha's learning during that semester. Over the sixteen-week span of the semester, Marsha had moved from being timid to confident and offering advice and support to her friend Damni.

In conclusion, Marsha's improvement, as seen through the lens of the ALM (Lea & Street, 1998; Street & Lea, 2004), is remarkable. Her improvement in the skills of reading, writing, and using writing conventions appropriately was noticeable. In terms of academic socialization, too, Marsha benefited from the LC, and her friendship with a peer encouraged her to express her opinions and thoughts through the medium of a blog. Finally, through the various activities in the different courses in the LC, Marsha began to realize the impact of her family's criticism on her performance. This realization, in turn, led to a growing confidence in her abilities. Thus, her identity as a learner evolved over the semester. The writing assignments in her composition class had prompted her to think in a transformative fashion and interpret her research in terms of her own experiences. Marsha did a commendable job in her final research assignment. Thus, the positive impact of the LC on Marsha's writing and learning cannot be underestimated.

Rafael

Rafael, who left his native Portugal in tenth grade, had received a strong academic foundation there. His skills in reading and mathematics were particularly strong. In addition, he presented himself as a disciplined and conscientious student.

During the first few weeks of the semester, Rafael had a chance to further assess his areas of strength with the help of his instructors. While his writing skills were undoubtedly strong, there were areas which needed improvement. For instance, while he was adept at using quotations to start his introductions, he was not always successful in creating a focused thesis statement. Secondly, he equated writing essays with answering questions. He assumed that the essay prompt was a question for which he had to provide an answer. He had not yet begun to consider essay writing as a transformative act (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Lillis and Scott explain that transformative writing assumes the nature of a dialog between instructors and students, where the opinions of both are privileged provided they are grounded in reason and supported by proof. The final issue in Rafael's writing was his lack of skills in locating sources for his research paper.

Rafael's activities in the LC displayed his understanding of the role of all the personnel involved. When he had a question, he preferred to ask the help of the person who was most qualified to help him, which included instructors, but not tutors. At the same time, he persisted in asking for help till he felt satisfied.

Rafael's writing at the end of the semester demonstrated his ability to do source-based writing and offer his opinions in a balanced manner. He also displayed his new-found ability to create focused introductions. He continued to use interesting quotations and varied and appropriate vocabulary in his essays. In short, his progress over the

semester owed more to his personal learning strategies and his strong academic skills than his dependence on the LC.

Liang

When Liang started his courses in the ESL section of the freshman composition class, he had already received a decade of ESL instruction in this country. Of all the participants, he had spent the most time in the US and had been in school the longest, starting from fifth grade. In the first two years in this country, Liang tried to learn English as quickly as possible so that he could make friends. In this effort, he was aided by his teachers, not his peers. When he moved to Buffalo, he was a solitary ESL student, working one-on-one with his reading and writing teachers. Here, too, he seemed to have had little interaction with peers. Through his formative years, starting from the age of eleven, Liang had studied in a bubble, unconnected to any peers, Mandarin-speaking or otherwise. Thus, he appeared never to have had access to a dynamic support system.

When Liang finally started college, he had made decisions that affected his maintenance of Mandarin and his acquisition of English. He continued to read newspapers in Mandarin and tried to increase his vocabulary through the use of online bilingual dictionaries. In his attempts to maintain his links to his native culture and acculturate to American culture, the lack of interaction and support system stands out.

Liang's earlier writings in the semester were marked primarily by a lack of organization, unity, and coherence although he was able to use sources in his writing. In terms of grammar, too, his writing demonstrated inconsistent use of verb tenses, number, and punctuation.

Although Liang was part of the LC, he did not access or make use of the support system in it. He did not enlist the help of the tutors or the counselors, nor did he approach

his instructors for additional help. Part of the reason for this might have been his confidence; he had been working on his own for a significant part of his schooling in the United States and had made independent decisions regarding his education. His tendency of self-reliance may have shaped his reluctance to ask for help. Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay (2003) have suggested another explanation for Liang's inclination to be self-reliant. In their study, which focused on Asian American Generation 1.5 students, they discovered that their subjects attempted to be bicultural, and in the process, functioned as cultural and linguistic intermediaries in their families which changed the order of hierarchy and power with their parents. The reversal of roles coupled with their desire to stay connected to their heritage culture made them unwilling to ask for assistance from anyone outside their family and community. The only person who worked with Liang was Claudia who helped him with his organization of ideas.

The LC, therefore, did help him to develop a fruitful partnership with a peer who helped him to some extent. Apart from that, he remained on his own throughout his freshman semester in college. His choice of writing material reflected his independence and his attempts to engage with his material; however, his writing skills did not improve significantly, nor did he become familiar with the resources of the college.

The experiences of the four participants from the LCs, Lauren, Marsha, Rafael, and Liang reveal the differences in the way they responded to the LCs. In the next section, I will describe the differences in the writing and academic skills of Marivia and Lisbeth who were enrolled in non-LC composition classes.

Marivia and Lisbeth

In this section, I describe the changes in writing and academic skills of Marivia and Lisbeth, the two participants from the non-LC class. They completed the same

assignments as the participants in the RLC. Although Marivia and Lisbeth were almost the same age at the time of the study, they started college with varying skills. The inclusion of Marivia and Lisbeth in this study offers a standard for evaluating the impact of the LCs on its participants. In other words, the description of the experiences of Marivia and Lisbeth may suggest ways in which association with an LC could benefit them and by extension, other Generation 1.5 students.

In Haiti, Marivia received instruction in both French and English. Most of the work in her language classes had been devoted to vocabulary and morphological endings. Thus, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, and antonyms had contributed to the bulk of her instruction in French and English. Marivia could not explain much about the kind of writing she had been required to do in her schools in Haiti.

By the virtue of her father's profession as a doctor, Marivia enjoyed a certain status in her community in Haiti. She was often at the center of knowledge and information about events that took place. On her arrival in the United States, Marivia, however, faced a completely different set of circumstances. The English she had learned in Haiti did not equip her to converse with her non-Haitian peers, and the lack of students from Haiti intensified her feelings of marginalization.

At the beginning of the semester, Marivia's writing in her composition classes displayed her unfamiliarity and ineptness with many conventions of composition writing (see Table 22, p.205). For instance, the introductions to her essays were unfocused and her thesis statements repeated the prompt instead of outlining the main points of her essay. The ideas in her introduction seemed like a random collection of thoughts. From a grammatical perspective, too, her essays displayed certain weaknesses. Marivia's writing

showed incomplete control of verb tenses and the use of punctuation. On the other hand, a strong feature of Marivia's writing was her tendency to use interesting and varied vocabulary.

As the semester progressed, Marivia's writing improved only sporadically. She seemed unable to grasp the idea of thesis statements and introductions, and the ideas in her essays often seemed rambling and unconnected. Her argumentative essays showed her reliance on assumptions which she could not distinguish from facts. Her use of verb tenses did show some improvement and she continued to use largely appropriate vocabulary. However, at times, she used phrases that seemed neither comprehensible nor suitable. At such times, it seemed as if she were translating from her native Creole to English. Her language appeared conversational and colloquial, not academic.

At the end of the semester, Marivia's writing had not shown significant improvement in terms of organization or grammar. It must be noted that Marivia's issues with grammar resulted from first language transfer. As Muysken & Law (2001) have explained, Creole languages employ simplification where they retain the root of the word from the original European languages but omit morphological endings. Issues such as morphological endings and verb tense usage were important items in the grammar courses that Marivia had taken in the previous semester. In addition, in her conversations with me, Marivia had indicated familiarity with word forms, morphological forms, and cognates. In spite of such awareness, Marivia demonstrated an inability to incorporate her knowledge to her writing.

In fact, in her interviews with me, Marivia showed a reluctance to employ any method of planning, revising, or editing even though we had talked about the importance

of using such strategies. Moreover, although Marivia was herself a tutor and worked in an after-school program, she was hesitant to visit the tutors at the ALC, apparently because she felt she had sufficient knowledge of both the subject matter of her essays and the grammar she would have to use. Another feature of Marivia's attitude in class had to do with her relationship with her peers in college. She often talked about her friends in Haiti with whom she had maintained a strong bond. In fact, even though these friends were living in Canada at the time of this study, Marivia looked to them for help with proof reading and editing. Although she was dependent on her friends and obviously realized the value of enduring friendships, she never felt comfortable enough to establish such friendships in her classes at Windsor Community Colleges. She did not enjoy working with any of the Haitian students in her composition class, even the ones who had strong academic skills. She did work with two other students, but this interaction was limited to class discussions. Marivia acknowledged the fruitfulness of class discussions, but was unenthusiastic about creating a deeper working relationship with her peers.

Marivia's work over the semester was thus marked by a lack of real progress, both in organizational and grammatical terms. Her writing style remained simplistic and her ideas lacked profundity. Her thoughts about the writing and learning process, too, did not undergo a major change, and she refused to make use of peer or tutoring support.

Of the six Generation 1.5 students who participated in this study, Lisbeth came to her freshman composition class with the strongest skills in writing. Her first assignment in this class demonstrated her eye for detail and her ability to explain her points thoroughly. She did exhibit several errors in grammar, such as omitting the auxiliary verb

in one instance, and using double negatives in another. However, these errors were surface errors and did not hinder comprehension.

Over the semester, the assignments became more demanding in nature. Lisbeth began the semester by writing comparison/contrast essays and then had to learn argumentation. Even though the argumentative essay was an unfamiliar rhetorical style, Lisbeth worked hard to understand the role of the counterargument, the rebuttal, and support, and produced a well organized, source-based essay. Her use of prewriting and proofreading were generally effective and she honed her ideas successfully over the two drafts. The final assignment was the research paper where students were required to use multiple sources to prove their point. In this assignment, Lisbeth, once again, successfully followed the required criteria and drew on her own experiences to write a paper that was rich and illuminating in its detail and development.

Lisbeth was a conscientious student with strong academic skills. In her composition class, she used her existing skills and classroom instruction to develop new ones. In her academic work, she drew on the support she received from her academically conscious parents, her peers, and her instructor. She actively engaged in class activities and linked course readings to her own experiences. Through the semester, she displayed her acquisition of academic skills (grammar, organization, content), socialization through her interactions with peers, and finally academic literacies (Lea & Street, 2000; Lea, 2006). She used her research paper assignment to explore a topic relevant to her and the information she unearthed through her research process helped her to make meaning on this topic. She positioned herself as an expert both in terms of the content and the organization of her paper.

In summary, the academic literacy levels of the six participants displayed varying levels of change over the semester. Lauren, Marsha, Rafael, and Liang, the four participants from the two LCs started the semester at different levels of preparedness which partly influenced their acceptance of the different mechanisms of the LC. Marivia and Lisbeth did not have access to the LC; Lisbeth flourished because of her ready access to academic support out of school and her ability to locate resources in school. Marivia, on the other hand, floundered precisely because she lacked an academic safety net at home as well as in school since she did not belong to an LC.

Research question 2

The second research question probed the value of the LC from the perspective of the participants, the effectiveness of the LC in the acquisition of academic literacy skills, and recommendations to make them more effective.

Lauren

Lauren had enrolled in the LC on her instructors' recommendations, and had hoped that the library course and freshman seminar course would soften and support the work load in the composition course. During the initial weeks of the semester, however, she was puzzled by the fact that each instructor gave seemingly random assignments, thereby increasing her work load instead of reducing it. She began to resent the irrelevance, as she perceived it, of the work she had to do in the library and the freshman seminar courses, especially as she was challenged by both her psychology class and to a lesser extent, by her composition class.

By mid-semester, Lauren had begun to realize network of support offered by the LC. First, she noticed that the seemingly unrelated activities in the three courses did actually relate to each other. She noted:

In essays, to make a better essays, and I think the most helpful is that you and her (Professor Martin, the freshman seminar instructor) are connected, so when we are doing something here, we are doing something different there, but connect to what we do here. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

In other words, Lauren understood the practical nature of the strategies discussed by Professor Martin, such as time management or study skills. She also noticed that the journal assignments in this class, which earlier she earlier had considered time consuming and tedious, actually prompted her to reflect on her own learning and thinking processes. In fact, she began to use these journals as a think-on-paper tool. For instance, in a journal assignment on time management, Lauren noted:

This journal was really helpful for me, and I found that my days are really stressful... I don't really have some solutions for my situation because I took the decision to study full time, working full time.

(Lauren, journal assignment, April 11, 2011)

This excerpt indicates Lauren's realization that her days were stressful, partly because of her scheduling. It is interesting to note Lauren's written deliberations regarding the fruitfulness of going to school part time. It was through this journal assignment that Lauren realized the pressure under which she had to continue her education and make a living at the same time. While she did not find an immediate solution to her time management problem, she realized overloading herself with too many courses was ultimately not a profitable strategy.

Similarly, Lauren also began to appreciate the library course. Early in the semester, Lauren had been discomfited by the online nature of library resources. She had come into the class expecting books and magazines and instead had been confronted by the internet in computer laboratories. While she did not become entirely comfortable with

this aspect of the library, she did begin to learn how to use it, especially when she had to work on her research paper around the middle of the semester. While working on the research paper assignment, itself a challenging task, she realized the value of the ways in which Professor Feng addressed issues of locating and annotating relevant articles. Without the library class, she realized that completing the research paper would have been an overwhelming job because she lacked the tools necessary to find appropriate sources even though I did work on basic research processes in the composition class. Thus, Lauren came to appreciate the reinforcement she received from the library classes.

I start finding information online about the library and there's a lot of thing I learned there. So now I can use that for the essays. [sic]

(Lauren, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

The more familiar Lauren became with the library, the more useful its resources became to her. To her, the notion of a library expanded from a room full of books to an online reserve of materials which she could now begin to access because of the tools she had acquired in the library course. Lauren did insist that the library course offer greater access to its physical site, but she appeared to be satisfied with the LC on the whole.

In sum, the entire semester presented many challenges to Lauren. In addition to the expected difficulties with language, especially with the grammar, organization, reading, and vocabulary skills needed in her writing classes, Lauren also had to reverse her preconceived ideas about her learning process and the resources available in the college. Her ability to adjust to new ideas and profit from once unfamiliar resources was a significant factor in her improvement of writing skills.

Marsha

Throughout high school and college, Marsha's learning experiences were characterized by her feelings of frustration. She was initially frustrated by her own shortcomings, both real and imagined. Much of this frustration had resulted because of the attitude of many of her relatives, including her mother. Her cousins, on whom she had been dependent, had belittled her academic progress instead of being sympathetic to her, especially when she was trying to learn English in high school. In high school, and later in college, Marsha had to struggle with her course work while believing that she could not ultimately complete her degree. Surprisingly, Marsha did not blame anyone for her shortcomings, choosing instead to take responsibility for her own failures and continuing with her college courses even when she seemed to flounder in them.

Marsha acknowledged that the LC had helped her to make an important transition to becoming a successful student. She was able to outline the ways in which she had strengthened her academic skills. For instance, she realized that she could take steps that would help her improve her work on her assignments. In a final reflection essay, she enumerated these steps.

I learned that writing an essay by hand and reading it and then typing it helps me a lot. I asked myself as you also mentioned to me that I should ask for help. Use the ALC or talk to the counselor.

(Marsha, Reflection essay, May 5, 2011)

Marsha became familiar with the resources offered by the LC, resources she could continue to use after she had moved away from the LC. Part of the rationale for establishing the LC was to help students become aware of the tools available at the college which could help them improve their work. Windsor Community College, like other community colleges across the country, offers an array of services like tutoring and

counseling with which, unfortunately, many students are unfamiliar, or do not know how to use. Therefore, the proactive tutoring services offered by the LC provided important benefits to Marsha.

Tanzie was absolutely helpful. She told me to organize my writing more, to get a better thesis statement, she gave me lots of information. She was really supportive. In fact, I told her so. I told her she was very helpful and that next semester, I would visit her.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Although this was the first time Marsha had availed herself of the tutoring services, she realized its value in shaping her writing.

Marsha also appreciated the support she had received from her peers. Although she had earlier preferred to work on her own, she now began to recommend study groups.

A study group if the students would agree to meet in the weekend to study and make it fun. Like have a potluck and then study. That would make the study interesting. Not in the class, but somewhere else, that would be helpful.

(Marsha, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Marsha's suggestion reflects the notion of third spaces (Gutierrez, 2008; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004). These researchers suggest that third spaces provide a forum for successful learning to take place in informal settings outside the classroom. That Marsha was able to conceptualize a third space which would allow her to interact with her peers indicated the extent of her progress on a social level and the connections she had forged in the LC. She had not enjoyed this level of support and intimacy with her family, who in fact, had constantly judged and belittled her. Marsha's experiences in the LC bear out Tinto's (1997; 2003) assessment of LCs. In his work, Tinto has constantly referred to the importance of community in the classroom and how it contributes to learning, knowledge building, and meaning making.

Rafael

As I have pointed out earlier, Rafael had strong convictions about his abilities and strengths. His main objective in the courses he took in Spring 2011 was to excel in every course and get straight A's.

Initially, Rafael focused more on his work in the composition and the library courses. He did not fully comprehend the scope or the objectives of the freshman seminar course, but was not perturbed by it either. He tried to spend as little time as possible working on the freshman seminar course assignments, and focused much more intently on the assignments in the freshman composition class. Right from the beginning of the semester, he realized the potential of the library course and worked hard to exploit it for his benefit.

The library class, it is important. She (Professor Feng) help us out with a lot of the stuff we need for the composition class. A lot of the information I need for my essay, we get from the library class. The other class, it is useful too, the teacher, she help us also when we need it. [sic]

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

Rafael had clearly comprehended the extent to which the library course supported his work in the composition class. He had more difficulty in articulating the relation between the freshman seminar class and the composition class, and therefore, expended minimal effort there, at least at the beginning of the semester.

Rafael's cohort had six students who were Generation 1.5 students who had similar academic profiles. Rafael was a friendly person, and maintained cordial relations with all his peers. He was especially friendly with two of them. However, he did not feel the need to cooperate very deeply with either of them for any of his assignments. He did ask for their help in peer editing some of his essays, but he did not collaborate with them

on any other projects because he did not believe that they could help him much. In one of his conversations, he described his collaboration with his close friends.

Well, sometimes I print my paper and ask Leo to look at it for mistakes, to do some peer editing. I don't like read their papers. We are all (required to write about) different people so it's no good reading their paper. [sic]

(Rafael, personal communication, March 30, 2011)

Rafael clearly did not believe that his friends could help him with his writing or that he could learn anything from his friends' writing, in terms of phrases, vocabulary, or organization. His experiences as a tutor in high school had probably bolstered his self-confidence since, as he had insisted earlier, he had always been an exemplary student. Thus, Rafael resisted using many of the modalities in the LC and consulted only those instructors from whom he felt he could learn something new.

However, Rafael had developed strong academic skills in his first language which he effectively transferred in his English learning process. Therefore, he had the ability to gauge the extent and nature of help he needed in order to complete his assignments. He selected specific tools in the LC, but his choices were strategic and ultimately useful. Thus, Rafael presented himself as an able student, not only because of his improved writing abilities but also because of his understanding of his own skills and needs.

Liang

Liang, as described earlier, had taken adult decisions for much of his school life as evidenced through his efforts to preserve his speaking skills in Mandarin and his decision to return to ESL classes after having been mainstreamed into regular English classes where he felt he lagged behind his classmates. His experiences at home, in high school, and in college were marked by the absence of an anchor like a friend or even a

parent. For that reason, perhaps, Liang saw himself as an expert in his learning experiences and was unwilling to ask for help.

The LC did not make a strong impression on Liang. He believed that he could benefit from tutoring to help with his writing.

For the other courses I am taking, I don't need any help with them. I do need help with writing since it is a little messy sometimes.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

However, he did not make use of the array of resources available to him.

I might go to the ALC next semester. But this semester, I can manage because I am working on my own and can see my problems.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

The help of tutors seemed most useful when seen from a distance. Liang kept insisting that he had no immediate use for their help although he did not discount approaching them in the future. Even when Professor Cohen returned his essays with her comments, Liang believed that he could work on his own to improve his grades.

Many of Liang's classmates benefited from working with their peers. Liang, too, worked with his classmate, Claudia. He acknowledged that Claudia's input on the introduction he was writing for one of his papers had been invaluable. Her many questions helped him to organize this introduction in a more coherent fashion. He had known from high school that his writing style was convoluted and difficult to understand.

Someone did mention that, they did point that out that my writing is all over the place. It's like a habit from high school.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

In spite of the help Liang received from Claudia, and knowing his weaknesses, Liang remained ignorant of the usefulness of the LC and its resources.

Researcher: So what would you say is the biggest, biggest help for you, the biggest resource? Is it the teachers, is it the tutors, is it Claudia?
 Liang: I don't have an idea. I don't know.

(Liang, personal communication, April 1, 2011)

Thus, Liang eventually could not assess the ways in which the LC or his peers in his classes could help him with the issues that he himself had identified in his writing.

Research question 3

The final research question elicited the opinion of the instructors regarding the impact of the LCs in helping the participants acquire academic literacy skills and the ways in which the design of these LCs could be improved in order to serve student interests better. The instructors were prompted to use their experiences to evaluate the effectiveness of the LCs.

The primary role of the LC was to help students improve their writing skills over the semester. To that end, the composition instructor worked with the freshman seminar and the library instructors to encourage student collaboration and cooperation. It was hypothesized that when students felt they belonged in a community composed of peers and instructional support, they would be able to use all the resources available to them. The instructors worked most closely with the students and so were in the most optimum position to assess student progress. In this section, I first discuss the instructor opinions about Lauren and Marsha from the RLC, and then talk about Rafael and Liang from LC2.

Lauren

Lauren, as I have pointed out earlier, was a quiet student who did not like drawing attention to herself. At the start of the semester, she made little impression on either myself or on Professors Martin and Feng. Both of them noted that Lauren talked only

when necessary and generally only to her friend Maria. Her degree of engagement with each of her three classes increased in varying degrees, as did her academic performance.

In the first few weeks of Professor Martin's freshman seminar class, Lauren presented herself as a sincere student who worked conscientiously on her assignments. However, Professor Martin noted that the quality of Lauren's work was mediocre, both in terms of content and language. In addition, Professor Martin also observed that Lauren, like some of her peers in the class, had to be given explicit directions, sometimes more than once. In a conversation with me, Professor Martin described her experiences with a scavenger hunt she had assigned as an introductory activity. Through this activity, students worked in pairs to find information about various personnel and services in the college. For example, one question on the scavenger hunt asked them to find the office of the provost and her office hours. Through this activity, students became familiar with many aspects of the college about which they would otherwise have remained ignorant. Working in pairs also made this activity less stressful. This is Professor Martin's description of Lauren's attempts to complete this assignment.

I'll give you an example, well, two, of Lauren's work. Actually, not only Lauren, but some others as well. First, it took them forever to find the provost's office. They seriously had no clue whom to ask. Maria (Lauren's friend and partner) emailed me and asked me what she should do. I think, finally, Aloizio (another student in the LC) realized they could simply ask Public Safety for the provost's office.

And then, I told the class to email me the scavenger hunt by a specific date. They were working on this scavenger hunt in pairs, so they would obviously only hand in one copy. Well, again, that became a real hurdle for them, whether they were going to both email me the scavenger hunt or just one with both their names and so on. It's like they have such a hard time, simply following directions and you have to explain it to them in so many different ways when you thought it would be a simple assignment.

(Professor Martin, personal communication, April 15, 2011)

Professor Martin admitted Lauren was not the only student to be confused with parts of the scavenger hunt assignment. At the same time, she was frustrated with what she perceived as Lauren's passivity in not asking for clarification in class when she had handed the assignments out or emailing Professor Martin directly instead of through Maria. Thus, at the start of the semester, Lauren's inadequate reading and writing skills hampered her understanding of many assignments in the freshman seminar class. Her reluctance to ask questions or actively participate in class discussions, which stemmed from her weak speaking skills, remained another hurdle. Professor Martin hoped that Lauren would become more engaged in class.

One tool that helped Lauren in Professor Martin's class was the journal assignments. As I have pointed out earlier, Lauren, in spite of her timidity, was a diligent student and attempted each activity with sincerity. Thus, her frankness in her journals and her willingness to acknowledge her challenges were helpful in helping Professor Martin understand the issues Lauren faced. Andrade (2007) has also observed that student journals provide insight into student thinking and their attitudes towards class. Lauren's journal assignments were evidence of her initial struggles and her attempts to deal with different aspects of her life.

Professor Martin acknowledged that being part of the LC meant that the instructors and tutors could work as a team to help students with their course work. Professor Martin believed that the spirit of team work was the strongest asset in the LC as it equipped instructors to help their students.

I think that obviously that we (the instructors) worked together really well, and that was really helped us. With Lauren and Marsha, too, it was important because

that's how we knew what to do and they guessed, too, that we were on the same page regarding class activities.

(Professor Martin, personal communication, April 15, 2011)

Professor Martin was referring to the strategies we used in each of our classes to address various challenges. Regina, the tutor was extremely helpful as was Wilson, a student from an earlier LC, who suggested strategies that led to Lauren's eventual academic improvement. Both Professor Martin and I believed that had Lauren not been part of the LC, she would have remained an invisible student and would not have received the support necessary for her success.

The course objectives of the library class had initially puzzled Lauren. The fact that she would have to develop the skill of conducting online searches was an unexpected challenge for Lauren. To her credit, however, Lauren presented a positive attitude in these classes. Professor Feng, the library instructor, believed that Lauren contributed to the overall positive classroom experience (PCE). Lichtenstein (2005) has insisted that, in addition to the academic support, a PCE, with evidence of intensive collaboration among instructors and students, is crucial to the success of an LC. Although Lauren was, by nature, quiet and shy, she was not withdrawn. Therefore, she enjoyed collaborating with her close circle of friends. The nature of the linked classes ensured that she was able to forge close relationships with this circle. Professor Feng also realized that because Lauren followed instructions diligently, she soon understood the intricacies of online searches, at which point, she began to collaborate actively with her peer group.

Lauren was very quiet in the beginning, but she was very responsible. She did all her homework on time and she followed all the instructions. And she helped the others, too. So that was good for everyone. Yes, in that way, it was good she was in the LC.

(Professor Feng, personal communication, June 6, 2011)

Thus, Professor Feng, too, noted that membership in the LC, gave Lauren tools to help her gain more confidence. Of course, the main objective of the library course was to help students with the research aspect of their research paper project and in this respect, too, it succeeded. Professor Feng believed, as did Professor Martin and I, that without the library course, Lauren might have floundered while working on her research paper. Through the library course, Professor Feng guided Lauren through the fundamentals of library research which helped Lauren get material for her research paper. Ultimately, Lauren's research paper barely met the required standards for information and details, but demonstrated Lauren's growing ease with the different norms of academic writing including doing source based writing. In that sense, it represented real improvement on Lauren's part.

The research paper, it is interesting, but quite difficult. I think that it helped Lauren. She didn't ask for help specifically on anything, but I think she understood what the main goals were. That is important.

(Professor Feng, personal communication, June 6, 2011)

Marsha

Marsha, through her own observations and as evidenced by the progress in her writing, had benefitted from different aspects of the LC. Along with Professor Martin, her freshman seminar instructor, and Professor Feng, her library instructor, I, too appreciated the journey that Marsh had taken to improve her academic literacy strengths and the role the LC had played in this journey. At the same time, we also noted the ways in which the LC could have served Marsha more effectively in terms of the counseling.

When the LCs were created in Windsor Community College, the role of counselors was seen as crucial to student success. Researchers investigating learning communities, notably Kress and Elias (2006) have insisted that counselors can facilitate not just academic learning but also social and emotional learning. It must be noted that Marsha's learning problems stemmed largely from the emotional neglect on the part of her family members including her own mother. Moreover, counselors, through their hands-on approach inside the classroom can work to enhance the community building aspect of learning communities and help students within a cohort work on their collaboration and problem solving skills. In fact, research by Steen and Noguera (2010) indicates that often, when the macro-approach taken to improve institutions or school districts as a whole fails, counselors can take a micro-approach and address issues that concern students, especially those who hail from minority, high-poverty, or emotionally unstable families. In such cases, the detail-oriented tactics of counselors to deal with individual students and issues that arise from their unique circumstances are more effective than actions targeted towards a general, larger school population.

In the LCs at Windsor Community College, the role of the counselors had been envisioned as a key one where they could advise students on matters of academic scheduling and offer support related to classroom and other issues. However, Marsha's experiences reveal a disconnect between the conception and the implementation of the role of the counselors.

Marsha had approached two counselors for help. First, she had approached Juan, who, while not a part of the LC, was supposed to help students with employment issues. Unfortunately, Juan was unable to devote much time to Marsha, nor did he encourage her

to make a follow-up appointment. It must be noted that employment is a concern for many students at a community college, and was especially so with Marsha, a single mother, who was dependent on an unsympathetic family.

More glaring were the actions of Allison, the designated counselor for the LC. Allison was supportive by nature and easily accessible; however, she did not invest enough time in gauging Marsha's capabilities to make helpful suggestions. She had drawn up a schedule of classes for Marsha which would have proven challenging for students with much stronger skills. Marsha had trusted Allison to give her appropriate academic advisement; however, she would have been unable to cope with the demands of the courses that Allison had suggested she take over the truncated summer session. Many students start college with the intention of obtaining a degree quickly. Awareness of the difficulties or ease of courses comes in much later and with guidance.

The failure on the part of the counselors to advise Marsha appropriately assumes significance when Marsha's progress from timidity to a much higher level of confidence is considered. The sense of confidence that Marsha had acquired in the LC could have been negated had Marsha gone ahead with Allison's schedule.

Rafael

Rafael, a competent student at the beginning of the semester, presented himself in different ways to the three different instructors. Professors Cohen, Andrews, and Feng all agreed that Rafael had strong reading and writing skills. However, they also agreed that Rafael did not regard the usefulness of each course equally.

Both Professor Cohen, the composition instructor, and Professor Feng, the library instructor, realized that Rafael's writing benefitted from the collaboration between the two courses. Professor Feng was impressed with the tenacity and persistence that Rafael

displayed in approaching her for help with his research. She strongly believed Rafael would not have appreciated the value of the research process and the library course had it not been linked to the composition course. Therefore, in the short term, the LC helped Rafael with his research paper assignment. In the long term, it helped him realize the potential of a valuable resource in the college he might otherwise not have explored fully.

Professor Cohen also appreciated the association between the library and the composition courses and the resultant reinforcement of skills. For instance, one aspect of the research paper was documentation of sources, which Professor Feng taught through the use of *Noodlebib*, a free online citation manager.

They (the students) had been working on Noodlebib in Professor Feng's class, and I didn't have to teach it to them. But, sometimes, they would ask for me to go over some parts of it, and I'd show them. So, it was something they did in both classes which was good. I didn't have to spend a lot of class time in teaching Noodlebib, but they knew that they could ask me if they got stuck. And of course, the repetition helped.

(Professor Cohen, personal communication, June 2, 2011)

Professors Cohen and Andrews also collaborated on each of the assignments that students completed. Once Professor Cohen returned the assignments, Professor Andrews, the freshman seminar instructor, had the students reflect on their performance and suggest possibilities for improvement. Professor Cohen approved of these assignments and realized that self reflection had obvious benefits for some students.

Roland (another student in the LC) made a huge improvement from his first draft to the second. Obviously, what Professor Andrews was doing was working. There seemed to be proof of that in Roland's work and also some of the others, though none quite so dramatic.

(Professor Cohen, personal communication, June 2, 2011)

Professor Andrews, too, noted that while many students worked diligently on the reflection assignments and benefited, Rafael did not take them seriously at the beginning.

Rafael knew he was a good student, and that he was doing okay in Professor Cohen's class, so he just did the bare minimum. When he realized that these assignments would be graded as well, that's when he began to put in more effort.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

Professor Andrews observed that Rafael's participation in the freshman seminar class was perfunctory. He completed the assignments mechanically; his sole objective in that course was to get good grades rather than appreciate its contribution to the learning process or its relevance to his composition assignments. In that respect, Professor Martin, the freshman seminar instructor from the RLC had a different perspective.

Our students don't know what they don't know. And they don't always appreciate the freshman seminar class when they are in it. But, I think, the lessons seep in after they start taking other classes. That's when they realize its value and its usefulness.

(Professor Martin, personal communication, October 10, 2011)

In addition to the library, the LC also offered other resources, primarily services of the counselor as well as the tutor in the Academic Learning Center (ALC). The structure of the LC meant that the library course and the freshman seminar course supported the composition course. Therefore, both the counselor and the designated tutor, Chrystal, would visit the students in the freshman seminar class. Professor Cohen reported feeling somewhat marginalized in the LC.

My class met on Fridays but Chrystal did not work on Fridays. So, she never visited my class, even once. Even the counselor visited only Professor Andrews' class, not mine. So, I never had a chance to meet all of these people, who undoubtedly would have been helpful to our students, I guess. I never really felt that I belonged to the LC because I did my own thing and would talk to Professor Andrews on occasion to discuss the students. But, I was pretty much cut off from all the other support.

(Professor Cohen, personal communication, June 2, 2011)

Because Professor Cohen did not feel connected to the LC, she could not endorse the services of the tutors to the students. Professor Cohen believed that had Chrystal made class visits, Rafael might have had a more positive attitude about her ability to help him. On that level, she believed the LC had not been successful. Professor Andrews, the freshman seminar instructor, observed another aspect of the counseling services.

I always tell the counselor if a student has been tardy with their work or absent from classes. It's wonderful when the counselor follows up on that. But I don't know if I am completely thrilled to lose a portion of class time when the counselor or the tutor makes class visits.

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

In this excerpt, Professor Andrews expressed her ambivalence about the support services offered by the counselors and the tutors. She believed their support was invaluable to the students; at the same time, she resented their intrusion in her class time. On the other hand, Professor Cohen would have welcomed the chance to integrate some tutoring and counseling in her classes. Thus, the two instructors expressed their frustration at the less than optimal utilization of the support services. It must be noted that Professor Feng, the library instructor, had almost no communication with either the tutor or the counselor in any of the LCs.

Liang

Liang presented the most puzzling case to his instructors. All three of his instructors, Professors Cohen, Andrews, and Feng had been impressed by his account of his engagement in his language learning experiences during middle and high school. They all agreed that the steps that Liang took were unusual for his age and displayed a

high level of motivation on his part. Based on the information that Liang himself had offered, his instructors had great expectations from him.

Liang started the semester on a promising note. When Professor Cohen handed out the list of notable personalities, Liang asked for permission to research a historical figure from China. Professor Cohen was impressed with his choice and looked forward to reading his papers. However, she was soon disappointed by his reluctance to fully engage in class assignments or take steps to address issues in his writing. Professor Cohen was especially disheartened because another student, far weaker than Liang, with less awareness of his language issues had blossomed in the LC. She put down Liang's lack of improvement to the fact that he had also started working and could not cope with the pressures of both work and school.

Professor Andrews, the freshman seminar instructor agreed with Professor Cohen's opinion of Liang's skills and performance. Professor Andrews, too, believed Liang's positive self assessment belied his actual skills. Liang often chose more difficult tasks believing he could complete them but was unwilling to follow through with the steps required to complete the assignment successfully.

In his journal assignments, Liang showed too much confidence. He had the appearance of knowing everything, he thought he knew everything and didn't need help. Given a choice of assignments or topics, he would chose the harder ones thinking he could ace them, but (he) rarely did the expected amount of work. He would look for shortcuts, and even though he was bright, he was not applying himself to the work

(Professor Andrews, personal communication, September 4, 2011)

As explained earlier, Professor Andrews had designed a series of reflection activities. In her classes, she discussed the concept of mindsets, especially from Downing's (2006) perspective. She explained the different approaches applied by

students to similar assignments and grades. Where proactive students wondered how they could improve their grades, less successful students questioned their teachers' motives or blamed circumstances for their lack of success. One of the goals of the LC is to establish connections and coherences among linked courses. Professor Andrews made repeated and valiant efforts to design activities that would prompt the students to work collaboratively on making these connections. However, Liang failed to assess his performance critically through the lens of these activities.

Like Lauren and Marsha in the RLC, Rafael and Liang, too, seemed to resist the LC at the beginning of the semester. Unlike Lauren and Marsha, however, Rafael and Liang continued to ignore most of the resources and the benefits of the LC. In her survey of research on LCs, Andrade (2007) discovered that students did not benefit from the LC when they did not see a connection between the linked courses. In particular, the freshman seminar course, a requirement in many first year LCs, is effective only when students understand its relevance to the other courses. For Rafael and Liang, the freshman seminar course, probably because of its non-credit status and its lack of subject content, remained an extraneous course.

Professor Cohen had one other comment about the LC. She noted that some students, including Liang, were tardy in submitting their assignments. She referred to one instance when she had complained to Professor Andrews about this missing assignment. Professor Andrews, in turn, asked Allison, the counselor, to intercede and tell Liang to complete it even though the date of submission had passed. As explained earlier, one of the responsibilities of the LC counselors was to keep track of student progress and prod

them when it appeared they were falling behind. Liang did finally submit the assignment after repeated requests from Allison.

Professor Cohen acknowledged that Professor Andrews, through her journal assignments, already provided a degree of support which encouraged students to work on their time management and improving their work. According to Professor Cohen, however, the LC should also have limited the number of opportunities the students received to submit their work. In the case of Liang, for instance, she believed that he should only have been given one opportunity to hand in late work.

I think what I disagree with is the amount of coddling they get. I understand that the point of the LC is retention, but if they (the students) can't hand in their work on time, they don't. First of all, it put me on the spot when Allison (the counselor) kept telling Liang and the others that I would work with them in the matter of the late assignments, and she hadn't even talked to me about that. And plus, I don't think that letting them give their papers whenever it was convenient for them really helped them all that much. It didn't make them more responsible, which I thought was one of the points of the freshman seminar course.

(Professor Cohen, personal communication, January 26, 2012)

In this excerpt, Professor Cohen revealed her belief that readiness for college included taking responsibility for turning in assignments on time and those students who were unable to do so needed to work on their academic skills.

All the instructors in this study agreed that the student participants had benefitted in different ways from the LCs. It is worth examining how LCs could have affected Marivia and Lisbeth, the two participants from the stand-alone composition course.

At the time of this study, Marivia and Lisbeth were almost the same age. Marivia was sixteen when she arrived in the United States to join her mother, leaving behind her extended family in Haiti. Her conversations with me indicated that she had developed an interest in language and language learning while in Haiti. For instance, when describing

her language classes in Haiti, she remembered working on word forms and morphemes. She also discovered the existence of cognates across French, English, and Latin. Marivia also demonstrated agency in language learning while in high school when she registered for SAT preparation classes, an autonomous decision on her part.

Another feature of Marivia's learning process in Haiti, which, to some degree she continued in the US, was her dependence on an intimate social network. For instance, in Haiti, she had enjoyed being at the center of events and being able to transmit news of such events in the community. Her function as local commentator had ceased on coming to this country; however, she had maintained close ties with some of her friends, like her, all Haitian expatriates. Her communication and collaboration with these friends continued in spite of the geographical distance between them. Marivia used her network as a resource to get information about possible career options and to help her in specific tasks in the composition class like proofreading and revising her essays.

Marivia's learning experiences, both in Haiti and in the United States, suggest ways in which an LC might have benefited her. Although Marivia had earlier relied on her network of friends, she was unable to create a similar network at Windsor Community Colleges. Andrade (2007) has noted that, "Being enrolled in the same courses with the same students encourages familiarity and interaction even if organized contact is not a specific feature of the learning community" (p.9). Andrade discovered that in most LCs, the nature of the small cohorts taking linked classes spontaneously fostered a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Thus, had Marivia belonged to an LC, the proximity to the same group of students might have encouraged her to build a fruitful partnership. It must be acknowledged that Marivia, in communicating with friends as far

away as Canada, probably thirsted for companionship among peers, but was unable to do find companionship close by. She had acknowledged the usefulness of collaborating with some of her peers in the composition class, but had been unable to create a more enduring relationship with them because they only took one course together.

In her interactions with me, Marivia also demonstrated an eagerness to explore career options. She had exhibited her pride in her parents' accomplishment of having established themselves professionally although she did not know what exactly her mother did. Prior to registering for classes at Windsor Community College, Marivia had attempted to find out more about suitable majors. Here, once again, she relied on a contact from her old network; here, too, her friend was unable to give her adequate information. In the LC, however, counselors played a crucial role in the progress of the students by guiding them through their career choices, suggesting appropriate courses for them, and helping them with time management and other issues. Marivia, like many students, did not know how to access the services of the counselor and thus, her choices of courses, at least for Spring 2011, were undirected and randomly chosen.

Finally, Marivia's reluctance to work with tutors is also worth mentioning. Like Rafael in LC2, Marivia, too worked as a tutor with school children. Yet, like Rafael, Marivia was reluctant to consider consulting a tutor partly because she believed that she already possessed the requisite skills needed for the composition class. Part of this apparent confidence may have stemmed from Marivia's preconceived ideas about the writing process and reluctance to follow instructions. It is not certain if she would have ultimately worked with a tutor, even had she been in an LC.

Lisbeth had just stepped into her teenage years when she left her native Venezuela. Her family life was a contrast to Marivia's more fragmented one. Lisbeth's parents were a constant presence during her school-going years and gave the impetus and scaffolds necessary for academic success. Her home environment, with its emphasis on literacy, learning, and provisions for academic and social support can be considered a model for LCs. It appears that Generation 1.5 students with access to similar learning environments can be successful learners without the additional support of an LC.

Conclusion

The six participants started the semester with little awareness of the demands of their composition course. The LC participants were initially bemused by the configuration of the three classes. In particular, they showed little understanding of the requirements of the composition course.

Lauren and Marsha benefited from the LC because of their willingness to exploit the affordances of the LC. Through their membership in the LC, they could access the linked courses, collaboration among the instructors, and tutoring services, all of which served them well by helping them to hone their existing academic literacy skills and developing new ones in organization and research. By the end of the semester, they exhibited improvement in their writing skills, a growing understanding of the composition course, and a more realistic assessment of their skills and challenges.

In LC2, Rafael and Liang approached the LC in different ways. Both of them started the semester with a confidence in their own essay writing skills. Rafael showed an astute understanding of the LC and used its resources selectively. His academic skills and ambition led to his writing proficiency and research capabilities increasing during the semester. At the other end of the spectrum, Liang, who started the semester with

impressive metacognitive skills, failed to fully exploit any of the resources of the LC; as a result, his skills did not improve. He continued to work on his own by relying on his own instincts. In this LC, a breakdown between some elements, namely the inability of the tutor to visit the composition classroom, was partly responsible for none of the participants using her expertise.

The two non-LC participants, Marivia and Lisbeth, both initially displayed an understanding of the composition course. Lisbeth exemplified the competent student who was able to use her existing skills to flourish in her classes. However, Marivia resisted changing her writing strategies, creating local learning networks, or accessing support resources at the college. Her work over the semester showed little change or improvement.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Introduction

LCs offer multiple resources to students in order to scaffold their learning and help them integrate academically and socially in the college community. As the results indicated, the participants initially appeared resistant to the LCs and its resources. Their lack of participation in the LC stemmed from their preconceived ideas both about their own learning styles and the function of the LC. However, collaboration within the LC made its services more accessible and comprehensible to the participants who then found it helpful at many levels. In this chapter, I outline the salient findings that emerged from this study and conclude with recommendation and implications for future research.

Finding 1: Miscommunication and mistaken messages.

The first finding concerns the often confusing message that students impart regarding their motivation in the composition classroom. What might pass for reticence and reluctance often masks inability to understand or complete assignments. On the other hand, some students exude a feeling of confidence which positions them as proficient students when, in fact, they too might be struggling in class. Instructors might justifiably be bewildered with the host of conflicting messages they receive from the attitudes of students which again do not match the quality of their work. In such situations, the opportunity to collaborate and confer with other instructors provides valuable insight and information. Marsha from the RLC, Liang from LC2, and Marivia from the non-LC class exemplify the disjuncture between the message they sent and their actual abilities.

In the RLC, Marsha's case appeared puzzling because her oral skills were at odds with the quality of the work she submitted. It was only through interviews and journal assignments that her challenges were unearthed and the faculty and tutors could work with her towards an achievable goal.

In LC2, Liang's narration, both to me and to Professor Cohen, emphasized his status as the sole ESL student in his middle school and the independent decision he made in high school to return to ESL classes after having been mainstreamed. His understanding of the various assignments, too, indicated a level of sophistication which, unfortunately, did not match his engagement in the classes in the LC.

Liang's behavior can be interpreted in the light of the research of Kim, Brenner, Liang, and Asay (2003). In their study about Asian American Generation 1.5 students, Kim et al. discovered that the acculturation process becomes difficult in the absence of a support system in the form of family or friends. Liang strongly identified himself with his heritage culture, but, in reality, had little contact with other Chinese students and had not made friends from other cultures. His isolation from peers and family made it difficult for him to accept the help of counselors or instructors. The independence that he had been forced to cultivate throughout his school years had helped him make certain relevant decisions in his high school, but prevented him from accessing the resources in the LC.

In another case, Marivia, one of the two participants from the stand alone LC projected herself as a confident and capable student with strong ideas on writing and language learning. Her self-assurance masked her actual skills and prevented her from consulting tutors for help. Her experiences mirrored those of Festina, the subject of Vásquez' (2007) study. In her study, Vásquez realized that some Generation 1.5 students

use their strong oral skills to position themselves as experts even though they actually lack academic skills. Marivia signaled her apparent expertise when she outlined her views on writing and her reluctance to work with other Haitian students. While such behavior signals a defensive attitude at having to cope in an unfamiliar milieu, it ultimately prevents students from succeeding in their classes.

Finding 2: Misapprehension about LCs.

An important finding from a close analysis of student interviews reveals their reluctance to belong to the LC, especially at the start of the semester. All four LC participants, Lauren, Marsha, Rafael, and Liang expressed their ambivalence at the three linked courses and initially dismissed the services of the tutors and counselors.

Of the three courses, the one-credit library course was not required for graduation and seemed to represent additional work and investment of time for the participants. However, eventually, all participants except Liang benefited from the course and acknowledged its contribution to their composition assignments.

The participants displayed the greatest resistance to the freshman seminar course. Lauren and Marsha believed that the journal assignments meant additional work for them, while Rafael and Liang dismissed the value of this course completely and tried to do the least possible work for Professor Andrews. Ironically, the design of the freshman seminar course had evolved over many years to address the needs of the students. However, because it was not a content course, it did not appear relevant to the students.

Andrade (2007) has discussed the implications of non-credit bearing courses or extra courses for students. In her comprehensive survey of the research on LCs, she reported that students were intent on enrolling in those credit-bearing courses with

relevance to their choice of their major. When students had to enroll in courses like freshman seminar, not a required course for any major, they did not take it seriously and failed to see its connection to the other linked courses. Liang and to some extent, Rafael corroborated Andrade's findings. They had already developed strong ideas about their majors. Therefore, the freshman seminar course appeared to be an unnecessary distraction. Lauren and Marsha, on the other hand, were still in the process of discovering their place in the college community. They began to appreciate the interwoven nature of the three courses in spite of their initial reservations about the linked courses. Their realization of the value of the LC helped them to be more receptive about its worth.

Ultimately, Lauren and Marsha responded more positively to various aspects of the freshman seminar course. Lauren used the journal assignments to acknowledge her own insecurities about time management and study habits while Marsha, in a period of epiphany, began to see her own experiences reflected in the anecdotes in the text book by Downing (2006). Their response to the freshman seminar course, and indeed to the three linked courses in the LC led to their creating more meaning for themselves from their courses, thus making them more active learners.

While Rafael and Liang appreciated the relevance of the library course, they did not make a connection between the freshman seminar and the composition courses. They saw the freshman seminar course as one more hurdle to cross in their journey towards graduation rather than a course which could equip them with significant study skills.

Finding 3: Prior preparedness and funds of knowledge.

The level of preparedness possessed by each participant as well as their progress, whether in the LCs or outside them, depended partly on the manner in which their prior

funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) was relevant to their course requirements. Lauren's parents and her network of friends had equipped her with funds of knowledge that she used in college. She had developed adequate study skills that let her take advantage of the resources in the LC. Although Marsha had always felt isolated and unsupported by her family, she, too, had access to funds of knowledge through her cousins and her brother, all of whom were achievers and thus, positive role models. Even though her academic skills were weak, her study skills were strong, and thus, she benefited from the reinforcement provided by the LC. Likewise, Marivia, too had access to some funds of knowledge in Haiti, and had developed an awareness of language and study skills through it. In college, however, her participation in a stand-alone class limited her access to more support services.

Rafael, by virtue of the strong education he had received in his native Portugal, already had a strong academic foundation before he enrolled in the LC. At home, his brother, a proficient English speaker, and his mother, a beginning learner of English, reinforced the value of learning English, while his experience in high school developed his skills further. He was resistant to the idea of the LC; nevertheless, he was able to appreciate the value of the library course. Liang, on the other hand, did not have a visible source of funds of knowledge apart from the teachers who had taught him in school. His progress or lack of it troubled his instructors. They believed that of all the students, he made the least progress.

Of all the participants, Lisbeth's funds of knowledge were most closely aligned to the academic demands of her courses. She had received a strong education in her native Venezuela and once in the United States, her parents had constantly worked with her to

improve her language and learning skills. Thus, she was academically and socially prepared for any challenge when she started college. The funds of knowledge that she had obtained provided her with a foundation which she used to deal with her course work. Unlike Marivia, Lisbeth continued to have access to an ongoing and rich knowledge repository which helped her flourish.

Finding 4: Collaboration, cooperation, or conflict?

The success of the LC hinged on collaboration at four levels. Collaboration among the three instructors and between instructors and the support services was critical in the LC. In addition, both instructors and the support services had to collaborate with the students. And finally, the essence of the LC lay in the collaboration among the cohort of students. Analysis of the interviews with instructors, students, and tutors reveal the uneven nature of collaboration, caused largely by conflicting interests.

Collaboration among instructors

At the first level, the collaboration among the three instructors led to their creating shared assignments to help students make connections between courses and also reinforce instruction. Moreover, the shared insight into student abilities was also a useful feature of the LC. In both LCs, each instructor made strong efforts to link class activities.

Assignments in both the library and the freshman courses supported the research paper requirements in the composition course or helped students work on improving their skills. In addition, each instructor worked with their teaching partners to assess their students' strengths. At that level, the collaboration was successful.

Collaboration between instructors and support staff

At the next level, the partnership between instructors and the tutors and counselors was less successful. For instance, in LC2, Professor Cohen felt left out of the LC because neither the tutor nor the counselor ever visited her class or introduced themselves to her. As a result, she could not wholeheartedly recommend their services to the students. Likewise, Professor Andrews in LC2 appreciated the work of the counselors, but believed that their repeated visits to her classes intruded on her class time. This was a belief echoed by Professor Martin in the RLC and brought into question the effectiveness of the counselors.

Similarly, in the RLC, both Lauren and Marsha did visit tutors, but neither of them visited Phuong, the designated tutor. The point of designating tutors for each LC was to enable them to work with instructors and share lesson plans. Thus, the cooperation between Phuong, the tutor, and the instructors ultimately remained a futile exercise since it did not yield any benefits. In LC2, it must be remembered that Professor Cohen did not have a chance to work with Chrystal, the tutor.

Collaboration between instructors and support staff with students

The collaboration between students and their instructors, on the whole, seemed successful with the exception of the acceptance of the freshman seminar course in some cases. The collaboration between students and tutors, too, was successful. Both Lauren and Marsha benefited from their tutoring. Professor Cohen believed that had Liang and Rafael visited tutors, they might have exhibited greater improvement in their work.

The role of counseling, as obvious Marsha's case, was problematic in one aspect. As described in detail in Chapter 4, Marsha was advised to take an intensive and

unrealistic course load over the summer. Allison, the counselor, was prompted to impose a generic schedule for her advisees to ensure that they graduated on time. Marsha's capabilities and desires did not influence Allison's advice. The disjuncture between Marsha's requirements and the counselor's decision, based on institutional mandates, undermined the interests of both. Therefore, counseling, a crucial element in the LC was seen either as an imposition or a non-entity by students and professors.

Collaboration among students

The final level of collaboration was among students themselves. It must be emphasized that Tinto (1987, 1997a, 1997b) viewed friendship among the members of a cohort as having the most impact on their development as students. Results of this doctoral study underscore Tinto's assumptions. In the RLC, Lauren continued her friendship with Maria and cultivated new partnerships which yielded quantum benefits. Lauren's writing skills improved as did her confidence. At the other end of the spectrum, Liang worked mostly alone and built few partnerships within his cohort. His resistance to the various modalities in the LC resulted his progress remaining stagnant. In between Lauren and Liang was Marsha who found confidence and support from her friends.

Marivia did not belong to an LC, but valued her old network. She had thrived as a cultural broker in Haiti, and had continued to rely on her friends from Haiti in spite of the geographical distance between them. Had she been in an LC, she might have developed new friendships which could have given her a greater sense of belonging in the college community. As for Lisbeth, her academic and social foundations were strong before she enrolled in her college courses. She is an example of an independent student with adequate access to funds of knowledge which propelled her forward.

Conclusion

This case study traced the journey of six Generation 1.5 students through their freshman composition course, some aided by their membership in LCs and others working alone. The uneven nature of the progress of some of the LC participants may throw doubts on the effectiveness of LCs in general. It is apparent that the LCs, designed as a collaborative project involving students, faculty, and support staff, often became chaotic because of the conflicting interest of the stakeholders. For some of the participants, the lack of coordination between students and tutors or the opposing priorities of counselors and students negated the more positive aspects of the LC. However, in other instances, the impact of sustained teamwork is clearly visible in terms of greater engagement and more meaningful interaction among students and was partly the result of seamless teamwork among the faculty and the willingness of the participants to exploit the tools of the LC.

The improvement demonstrated by some of the participants positions LCs as effective models of instruction. Likewise, the gaps in the implementation of the LCs indicated in the results of this study offer suggestions on how future LCs might be designed to make them more effective. As I discovered, LCs can be cumbersome organizations, involving people from diverse departments. Yet, the ultimate goal of all stakeholders revolves around the academic integration and success of all students. Therefore, more thought must be given on how LCs can be used to achieve this goal.

In the next sections, I will outline the limitations of this study which will inform recommendations for future LCs. I will conclude by highlighting areas of future research.

Limitations

This case study employed primarily interviews and document analysis and, to a lesser extent, class observations to explore the impact of LCs on the writing skills of Generation 1.5 students in a community college. The study was conducted over the span of a semester. Participants were selectively chosen from three freshman composition classes, two of which were part of an LC. The objective of this study was to explore the usefulness of an LC and the case study method was employed to provide a rich body of details. Triangulation was achieved by diverse methods of data collection as well as interviews of not only the participants but also their instructors and tutors. However, this study was constrained by several limitations.

The six participants in this study were Generation 1.5 students in a community college. Their experiences, prior to and during their college courses, are typical of many Generation 1.5 students at any community college. At the same time, as this study reveals, each participant had a distinct academic and social history. Therefore, their experiences as students taking the same courses cannot be held as representative of all Generation 1.5 students. Similarly, while this study reveals rich details of the design and dynamics of the LCs at Windsor Community College, its portrayal of LCs is by no means definitive and should not be generalized to depict LCs at other institutions. In fact, community colleges are defined by the communities which they serve; by extension, the student population at each college is unique. This case study presents snapshots of the experiences of Generation 1.5 students of one particular LC at a community college.

The study is also limited in terms of its length and its breadth. The study was conducted over the period of one semester in one composition course. Information about

the participants' progress in other courses during Spring 2011 was only ascertained through interviews with the participants; instructors for their classes outside the LC were not interviewed for this study. In addition, the progress of the participants in Fall 2011 was not tracked either; therefore, no documented information exists on the efficacy of lessons that the participants learned over the previous semester. Rather, this study focused on the dynamics within the LC in Spring 2011; its focus was on the interactions between the participants, instructors, and other support personnel.

Another limitation of this study emerged, not from the design of the study but from the structure of the LCs. In my description of LC2, I had included a comment articulated by Professor Cohen, the freshman composition instructor regarding her lack of interaction with the tutor designated for her class. Although Chrystal, a former ESL student had been assigned to tutor students in LC2, her schedule did not match their class timings. As a result, she was unable to meet either Professor Cohen or the class. The scheduling conflict meant that Professor Cohen was unable to recommend Chrystal to her students, who did not visit either Chrystal or any other tutor. In RLC, I had documented the interactions between students and tutors; I was unable to do the same for LC2. The analysis of the LCs, therefore, omitted one of their vital components.

Finally, my position as a practitioner researcher can also be considered a limitation. As I have mentioned before, I attempted to eliminate bias towards my student participants by employing a method of blind and double grading. My teaching partner and I both graded each assignment and ensured that each of them had only student identification numbers rather than names. The limitation in this study refers to the interpretation of data. My job as an instructor at Windsor Community College gave me

an insight and a clear understanding of the teaching methods of the instructors and the reactions of the students. I concur with Le Gallais (2008) in asserting that my status as a researcher was validated by my position as an instructor. However, while being an insider researcher had obvious benefits, it also allowed me to develop a unique interpretation of my data. Outsider researchers, with less knowledge of the workings of Windsor Community College, might interpret the same data with differently.

Recommendations for future LCs

This study indicates that LCs can be a vehicle of instruction for Generation 1.5 students when designed well. LCs can reflect the principles of ALM (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007) by acknowledging the fluid nature of literacies and helping students negotiate through various academic contexts by including their voices in the learning process. This study indicates that while the LCs were created to serve students, their effectiveness was limited by the fact that some participants were unable to assess its usefulness and so could not exploit it to their advantage. A discussion of the *why* these LCs were not completely successful and *in what ways* they can better serve Generation 1.5 students follows.

Tutoring: Restrictions and recommendations. The ALM, (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007), with its insistence of focusing on students, makes learning a dynamic process. The LCs described in this study were only partly successful because of their failure to listen to students and incorporate their opinions on their needs. Tutoring was one area in which the LCs provided services without considering student concerns.

The participants in this study had to balance their responsibilities at school with those at home and work. Their busy lives, as exemplified by the stories of Lauren and

Marsha in RLC and Liang in LC2, often made it difficult for them to find time to access tutoring services. In addition, tutors sometimes had schedules that limited them from being able to work with their designated tutees. In neither of the LCs did the participants actually visit their designated tutors although the RLC participants did meet with other tutors. Yet, the LCs did not possess a mechanism to elicit information about student schedules and suggestions on accommodating the critical elements of tutoring and counseling services in their work days. Thus, although tutoring services formed the bedrock of the LCs, students and their designated tutors found it difficult to synchronize their schedules. Issues in scheduling made it difficult for students to consult the designated tutors, and more importantly, eliminated the value of collaboration between instructors and tutors.

This mismatch between tutoring and student convenience suggests that Windsor Community College perhaps could have inquired into adopting more creative methods of offering learning assistance to students since non-traditional students form the core of student population at community colleges. Tutoring services must be incorporated more creatively in LCs to bridge the gap between the ideal of providing resources and the ability of students to access the same. For example, one solution might be to structure online tutoring services in order to provide ongoing support to students. The use of video chats, emails, and texting features could be analyzed to assess their usefulness in bridging time and communication gaps. Tutors could use the online space to provide support on proof editing and organizational issues among others,

Another solution can be to embed tutoring within class time or allot mandatory tutoring sessions for all students. Small groups of two to three students could sign up for

tutoring sessions with the designated tutor and work on skills-specific topics like sentence punctuation or thesis statements. In addition, tutors could also work in the composition classroom, giving support to the composition instructor by working on discrete grammar or editing skills.

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (Arendale, 2010) report has also made several useful recommendations on incorporating tutoring or learning assistance more effectively. This report bemoans the lack of tenured faculty playing a more active role in providing tutoring. It may be remembered that all the tutors described in this study were either peer tutors or paraprofessionals. Two of the participants in this study, Rafael from LC2 and Marivia from the stand-alone composition course had themselves been tutors in high school but were reluctant to get tutored because of their apprehension of stigma associated with getting learning assistance. However, the presence of more faculty might have encouraged Rafael, Marivia, and other students to visit tutors. In fact, the ASHE report also suggests that faculty work with students of different learning styles. Such one-on-one interaction with students could supplement classroom instruction.

Counseling services: Restrictions and recommendation. The inclusion of counseling services in the LCs was meant to provide further out-of-classroom support to the students. Paradoxically, however, counseling services, too managed to marginalize the students. The counselors were conflicted in their need to serve the institution and the students. They were required to make a choice between the institution's intention to retain students and the students' ability to cope with intensive course schedules. The mismatch between student needs and counselor priorities was further exacerbated by

privacy concerns which deprived counselors of getting valuable information from the instructors regarding student capability. Counselors are expected to respect the privacy of students, and therefore, cannot discuss their cases openly with faculty.

Student voice and communication. Participant voices were also ignored with respect to the construction of the LC. They initially resented their membership into the LC principally because of the courses offered. While none of the participants had questions about the composition course, they did question the validity of both the freshman seminar and the library courses at first. However, each freshman seminar course was carefully designed to coax the students to perform better. The disjuncture in the opinions of the LC administrators and the students, between what the administrators believed necessary and student acceptance to those courses proved a stumbling block.

It must be noted that the instructors in the LC courses at Windsor Community College crafted composition and journal assignments that elicited and responded to student opinions. Their assignments were based on the Academic Literacies Framework (Lea & Street, 2000). It was only at the macro or the institutional level that student voices were largely ignored and policies were imposed on them.

A practice adopted by the Commanding English program at the University of Minnesota was to mandate first-year multiple course LCs for all freshman in order to reduce the stigma attached to an LC (Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang, 2005; Fitzpatrick & Murie, 2009). However, at colleges which cater to students from diverse income groups, mandatory LCs could be a financial strain.

However, future LCs might benefit from greater communication between faculty and students, perhaps in the form of mandatory orientations, regarding the objectives of

the LC. Such communication would help students feel more involved in the LC. In addition, more emphasis must be laid on more community building activities; in this study, the idea of community creation was implicit with no overt steps being taken to create genuine partnerships among students. In this study, the interactions among peers were spontaneous and neither the faculty nor the support personnel worked from thoughtfully designed community focused activities.

Creation of third spaces. Finally, LCs are based on the credo that cooperation and collaboration are instrumental in helping students create knowledge in a substantially meaningful way. However, my conversations with the participants reveal that they had little time to spend in college outside of their classes, and thus had few opportunities for spontaneous interactions with peers. In this context, it is interesting to revisit Gutierrez's (2008) conceptualization of third spaces where, she believes, students and instructors weave their history with their school and out-of-school experiences to create a powerful learning environment with contributions from each individual.

Third spaces can be a rich source of empowerment and learning for all students. Generation 1.5 students, who are on the fringe of two cultures and two languages, can make substantial contributions to third spaces.

In addition, third spaces can lead to more community building among LC participants. Future LCs might be better served by exploring ways of creating and using third spaces. Memberships in college clubs and service learning groups can enhance student engagement.

Implications for future research

The limitations defining both the case study and the LCs it investigated suggest directions for further research. A case study, by definition, is constrained by specific parameters of the case, number of participants, and the length of time (Creswell, 2007).

Length and breadth of the study. To extend the findings in this case study, further research should have a broader scope. A longitudinal study (Sternglass, 1997) designed to follow students through their freshman seminar and beyond can yield a more detailed picture of student progress as well as what supports and inhibits it. It can explore whether and how former LC students use strategies they learned in freshman seminar courses to cope with college courses and expectations once they leave the supportive shelter of an LC.

The current case study provides a snapshot of two LCs at one community college. It can be extended by studying LCs across multiple such institutions to compare issues and solutions that emerge at each site. Such cross-institutional research would generate a more comprehensive picture of LCs working with diverse student populations and unique methods used under different circumstances. Such a broad study involving multiple researchers at different sites can also mitigate the limitations of an insider study.

Tutoring and counseling. Appropriate deployment of tutoring and counseling services was a concern that emerged from this study. While these services are crucial for student success, they were not optimally used in this study. Further research into more accessible tutoring and effective counseling, therefore, is critical.

Such research could focus on increased collaboration between instructors and support services. In addition, research into the use of online tutoring and counseling also

seems warranted. Community colleges serve non-traditional students who have to balance academic work with family and work responsibilities. They do not always have time to physically visit tutors or counselors. For that reason, there needs to be more research into the use of online services that incorporate chatting, texting, and email features to maximize interaction between students and support staff.

The conflicts evident in this study notwithstanding, counseling is an effective tool help students become more integrated in the college community (Kress & Elias, 2006) and help students, especially those from minority and low-income homes, to deal with their out-of-school problems (Steen and Noguera, 2010). Therefore, the role of counselors must be investigated further to ascertain the extent of their collaboration with faculty and the nature of their involvement in student progress.

Conclusion

Learning communities (LCs) attempt to create successful learning environments by offering students easily available and multiple affordances for acquiring academic literacy skills. Some participants, in particular Rafael and Lisbeth, had grown up in similar learning environments at home and encountered them in schools in their native countries as well as in the United States. Others like Marsha and Liang had received little support from their home environments. Lauren and Marivia had received varying levels of encouragement and support from their families; their high school experiences, however, made them feel somewhat marginalized. It must be noted that resources like tutoring, counseling, library services, and peer support are services available in all community colleges, thus making them ideal institutions to serve students with diverse

needs. The LCs, as this study explains, highlighted these services and made access to them more convenient.

The findings from this study indicate that while all six participants seemed invested in their education, not all of them were able or willing to access the resources available to them. Those who did, namely Rafael, Lauren, and Marsha, showed a marked improvement in their academic literacy skills. There was a multiplicity of resources, from which participants chose some and discarded others. At the end of the semester, they seemed more aware of the tools they could use to succeed in college. Lisbeth, from the stand-alone class, flourished in her classes due to the support from her earliest learning community, her family. They had helped her to develop her skills from a very early age. Therefore, Lisbeth was cognizant of strategies she could use in school. Liang seemed resistant to the various tools offered and his skills did not improve as much.

In conclusion, community colleges can match their vision of democratizing education through their adoption of tools such as LCs. However, as this study shows, LCs are not perfect organizations; these organizations are shaped by the dynamics between the various stakeholders such as the instructors, the host institution, and the students. While instructors are responsible for encouraging and guiding students, and colleges for serving student interests, ultimately, students remain the most critical constituents in LCs. It is their involvement, persistence, and willingness to use readily available resources that will determine their eventual success.

List of Appendices

Protocol # 1

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for student participants

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire was to elicit information from students enrolled in a freshman composition course if they fulfilled the criteria necessary to participate in the study and their willingness to do so. I distributed the form to specific classes.

Questionnaire

I am looking for participants for a study that I have to undertake as part of my pilot study. This study will assist me in developing my proposal for my doctoral dissertation. If you fulfill the criteria I am looking for, I may invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If, at any time during the study, you want to leave it, you are free to do so. Again, your grades will not be affected in any way.

Name _____

Country of origin _____

1. In which country did you complete your elementary school education?
2. In which country did you complete your high school education?
3. How many years did you spend in a high school in the United States?
4. From which high school did you graduate? _____
5. How many languages do you speak?

This semester, you may have enrolled in a Freshman Composition class which is part of a learning community (LC). In my study, I would like to find out from you and your instructors if student participation in a learning community helps students to write essays and read academic passages more easily.

6. Would you like to participate in my study? Yes/ No

Your grades will not be affected in any way should you choose to participate in this study. Your grades will not be affected if you prefer not to participate in this study.

Protocol # 2

Appendix 2- Day 1 writing prompt

What, according to you, are the most important objectives of this class? What are your expectations from this course? What do you believe will be your most important contribution to this course? What do you consider your greatest challenge in a writing course, and what do you think is your strongest asset?

Protocol # 3

Appendix 3**Interview 1 with participants**

Purpose: This semi- structured interview was conducted at the start of the study. The purpose of this interview was to elicit background information from the students regarding demographics, age, and prior literacy experiences of the participant, both in their native countries and in the high school they attended in the US. Prior literacy experiences shape the learning experiences of all students. Therefore, to build an accurate assessment of the effect of LCs on the participants, it is important to know how they learned and what was expected of them before they came to this country.

This oral interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

Questions:

1. Tell me something about what you learned in school in your native country. For example, what did you do in language class? What kinds of reading did you do?
2. Tell me something about your 1st year in high school in the US. How many hours of English did you have, what difficulties did you have?
3. What do you think of your writing and reading skills so far?
4. Do you enjoy writing? If so, what kind of writing do you like to do?
5. Do you think it is important for you to learn how to write better?

Appendix 4

Purpose: This is the second interview with the students and was conducted toward the middle of the semester. The purpose of this interview was to get a sense of the writing process of the participants and explore the extent to which they used the resources (such as tutoring, counseling) available to them as part of the learning community. This was an oral interview which was audio recorded and transcribed.

1. I'd like to talk about the writing assignments that you have completed so far in the semester. How many have you done so far?
2. I would like to discuss your approach to writing one specific essay, like your argumentative essay. Could you describe your approach to me?
3. How often did you visit your designated tutor while you were working on this draft?
4. When you were proofreading your essay, what did you think were the weakest sections in your essay? Why?
5. Apart from me, you had other resources you could use this semester. For example, you could visit the tutor, discuss your essay writing with your peers, and use the links on Angel (course management system), some of which have been provided by your peers. Which of these did you find the most useful? Why?

Appendix 5

Purpose : *The purpose of the final interview was to assess the impression of the participants about the learning community. It was audio recorded and transcribed.*

1. I would like you to think about your writing process at the beginning of the semester. Has this process changed in any way? Reflect on your prewriting strategies, revision strategies, and your tendency to visit the tutor.
2. What was the biggest stumbling block for you this semester? Can you explain?
3. This semester, you were part of a learning community. Your peers and you took three courses together. Can you think of ways in which this benefited you?
4. What are some skills that you learned this semester that you think will help you next semester as you take courses in your major or more academic courses?
5. Do you believe that your writing style has changed over the semester? If so, can you describe the way(s) in which it has changed?

Protocol # 4**(Writing assignments & grading rubrics for RLC & stand-alone composition class)****Appendix 6**

Essay 1

Imagine you get to change places with any of your college instructors. Write an essay where you compare and contrast how your life would change. Address the following points:

- What about your life would be better?
- What would be worse?
- What would remain unchanged?
- What would you most enjoy doing?
- What would be your biggest challenge? etc

Introduction: Use the 1st paragraph of your essay to establish a context for your discussion. You can use quotations from the essays you read this week or any of your experiences. The last sentence of your introduction should be your thesis statement.

Body (at least 3 paragraphs): In this essay, you will be looking at the differences in your experiences as a student and those of your instructors. Discuss those points that you think are the most relevant. Make sure that your explanations are thorough and detailed.

Start each paragraph with a topic sentence which contains the main idea of the paragraph. Use examples and adequate support.

Conclusion: Use this section to summarize your discussion and to make any prediction

Appendix 7: Grading rubric for comparison/ contrast essay

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards
Introduction	Introduction starts with a hook. The thesis statement clearly lists the points of similarity or differences to be discussed. There is a clear progression of ideas from the hook to the thesis statement.	The thesis statement names the topic of the essay. There is a hook.	The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic.	The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed.
Support	i. Clear use of either the block method or the point by point method. ii. Three or more points of similarity / differences, each explained clearly. iii. Each paragraph opens with a relevant topic sentence. iv. The writer provides adequate explanations.	Use of the block or the point-by-point method. At least 2 points of similarity or difference. Use of a topic sentence to open a paragraph. Adequate explanations.	Some attempt to explain similarities/ differences but points may not be valid or well explained. No use of topic sentences.	More of a narrative or a general discussion than a comparison/ contrast analysis
Transitions	A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected	Transitions show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety	Some transitions work well, but some connections between ideas are confusing.	The transitions between ideas are unclear OR nonexistent.
Grammar & Spelling	Few errors that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in one of the following area: i. verb tense ii. capitalization. iii. sentence structure & punctuation iv. word forms v. Word choice These errors do not greatly distract from meaning	Multiple errors in 1-2 of the following areas: i. verb tense ii. capitalization. iii. sentence structure & punctuation iv. word forms v. Word choice	Multiple errors in more than 2 of the following areas: i. verb tense ii. capitalization. iii. sentence structure & punctuation iv. word forms v. Word choice
Conclusion	Strong conclusion with adequate summary and attempt to make links to the writer's own experiences.	Recognizable conclusion but weak effort to make links to the writer's experiences.	Brief conclusion but no attempt to link to the writer's own experiences.	There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.

Appendix: 8

Prompt for Argumentative Essay

You have read a few articles by different authors from The New York Times. David Leonhardt claims that a college degree helps students in establishing themselves in a career and giving them a level of stability in life. Jacques Steinberg argues that a college degree is not worth the time and money spent on it and that many people may have successful careers without ever taking a college course.

What is your position on this issue? You need to provide adequate support for your position as well as a counterargument and a rebuttal. Use facts and statistics from your class readings. Your essay will be graded according to the attached rubric.

Appendix 9: Grading rubric for argumentative essay

CATEGORY	4- Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2- Approaching standards	1 - Below Standards
Introduction & thesis Statement	Introduction starts with effective hook and there is clear progression of ideas leading to the thesis statement. The thesis statement specifies the position of the author and outlines the main points to be discussed.	Introduction lacks hook. There is a progression of ideas leading to the thesis statement. The thesis statement specifies the position of the author and outlines the main points to be discussed.	There is no hook. Sentences appear random. Thesis statement outlines some of the main points of support but does not mention the position of the author.	The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed.
Support for thesis	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. · Explanations clear and detailed.	Includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. Sketchy explanations present.	Includes 2 points of support with some explanations which may not be adequate. Choice of support may not be satisfactory.	Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences). Little or no attempt at providing explanations.
Grammar & Spelling Transitions	Author makes no major errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content. A variety of thoughtful transitions are used to connect ideas	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorrect use of verb tenses, • capitalization, • subject-verb agreement, and / or use of conjunctions • word choice Transitions used to connect ideas, but there is little variety.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorrect use of verb tenses, • capitalization, • subject-verb agreement, and / or use of conjunctions • word choice Few transitions used, or used incorrectly.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content. Major errors include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorrect use of verb tenses, • capitalization, • subject-verb agreement, and / or use of conjunctions. • Word choice No transitions used.
Counterargument / Rebuttal	Counterargument is explained well. Rebuttal is effective.	Counterargument and / or rebuttal not explained clearly.	Counterargument exists, but rebuttal does not.	No counterargument or rebuttal.
Conclusion	Recommendations/ predictions clearly outlined position restated.	Summarization of main points & author's position restated.	Weak conclusion couched in general language.	No conclusion- essay simply ends.

Appendix 10

Research paper:

For your research paper, you will choose ONE of the following topics related to education and technology:

- i. Assistive technology for students with learning disabilities
- ii. Distance education
- iii. Gaming in education

These are very general topics, so you need to refine the focus of your paper.

Requirements for the research paper

- a. Your research paper must have a clear thesis.
- b. It must incorporate information from at least 5 reliable sources. Articles from college databases, books, newspapers such as the New York Times, and interviews are reliable sources.
- c. The research paper should be in your own words; you must use information from other sources, but rephrase them in your own words.
- d. You must credit the author whose ideas you have included in your essay.
- e. Your paper must be at least 5 pages long, not including the references page.
- f. You must get a grade of C in the research paper in order to pass the course. If you fail to hand in the drafts of the research paper on time, points will be deducted. Any plagiarism, regardless of length, will result in your failing this course.

Appendix 11: Grading rubric for Research Paper

CATEGORY	4 : Well above standards	3: Meets standards	2: Approaching standards	1: Below standards
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.	The information appears to be disorganized.
Quality & quantity of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples. At least 5 pages	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples. Between 4-5 pages	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given. 3-4 pages	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic. Less than 3 pages
Sources	i. At least 5 reliable sources. ii. sources documented using MLA or APA iii. in text citation	i. In text citation or end-of-text citation sources done incorrectly ii. 5 reliable sources	i. Less than 5 sources, some not reliable. ii. end-of-text & in-text citation not done correctly	i. no reliable sources ii. citation missing
Mechanics & formatting	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. Formatting correct	Almost no grammatical, spelling, punctuation , or formatting errors but none that seriously obscure meaning	A few grammatical spellings, punctuation, or formatting errors which may occasionally interfere with meaning	Multiple grammatical, spelling, punctuation, or formatting errors which hinder comprehension

Protocol # 5: Writing assignments and grading rubric for Prof Cohen's class.

Appendix 12

Assignment # 1- Biographical Essay (4 pages)

Due on ... at the end of class.

- Choose a person in history or in the present who you think fits the description of a hero or a monster.
- Research him/ her in the internet and college databases. Look for 5 historically accurate articles that will give you clear information about the life and times of this person. Print out the articles.
- Highlight the information that you find interesting and important; it must be detailed information that explains the person in depth.
- Focus on critical parts of the person's life in order to help the reader understand his/ her character.
- Make an outline.
- Write an unbiased and accurate draft of this "Biographical" essay about the life of this person you have researched.
- After receiving this draft back with comments and suggestions for improvement, write a 2nd draft.

General Format of the Biographical Essay

Fill in the outline below with information, quotations, statistics, etc. where they belong. Factual information must be cited which means that you need the title, author[when available], publication and date of publication. Save the articles including the first page and the last page.

Introduction-

- a) Overview of the individual's life
- b) Highlight of the main points of the essay- Preview of the essay

Sentence #1- hook- How are you going to capture the attention of the reader?

Thesis Statement-

Body Paragraphs-

First body paragraph should focus on the early life of the individual

Detailed descriptions topic by topic which have been introduced in the introduction – one topic per paragraph

Conclusion-restatement of the main points of the essay

Appendix 13

Essay # 2 (4 pages)

- Research your hero/ monster in the internet and college library databases. Look for 5 sources with information like personal testimony proving the “hero” side and factual information.
- Highlight sentences and paragraphs with pertinent information; that is, information that clearly supports your “hero” point of view.
- Prepare an outline.
- Write a first draft of the “Hero” essay, proving through facts and personal testimonies that he/ she is a hero.
- After receiving the draft back, write a second draft.

Suggested procedure for the second essay- Hero Essay

1. Prepare the Works Cited page
2. Select the quotations you would like to include in your essay [you can cut and paste them onto a word document that will become the essay page]
3. Make an outline of the essay and decide where you will put the quotations
4. Write the paper
5. BE SURE TO READ YOUR ESSAY ALOUD BEFORE YOU HAND IT IN TO ME

Appendix 14: Prof. Cohen-Monster essay prompt

Essay # 3 (4 pages)

- Research the hero in the internet and college library databases. Look for 5 sources with information like personal testimony proving the “monster” side and factual information.
- Highlight sentences and paragraphs with pertinent information.
- Prepare an outline.
- Write a first draft of the “Monster: essay proving through facts and personal testimonies that he/ she is a monster.
- After receiving the draft, write a second draft.

Appendix 15: Grading rubric for Professor Cohen's assignments

CATEGORY	4 : Well above standards	3: Meets standards	2: Approaching standards	1: Below standards
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed with clear introduction , body, and conclusion. Introduction has a hook and conclusion restates the main ideas	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs. There is an introduction which does not contain an effective hook.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed. There is no conclusion	The information appears to be disorganized.
Quality & quantity of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples. At least 4 pages	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples. Between 3-4pages	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given. 2 pages	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic. Less than 2 pages
Sources	i. At least 5 reliable sources. ii. sources documented using MLA or APA iii. in text citation	i. In text citation or end-of-text citation sources done incorrectly ii. 5 reliable sources	i. Less than 5 sources, some not reliable. ii. end-of-text & in-text citation not done correctly	i. no reliable sources ii. citation missing
Mechanics & formatting	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. Formatting correct	Almost no grammatical, spelling, punctuation , or formatting errors but none that seriously obscure meaning	A few grammatical spellings, punctuation, or formatting errors which may occasionally interfere with meaning	Multiple grammatical, spelling, punctuation, or formatting errors which hinder comprehension

Protocol # 6**Appendix 16: Interview questions for instructors**

The purpose of this protocol was to orally interview the instructors about the improvement or changes in the writing style and proficiency of their students over the semester. In addition, instructors were asked to offer their assessment of the various aspects of the learning community. This oral interview was audio recorded and transcribed before analysis.

1. What were your initial impressions about Student A? I would like you reflect specifically on the writing abilities of Student A.
2. Now, I would like to discuss the writing abilities of Student B.
3. Now that the semester has come to an end, can you identify the way or ways in which Student A's abilities and skills have changed? Could you talk about that a little? (Repeat for each participant)
4. What, according to you, were some of the most useful modalities of the learning community? Why?
5. How did these modalities help Student A?
6. How did these modalities help Student B?
7. What modalities do you believe the students did not exploit adequately? Do you believe that the use of these elements would have made a more visible improvement in their performance?

Protocol # 7**Appendix 17: Interview questions for tutors**

The purpose of this protocol is to orally interview the tutor designated for the learning community. The tutor will be asked to assess the ways in which she worked with the participants and her interaction with both students and instructors. This interview will be conducted towards the end of the study. It will be audio recorded and transcribed before analysis.

1. You were the designated tutor for this semester for this learning community. How often did Student A visit you? _____ times.
2. How often did Student B visit you? _____ times.
3. Please describe a typical session with Student A. I would like you to talk about the time you spent with Student A and the process you followed in helping this student.
4. Could you describe a typical session with Student B?
5. Did the instructors provide any kind of input that helped you as you tutored the students?
6. What suggestions do you have for the instructors to help you work with the students?

Protocol# 7**Appendix 18: Reflection essay for Prof. Cohen's class****Guidelines for the Reflection Essay**

In this essay, you will explain the changes in your writing over the semester and evaluate your skills as a writer. Please use this essay to reflect as clearly as you can on your writing skills. You will need to write a 2nd draft only if your essay does not address the following issues in content and grammar:

CONTENT

- Title
- Introduction with a thesis statement.
- 2-3 body paragraphs where you will
 - discuss specific items and skills you learned (you may give examples from your portfolio)
 - evaluate the changes in your writing (you may use the drafts you wrote, trips to the ALC, work with your partners, etc)
 - assess areas where you need more help (and explain why)
 - include any anecdotes about your writing experience if you wish to
- A conclusion

GRAMMAR

- Correct use of verb tense
- Punctuation
- Subject- verb agreement

Protocol#8**Appendix 19: Guide for field notes**

A. The following questions guided my notes on my assessment of my classes.

1. How was class today?
2. Describe any interactions between participants.
3. Is there anything about any participant that stood out in class?
4. What did I discuss with my teaching partner?
5. What is my impression of a particular writing assignment handed in by a participant?

B. The following questions were used to document my observations of Professor Cohen's classes.

1. What were the interactions between Prof. Cohen and the students, and between the students?
2. What stood out about class?
3. What were Prof. Cohen's impressions about class?
4. What does she think about the assignments?

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