Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis from a Realist Perspective

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Abstract

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Keywords

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Realist Paradigm, Against Postmodernism, Qualitative Research in Education, English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

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The article presents how a study that investigated the acquisition of second language academic literacy skills practised the qualitative methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), from a realist perspective. We share the rationale behind the methodological decisions made in the study, which is followed by a detailed description of the methodological practice. In addition, the evaluation of the study against the realist criteria is reported, and some implications of using IPA based on realism for educational research are discussed. Overall, we suggest that IPA practice from a realist perspective helps go beyond postmodernism paradigms that seems to exert considerable influence on qualitative research in education. Keywords: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Realist Paradigm, Against Postmodernism, Qualitative Research in Education, English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
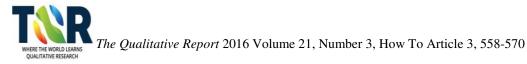
In the article, we, practitioners and researchers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), report how a study in our field used the qualitative methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), from a realist perspective. The presentation is based on a PhD research project that one of us undertook, to investigate the acquisition of second language academic literacy skills by eight international doctoral students at a New Zealand university.

English language has become the most commonly used language for academic communication. Researchers and university teachers have tried to support students using English as an additional language with programmes and materials focusing on academic literacies. In the middle of such trial and effort, the field of EAP emerged as a subfield of educational research (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Since EAP was established, a considerable number of research studies have been carried out, such as those published in the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, or the *Journal of Specific Purposes*. Various methodological approaches have been introduced by these studies, and some of them are concerned with competences of doctoral students or students in the context of higher education. However, the issue encountered was that the realism that the study takes as the research paradigm hardly aligns with the majority of EAP ethnographic studies taking postmodernist approaches.

The decision for using IPA was made after a long search for a methodology that suits the realist orientation as wells as the aim of the study. IPA is "concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience" (Smith, 2011, p. 9). It emerged in the mid-1990s in medical psychology, and continued to form its own theoretical orientations, and data collection analysis procedures (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The founders of IPA indicate that the methodology challenges postmodern approaches to some extent (see Smith et al., 2009). It is also known for following realism in a broad way (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Nevertheless, as we will discuss in the following section, some principles of IPA diverge from the realist perspective that the study is based on, which made the use of the methodology cautious and selective.

The next section describes the rationale behind the methodological decisions that were made. We then report the research procedures, with great detail for data analysis process in particular, to demonstrate how the realist perspective has realised in the IPA practice of the study. Finally, the evaluation of the study against the realist criteria is reported, and some implications of using IPA based on realism for educational research are discussed.

Rational for Using IPA from a Realist Perspective

Like qualitative educational research in general, qualitative EAP studies have been influenced by postmodern thinkers, such as Foucault (1972) or Lincoln and Guba (1985) (see Hyland, 2006; Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997; Wilson, 1997). These EAP studies claim that research findings are not what the researcher actually finds out, but what the researcher and participants co-constructed (e.g., Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). They also argue that "reality" does not exist objectively, but is constructed as multiple subjective realities (Hyland, 2009). Their methodological procedures serve to co-construct findings with their participants. A postmodern study is evaluated against the extent to which the co-construction process was reflective and transparent. In addition, a number of EAP ethnographic studies undertake social, cultural approaches to students' learning or acquisition. They look at interactional or social processes of learning, or how interpersonally distributed knowledge or competence, such as of academic literacies is internalised into the individual mind (e.g., Donato, 1994).

In contrast, the study in this article is based on realism, and thus it presupposes that the object of enquiry and its reality exist independently of the researcher, whose task therefore is to uncover the objective reality (Husserl, 1970; Kukla, 2006; Willard, 1995). In relation to developing knowledge and competence, the present study stands on the view that, although learners are, and should be, helped and guided by other social members, learning or acquisition is fundamentally an intentional, intrapersonal and cognitive process. Accordingly, the study decided to use IPA, which suits the research paradigm relatively well, and also the nature of the study exploring individual experiences, although it had been little known to educational research yet (see Wagstaff et al., 2014)

There are three theoretical principles of IPA. Firstly, IPA values the participants' own perspectives on their experiences. It is concerned with how the person binds and integrates discrete elements of perceptions, memories, judgments, assumptions, and beliefs about something into one unified, meaningful experience (Husserl, 1970). Secondly, IPA is essentially committed to examine closely the unique, particular experience of each individual participant, from which themes that respond to the research question(s) emerge (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Thirdly, IPA is in the line of the interpretative (i.e., hermeneutic) tradition rather than the descriptive one within phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009). This is implicit in the concept of double hermeneutics: the participants try to make sense of experience (the first hermeneutic layer), upon which the researcher makes his/her own interpretation (the second layer). As such, IPA broadly employs a realist approach (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 21), acknowledging the ontological independency of the research object from the researcher, and the universality of the particular.

IPA, however, still proposes that the experience of the participants and the interpretation of the researcher remain subjective. That is, while not completely dismissing the universality in individual experience and its independence from the researcher, it stresses the subjective, particular nature of the participants' and the researcher's meaning- and sense-makings (Smith, 2004). By contrast, this study considers that, despite the subjectivity of their cognitive processes, both the participants and researcher potentially can achieve objectivity (and thus universality and generalizability) in their knowledge and experiences, by perceiving and cognizing the same world (reality; Husserl, 1970; Kukla, 2006; Willard, 1984, 1995).

Thus, the application of an IPA framework in the present study was necessarily cautious and selective. In applying the data collection and analysis strategies and procedures suggested by IPA, this study has sought to be flexible when appropriating them to the context and nature of the study. For example, the accounts of the participants were insufficient for investigating certain aspects of the nature of the development of academic literacies. Therefore, while still using the interview data as the primary source for important themes, the details of some of these themes were supported by means of a text analysis suggested by Bruce (2008).

Actual Practice

Here we report the actual field work of the study for exploring the nature of the acquisition of second language academic literacies by eight PhD students at a New Zealand university. For reference, formal ethical approval for the study was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the university under whose aegis it was carried out. Since the research procedures were undertaken by one of us, we use the subject "I" in the rest of the section for the spirit of maintaining active voice.

Participants

The participants of the study were eight, newly-enrolled international PhD candidates at the university when data were collected from them. They were from three different faculties of the university. After the full research plan was approved by the university in December 2010, I recruited participants. Most help and support for the recruitment came from other PhD students. One of departmental peers introduced a new student from his home country, and she became the first participant. Then she introduced two more participants. Another colleague suggested emailing the entire population of PhD students in the university through the Postgraduate Students' Union mailing list, and through this one more participant joined. This person introduced two more participants. Later, through another colleague, one more student agreed to be a peripheral participant. The last participant was introduced by a lecturer in July, 2011.

Among eight participants (pseudonyms used), seven were female and one was male. One was from China (Shu), three from The Maldives (Mubin, Fadila, and Nada), two from Sri Lanka (Padma and Kusum), and two from Vietnam (Hai and Tram). Their PhD commencing dates were different, so data collection began in March, 2011 and ended it in January, 2013.

Among the eight participants, four were core participants from whom I collected interview data from their first or second month to the last month of their six-month conditional enrolment (at the end of which they were expected to apply for confirmed enrolment by submitting a full research proposal which included a substantial literature review). I made idiographic (individual) analyses of the interview data from these four participants prior to identifying intersubjective themes and patterns. The superordinate and subordinate themes for the research topic – their acquisition of academic literacies occurring while undertaking the literature review – primarily emerged from the data collected from them.

The other four were peripheral participants from whom I collected data for two to four months of their conditional enrolment. At first, I used their data to strengthen, enrich, modify, change, or discard the superordinate and subordinate themes intersubjectively emerged from the data of the four core participants. However, as the data analysis progressed, I realised that the distinction between the core and peripheral participants was not so significant in reporting

the findings. This is because the data extracts from both groups of participants supported the interpretation in an equal manner. (See the section for data analysis procedure).

Data Collection Methods

Case studies in general employ multiple data collection methods, and triangulate them to gain more holistic, balanced understanding (Merriam, 1998; Willig, 2008). On the other hand, an IPA case study is based on the notion that the best way to access the participants' experiences and cognitive processes is to "invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56). This study, as an IPA case study, involved monthly interviews with each participant as the primary data source to obtain the participants' own accounts of their acquisition of academic literacies required to undertake the literature review. Simultaneously, other supplementary sources, such as their research proposal drafts (including the literature review texts) or summaries of supervision meetings were collected to triangulate and contextualize the findings. These supplementary data were provided by the participants during or after the interview upon my request.

Interviewing individual participants several times over a period provided rich information and sufficient opportunities to probe and elaborate the data. These multiple interviews with the same participants also helped enhance the internal reliability of their accounts (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The first and last interviews were semi-structured and the questions of these two interviews were tailored to each individual participant. The interviews between the first and last were unstructured, but with a clear focus: to uncover inductively the occurrence of the participants' acquisition of academic literacies from their accounts of how they were undertaking the literature review. The interviews were also used to clarify some of the answers given during previous interviews. In addition, when interesting issues emerged while interviewing one participant, these issues were discussed with the other participants through such unstructured interviews with them.

The interview dates, times, and places were decided by the participants. Interview places and times always changed. They were interviewed at their homes, offices, or outdoor benches on the university campus. I tried to interview them when they were not busy, and the most preferred times by the participants were before or after lunchtime and late evening when they relaxed at home. Interviewing them where they worked and kept their study materials was convenient because I was able to collect supplementary data during, or right after, the interviews.

The collection of additional data was intended to contextualize and triangulate the findings emerged from interview materials (Richards, 2009). In addition, the literature review sections in the final research proposals of five participants were used to identify the importance of some extra-linguistic elements of academic competence, which initially emerged from the interview data.

Data Analysis Procedure

IPA encourages researchers to utilise their theoretical knowledge in inductively analysing data. This was centrally exercised in the present study through a hermeneutic turn between my theoretical knowledge (conceptual framework) and the data. As I collected data from different participants at different times, this incremental approach allowed time to make a preliminary analysis of the data before the subsequent detailed analysis. During this stage, notes and comments while transcribing interview data were made, and supplementary documentary data to be linked to the relevant interview data were arranged. This pre-analysis period developed into a six-step approach to substantial analysis:

1. reading and re-reading
2. initial noting
3. developing emergent themes
4. searching for connections across emergent themes
5. moving to the next case
6. looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2009, pp. 82-107).

These steps guided the approach to the data analysis. The initial focus of the data analysis was on the four core participants' transcribed interview data and documentary data collected to contextualize the information thus elicited. Analysis started from the first participant, Hai, and moved in turn to Padma, Nada and Shu. When working on the data from Hai, wishing to be rigorous, I was carefully checking the first four steps all the time, not to miss any step. As the analysis proceeded and moved onto the other participants one by one, I was able to go through the steps more smoothly. Although these steps were initiated one after another, they needed to be engaged with continually and concomitantly throughout the data analysis process. In addition, the whole analysis process also involved constant feedback and comments from other researchers who knew and understood the study.

Steps 1 and 2 involved getting closer to the original data from Hai. This iterative process enabled the discovery of new information not noted in the initial reading. As Smith et al. (2009) suggested, these first two steps merged naturally. At this stage, three kinds of comments were made: descriptive comments, which were the rephrasing of the participant's account; linguistic comments, which included paying attention to the words and expressions that the participant used; and conceptual comments that involved my knowledge from the literature and life experience. Different fonts or underlinings were used to identify the three kinds of comment. For each interview text, a three-column table was designed: the original data were put in the middle column; three kinds of comment were written in the last column; and the first column was left empty for the next step.

Step 3 involved identifying emergent themes, referring to the three kinds of comments that had been made from the previous steps; the data reading then became more focused and interpretative (See Appendix A for an example). While checking with the linguistic and descriptive comments and the original source, I developed themes centrally from conceptual comments, mostly in the form of a phrase and sometimes in a sentence. Following the advice of Smith et al. (2009), the themes were intended to be concise and compressed, but at the same time still expressive enough to remind me of the original sources from which the themes had emerged, rather than using abstract codes. On one hand, I retained the original data sources and on the other hand, I allowed myself to be informed and guided by the research questions and literature, to be certain that these themes are addressing the research questions.

Step 4 involved searching for connections across emergent themes. Firstly, the emergent themes were divided under the overarching research question. Then these themes were also grouped into different superordinate themes. The superordinate themes were based on subordinate themes, but at the same time, they were guided by theoretical knowledge. Under each of the superordinate themes, subordinate themes from the interviews were organised chronologically so that they could be traced from which interview each came. At this step, a hierarchical node tree was visually created so that the organisation and relationship of themes were clearly seen. On top of the node tree there were the research questions, under which there were the superordinate themes, and under the superordinate themes were the subordinated themes. A Microsoft Word table following the hierarchy of the

node tree was created, where data extracts that were firstly detached from their original texts were organized

Step 5 was actually repeating the previous four steps, following what had been done for the case of Hai for the other core participants one by one. In addition, provisionally, the same superordinate themes identified from Hai's case were recycled for the other three. Thus, instead of identifying new superordinate themes for each core participant, the subordinate themes of the other three participants were grouped into the same superordinate themes. I organized different cases under the same superordinate themes to allow each case (the part) to be connected with each other, contributing to shaping a united theme structure (the whole). The parts of each case and the whole started as incomplete; they developed together while closely interacting with one another. When there were considerable resistances and disagreements between superordinate themes and subordinate themes from a particular participant, I tracked back to the original data of the superordinate theme and checked its validity. With this process, some superordinate themes, and subordinate themes that had previously emerged were discarded or altered, and sometimes new superordinate themes were added as the analysis proceeded for the next participant. This was necessary to undertake numerous hermeneutic dialogues, such as between themes and sources, between superordinate and subordinate themes, between the data from different participants, and between the whole theme structure and a particular case.

Step 6 involved looking for patterns across cases. At this step, fairly fixed superordinate themes shared across all the four core cases were developed. These superordinate themes acted as the boundaries within which the patterns of convergences and commonalities, and those of divergences and nuances, across the four core participants were observed. These patterns had become *grouping themes* which were situated between the superordinate and subordinate themes. I created a table for organising the superordinate, grouping, and subordinate themes, and another table in which I included the grouping themes and the locations of the relevant interview and supplementary data. This step was in preparation for writing the report on the findings. From this point, more focused further analysis of the core participants' data was carried out, into which the data from the four peripheral participants were also incorporated.

In fact, Step 6 was not the last step of data analysis as the analysis continued throughout the process of writing the findings. Smith et al. (2009) state, "[There] is not a clear-cut distinction between analysis and writing up. As one begins to write, some themes loom large, others fade, and so this changes the report" (p. 110). By undertaking the data analysis by broadly following the six steps, I was able to develop some sort of indexical knowledge of data, which allowed me to identify the locations of specific data extracts, such as the ones that closely addressed the research questions and communal patterns across the participants. However, the structure and themes of the findings obtained from the six steps of analysis were still not satisfactory, even after several drafts of the findings reports were made based on this analysis: The content of these drafts seemed not to correspond closely enough to the data themselves.

This somewhat intuitive dissatisfaction led to re-reading the data, while reviewing more carefully previous studies and theories about the nature of knowledge, knowledge acquisition and competence development. Eventually, a further analysis of the analysis was undertaken, through which themes were re-identified and the report of the findings was re-written. This further analysis combined both deductive and inductive processes. That is, on one hand, the report was structured from main sections to sub-sections, and on the other hand, superordinate themes were re-read, given new or modified meanings, and (re)classified under the subsections of the report. In so doing, some data extracts were moved from one superordinate theme to another. As a result, the themes and organisation of the final report

that had begun to be developed after the six steps of data analysis considerably evolved. Moreover, the distinction between the core and peripheral participants became less important. Sometimes data extracts from the peripheral participants were presented to support the themes derived initially from the core participants because they better portrayed such themes. Some new themes even emerged from the data of the peripheral participants and then were further supported by those of the core participants. The realist philosopher, Willard (1995) notes, "[A] representation finds its fulfilment not immediately, but only by passing through other representations that are closer to the ultimate object [of knowledge]." (p. 146). The process, through which all the discarded themes prior to the final themes were identified, was not only unavoidable but in fact was meaningful and necessary for the final findings of the study. An extract from the final findings report is presented in Appendix B.

Discussion

Evaluating the Research Practice of the Study from a Realist Perspective

Research findings should reveal knowledge of the object of enquiry. Here we use the three conditions for attaining knowledge that the realist philosopher Husserl (1970) suggests as criteria, against which we evaluate the study. The three conditions for knowledge are:

- returning to the object (data) reiteratively, to alter and deepen current understanding of it;
- checking the current understanding (findings) of data intersubjectively by means of getting feedback from others who can access the same data; and,
- applying logic.

Firstly, the expression that "data do not speak for themselves" is often stated to emphasize the importance of having a clear worldview and conceptual framework in understanding data (e.g., Willig, 2008). However, no conceptual framework would help the researcher to find out things that do not exist in the data. Bearing this in mind, we seek to see in what ways the study achieved this first condition of knowledge – iteratively returning to data. In the study, the original data were re-read a number of times. This repetitive data reading helped uncover new things and also find more suitable extracts that support already identified themes. In addition, written analyses and the corresponding extracts were compared thoroughly, to check how clearly and precisely the interpretations reflected the data. When dissatisfied, the data extracts were reviewed, and examined whether there had been missing or misunderstood points. In so doing the extracts were sometimes put back into the original text so that they were read in the whole context.

Secondly, what allows a group of people to experience intersubjectivity is to be in, and perceive the same world. When understanding the concept strictly in the context of attaining knowledge, intersubjectivity takes place when the cognitions of people converge onto the same object of knowledge (Willard, 1982). Intersubjectivity in the present study was firstly achieved between the participants and the researcher, and among the participants, by exploring the same research topic, the literature review. The participants provided their accounts based on their own personal experiences, but they were all undertaking a PhD in the same physical context, and at the same temporal moment in their academic careers, so that communal patterns from their individual, unique experiences could be found. Then intersubjectivity also took place between peer researchers and the researcher. They understood the research topic and research questions, and they read research report drafts a number of times, carefully checking, revising and validating descriptions and interpretations

of data and the research topic. They helped refine the researcher's thinking and language, making for more logical, clearer, and more accurate writing, which in fact helped meet the other two conditions of knowledge more satisfactorily.

Furthermore, the laws of logic that Husserl (1970) suggests are a priori, universal beyond any culture or language, which guide a person's thinking to take place in accordance with necessities and possibilities, eventually leading the person to arrive at truth. Willard (1982) explains logical thinking as following necessities and possibilities as follows:

> When snow…is under the influence of heat, [it] will not remain snow and heat; but at the advance of the heat, the snow will either retire or perish…Now the same general ontological structure of necessities and possibilities determined for subjects by their properties also governs within and between cognitive acts. The forms of the thought that all men are mortal and that Socrates is a man, along with their truth, necessitate truth in the possible thought that Socrates is mortal… The necessities and possibilities in the relevant individual cognitive events follow from the qualities and relations embedded in those events. (pp. 396-397)

Geisler and Brooks (1990, pp. 166-179) suggest that, in undertaking an inductive research study, applying universal logic in understanding data would help the researcher to avoid logical fallacies "in which confusion can arise about what should be considered a cause and what should not" (p. 166), such as the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy, or the fallacy of reversing cause and effect. In the course of analysing data, it was sought to apply logic in the way that these philosophers propose. For example, when examining the relationships between the participants' acquisition of academic literacies and social processes, it was closely examined whether or not the influences of social processes on the processes of their academic literacy acquisition indicate that the former were actually conducive to the latter as the social, cultural EAP researchers claim. In addition, an endeavour was made, in order not to overlook the participants' accounts that seemingly contradicted some potential findings, as neglecting negative evidence is also a logical fallacy. Moreover, by being aware that ambiguity is a fallacy of logic in research, clear and precise writing style for writing the findings was targeted. In fact, such struggling, although difficult, rather helped eventually develop a better understanding of the data.

Implications of Using IPA from a Realist Perspective for Educational Research

In educational studies that have particular interests in individual, lived experience of teachers and students, and intend to examine it from their own perspective, we suggest that IPA will provide helpful methodological guidelines. Moreover, the realist principles described in the article can be drawn on to resist postmodern paradigms prevalent in educational research. In what follows, we discuss some implications of this article.

Firstly, IPA allows the researcher to understand learning and teaching experience from the teacher's and student's own standpoint as well as to integrate the researcher's own perspective systematically. The double hermeneutic principle of IPA enables researchers to express and display their own accounts based on those of the teacher or student participants. Unlike most of experimental research that excludes how the participants think of what is investigated, phenomenological research involves elicitation methods such as interviews in order to explore the participant's experience from the first person perspective (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). In an IPA study, different data from different methods are used discriminately, and main themes are always elicited from data that reflect the teacher's or student's own

voice, such as those from interviews or personal diaries, while other data sources are used to triangulate or contextualize such themes. Therefore, the participants' understanding and perception of their teaching and learning inevitably constitute the major content of the findings. In addition, unlike postmodern approaches such as conversation analysis or discursive analysis that focus on effects of language between the researcher and participant and attempt to construct meanings emerging from such effects (Burr, 2003), IPA takes thematic approaches to participants' accounts, trying to "discover" what they really mean. Secondly, IPA takes a bottom-up approach for finding out patterns of teaching and learning strategies or challenges, or any aspects possibly occurring in classroom settings, and provides deep, specific insights into them. As described in the data analysis section, the IPA researcher analyses data from each individual participant separately, and then see general patterns converged across cases. Thus, these patterns remain personalised portraits of individuals' lived experiences including their thoughts, behaviours, attitudes and feelings, rather than impersonal statistics (Smith et al., 2009). In this manner, IPA complements quantitative research, which does not allow one to trace back to the personal unique experiences of the original informants, with detailed and elaborated reports that uncover the subtlety and nuances of individual teachers and students.

In addition, the realist perspective, on which this study is based, encourages researchers in education field to carry out rigorous, scientific studies, resisting postmodernism that treats research works as fictional narratives (Kvale, 1992; Zeeman et al., 2002). Postmodernism has challenged the modernism structure in which the information given by academics was imposed as true knowledge with absolute authority, even when it was wrong or false (Foucault, 1972). In so doing, postmodern scholars also promote the idea that seeking objective truth, true knowledge and reality is meaningless and impossible, as Parker (1998) notes. However, teaching and learning experiences in educational settings should be treated as the objective reality that truly takes place. And the responsibility of the researcher is to develop true knowledge of the reality, which any reader – teachers, students or other researchers – can access and evaluate rightly. Regarding this point, Kukla (2006) states:

> [E]pistemic practices, in order to count as epistemic, are necessarily bound by two sets of norms: the norms of justification and the norms of truth, or fidelity to the objects of inquiry. What makes the former norms epistemic in the first places is that they are held to the tribunal of the second. But this will be so only if our doxastic judgments are open to correction and confirmation from the independent world they seek to capture (p. 81).

The authority of this evaluating task is not necessarily limited to theorists or researchers: anybody can, and should be able to exercise it as long as the person has a sufficient understanding of those approaches and actual experience relating to the classroom context subject to the research study.

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Appendix A

Identifying Emergent Themes

The nature of academic English competence

1. Being a second language speaker of English

Subordinate themes	Extracts	My comments	Contexulising with sub-data	
1st interview (August 15)				
Thinking about difficulty first when 'thinking about' doing the LR in English which is her second language	I: yeah then how do you find doing the literature review S: um I: in English which is not your first language S: I think biggest difficulty is reading for me.	When I asked 'how do you find doing the literature review in English which is not your first language, she starts from 'difficulty'. It has been found from my other participants' comments as well. Is it a matter-of-factual mind-set which arise from the reality from her own experience or by being influenced by dominant discourse as L2 speakers inferior to NSs? Or both???	Manual notes	
feeling always reading is challenging but telling different factors for it over time	you know you can talk in English fluently but for me I never think, I think I can never read as fast as native speakers and also you know that academic reading it is not that easy so it took me much longer time to read much longer time not just to read it's when while you're reading you need to get to the point out of your reading so it's kind of digestion um so maybe in Chinese in your language you can pick up those ideas while you're reading but in English you need to read it and yes you also do that while you're reading but for some you have to re-read it to get those important ideas so reading it reading takes much longer time and somehow even if you spend a lot of time still you didn't quite catch the point maybe there's misunderstanding or something so reading is a big thing	she is telling two things: academic reading needs more time to "digest" (think and understand) and somewhere else she mentioned that she is a slow reader in general, which is already challenging; L2 speakers need more time to process than NSs also there is a possibility for misunderstanding. That is the fact that she needs to engaging in academic reading plus in English which is not her first language seems to, she thinks, 'double' the difficulty of academic writing. Interesting thing is in her later interview, although she still thinks reading is most challenging, she finds the difficulty more from her slow reading than her being as a L2 speaker		

Appendix B

An Extract from the Final Findings Report

I begin with Padma. As she stated, the task of undertaking the literature reivew required her to clearly understand her research-related concepts:

 # 42

I…have got to…clearly identify concepts [that] he [her supervisor] sent me,

it comes in this, network concepts, which I am discussing broadly, so that's

it, so, I have made all this for that, so these are the ones that I have read

(Padma Apr 19, pp. 2-3)

Considering another comment presented in Section 5.1.3 (Extract # 40), for her, clearly identifying concepts would appear to involve understanding them as intended by the authors, not changing or transforming their original meanings. However, achieving such accurate knowledge of the target literature was sometimes difficult for her. In another interview, she admitted that "there have been many instances there some sentences were not that clear to me" (Padma, Jun 8, p. 9). Given this apparent knowledge gap, I started to presume that, when the meanings of what she was reading were not clear to her, it would be possible that she had not known some of the language systems (e.g., vocabulary, syntax or rhetorical patterns) that encode the meanings. Then her intention and effort to understand clearly and accurately such meanings may have pushed her to learn the particular linguistic resources that kept her from comprehending the contents. This inference seems to be supported by extracts from an email correspondence with Padma, in which I asked her if she had known a term that I found from one

of her documents before commencing her PhD:

 # 43

I: Padma…I found the term, "dyadic relationship" from one of your documents you gave me. Did you know its meaning before you commenced your PhD?

P: I learnt about the term when I started reading for my proposal and not before. Hope this helps. (Padma, email correspondence, Oct 30, 2012)

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