Language Socialization and Essay Writing: The Appropriation of Academic Discourse in an Iranian English L2 University Class

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Abstract

L2 language socialization asks how learners come to gain the ability to write appropriately and sufficiently in an institutional academic community of practice. In the same line, this study focuses on the process of socialization of an Iranian English L2 essay writing class in the context of higher education. The theoretical backgrounds rely on the socialization and Vygotsky's sociocultural theories. Three case studies were analyzed throughout six weeks. The learners' essays, outlines, and reflective diaries were analyzed to trace their development in appropriating academic discourse and argumentation. Also, an interview session was held at the end of the study in which the issues regarding the whole experience of socialization were discussed with the participants. The results suggested that each learner pursued their path of socialization based on their individual and social needs of the academic discourse community. Accordingly, a model demonstrating their paths of development is presented. The model shows that the new-comers to this social site of engagement were mediated by the old-timer agent of practice (instructor) to appropriate the values, principles, and behaviors of this community of practice through the activities they were engaged in.

Keywords: Socialization, essay writing, sociocultural theory, academic discourse, community of practice

Cognitive approaches have mostly dominated the field of SLA studies. Theorists and researchers, according to Davis (1995), mostly "view SLA as a mental process," and the acquisition of language, in

particular, is believed to happen in mind mostly (p. 427). The consensus was and is for many to discover what processes happen in the mind of the learner in order to understand SLA and thus provide a better teaching practice in class. Ritchie and Bhatia (1996), Ellis (1997), Long (1997), Mitchell and Myles (1998), Gass and Selinker (2001), Doughty and Long (2003), Larsen-Freeman (2007), and Van Patten and Williams (2007) are some of the leading figures who have oriented their research toward cognitive, computational, and individualistic perspective to SLA.

In the 90s, however, a new trend of research studies grew out of the concern for the social aspect of SLA. This social turn (Block, 2003) oriented toward how learners and learning develop via taking the context as a critical concept in fields such as cultural as well as educational psychology. Sociocultural theories provided evidence as to why SLA theorists, researchers, and practitioners also have to look outside the black box. Sociocultural theory's concern (Frawly & Lantolf, 1985) was a significant knock on the door to observe the other side of the moon.

Among the social theories, Lave and Wenger's (1991) monograph played a significant role in establishing a base for the social practice of learning. Lave and Wenger (ibid) provided a different perspective from the abstract generalization-oriented view toward concept formation which changed our common view toward learning. Instead of the cognitive, individualistic view of the learning, they contextualized the abstract mental representation by indicating that learning is not only the transmission of abstract general rules, but that it also involves social co-participation of the learners in an ongoing actional context, where learners are involved in activities that provide them with the legitimate access to resources of the community of practice they want to become a part of. This process of the new-comers appropriating the values, behaviors, and social practice of the target community is called the "legitimate peripheral participation" (Henceforth LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The model that they provide is derived from the analysis of five communities of practice, namely: midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and nondrinking

alcoholics. They analyze how the new-comers become a member of the community through their engagement and interaction with the old-timers of the community.

LPP's social view toward learning has attracted some (Duff, 2003; Zuengler & Cole, 2005, to name but a few) in applied linguistics. This line of research is expanding due to the recent interest in the social theories of language acquisition in general. However, there has been a severe lack of research studies on socialization in the Iranian context of language learning. To fill this gap, this study aims at the academic community of practice in general by focusing on the rationality and reasoning of the academy, and L2 essay writing class in particular by exploring how L2 learners appropriate the ability of argumentation and supporting their essays critically and analytically. In other words, the article intends to explore how L2 essay writers have access to the critical reasoning of the academy as a rational institution when they are engaged in an essay writing class prior, while, and after the social site of essay writing class.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of the study rests on two broad social theories toward SLA: Language socialization and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning. These two social theories have the same goal in research, in that both try "to understand the relationship between MENTAL FUNCTIONAL, on the one hand, AND CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING, on the other" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 65, capitals in the original). Of course, there are other areas of commonalities, namely, that both of them take into account the social, cultural, and interactional aspects of learning a language, both emphasize the significance of activity as a site for learning, and finally both consider a crucial role for the co-participants and interlocutors in the process of gaining membership and competence in the L2 (Duff, 2007).

Language socialization is the process through which the new-comers to the new target community are to gain the appropriate competence, identity, community's values, beliefs, and behaviors by interacting with the

competent, proficient members (Garret & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). Language plays a crucial role in helping learners have access to the social, cultural, and interactional resources of the community of practice (Henceforth, CoP). CoP consists of members who have shared values, beliefs, and social-cultural understanding. The focus on CoP by Lave and Wenger (1991) is that it examines how learners are pushed or obstructed in having legitimate, agentive, participation and/or identities in the process of community membership. So as Morita (2004) did in her study, a class can be considered a CoP too.

L2 language socialization asks how learners come to gain the ability to write appropriately and sufficiently in an institutional academic CoP. In other words, it pursues how they are socialized into the discourse communities of the academy in which the members are asked to reason, think critically, and provide support and evidence for their claims. The internalization of such an identity and ideology is perused in L2 research. In words of Duff (2010), "identity work and the negotiation of institutional and disciplinary ideologies and epistemologies are core aspects of the production and interpretation of academic discourse." Of course, this process is not a linear, passive one for learners, but that it is bi-directional (Talmy, 2008). Not only do learners have to understand the norms in the target community, but also they may sometimes resist the discourse community, and they change them in their ways. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), when a new-comer brings his own historical, social, cultural and ideological understanding to the CoP, not only does he change to become a member, but also the community changes too. This is why the discourse community is not a fixed, stabilized social site but that it is in constant flux and change.

In academic discourse, this involves broad areas of change for the learner. It covers both the formal, technical, written discourse of the academy as well as the informal, interactional, class-discussion aspects of the socialization (Bunch, 2009). However, in order to have a related

definition of academic discourse to the current study, the one borrowed from Duff (2010) will be cited. She defines academic discourse as the

> Forms of oral and written language and communication, genres, registers, graphics, linguistic structure, interactional patterns, that are privileged, expected, cultivated, conventionalized, or ritualized, and, therefore, usually evaluated by instructors, institutions, editors, and others in educational and professional context. (p. 175)

In other words, there are certain principles and manners of practice dominating the academic discourse community that influences and is influenced by the member of that community. The newcomers need to acquire these principles and manners to be accepted as the legitimate member of the academy.

Most of the studies in language socialization and L2 are qualitatively-oriented. Belcher (1994), for instance, focuses on the relationship between the non-native graduate students and their advisors in their process of participation in research CoP when they aimed at writing their dissertation. Belcher shows that there seems to be a mismatch between both side's conceptualization of what the acceptable practice is. This was apparent in writing goals and reader's expectation of the dissertation writing. There are occasions when the new-comer (student) did not accept the guidance of the advisor, but the negotiation of the membership between the two parties resolved the conflicts. The relationship was also influenced by the advisors' perception of what the mentoring means since one advisor viewed the mentoring as self-replication (which was not successful) and another viewed it "reproduction and transformation" of the new-comer (entirely compatible with the LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Willett (1995) conducted an ethnographic study on the interactional routines and strategies among the ESL children. This perspective was significant in exploring how children constructed "their social relations, identities, and ideologies in the social world" of the class (p. 474). In a longitudinal case study, Flowerdew (2000) followed the process of a Chinese non-native speaker of English's attempt in publishing an article in

a journal of his discipline. The study showed how the new-comer to the discourse community of his discipline was placed in the periphery of his participation so far as the acceptable norms of writing in the target journal were concerned.

Morita (2004) in a one-year-long attempt to analyze Japanese female L2 English learners' experience of socialization in the academic discourse in a Canadian university is of particular interest. Assuming each class as a CoP, Morita found that although participants were homogenous in their groups, each constructed their identity in different ways (evidence for intra-variation in group membership). Secondly, the intra-variation of identity formation varied when participants moved from one class to another. This outcome corroborated with the current post-modernist paradigm in language teaching/learning indicating the particularity of each class as a unique site of learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Finally, the participants' agency differentiated along a continuum in having active participation in one class and marginal in another.

The literature, however, seems to be poor in exploring the LPP of L2 learners when they are engaged in an academic discourse community in L2 essay writing classes. In a more particular sense, the institution of the university as a site of reasoning, and evidence-required community needs specific appropriation of values and interactional behavior (both oral and written) from the learners, specifically in the Iranian context. This attitude is a site of struggle for the L2 English learners from different L2 backgrounds, who have to conform to the fundamental values of providing support and evidence for the claims commonly made in English written essays. This is also one of the main principles in the Iranian English essay writing class. To this aim, the following research question is pursued:

How do L2 English learners in an essay writing class do/do not appropriate the values of the academic community of practice, so that they can be labeled as legitimate participants?

The following sections attempt to seek how the answers can be achieved.

Method

This study focused on a group of L2 learners in an essay writing class. However, in the current study, three learners were purposefully selected and followed in six weeks of their 16-week semester in 2017. The participants were from a variety of subcultures from Iran, each having their unique ways of life. They were all in the fourth term of the bachelor studies two of whom studying English Translation and one studying English Language and Literature at Arak University, Iran, which is a state university linked to the ministry of education. The participants' names used in the results and discussion's section are pseudo-names.

The learners had passed several courses from term one to three which seemed to promote (partially) their understanding of the status and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) of the institutional setting of the university in the manner of behavior and orientation toward studies and classes. The courses they had passed were Conversation 1 and 2, Reading Comprehension 1, 2, and 3, Grammar 1 and 2, Study Skills, Listening Comprehension 1 and 2, Paragraph Writing, Phonetics and Phonology of English, Linguistics 1, and Simple Prose Translation. They were quite familiar with the instructor of their essay writing class since he was their course instructor of Grammar 1. The instructor was one of the authors of this study, who played a participant observer role.

The class procedure required learners to study some texts on the topics assigned by the teacher, so that they could be prepared for the class discussion. The topics, which were chosen based on the general interest of the learners, were: The Code of Hammurabi, Education, and Freedom. The type of discussion directed by the teacher was inspired by the Socratic dialogue which is tuned in line with the current sociocultural view of scaffolding and mediation. The teacher responded to the participants' opinion on the topic of discussion indirectly at the beginning, gradually moving toward more explicit guidance (Amerian, Ahmadian, & Mehri, 2014; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Mehri & Amerian, 2015) and involved other participants as well. The aim was to have a critical analysis of the questions and topics presented, thus encouraging an environment of

critical thinking. It is important to note that the instructor only prompted the beginning of the discussion, leaving it to participants to where the discussion led. However, the purpose throughout the class discussion was to engage learners in providing reasons and support for their claims regarding the stance they took about topics raised.

The interactions and class discussions were all recorded and transcribed. The participants were unaware of this decision until the end of the course when they were asked if their voices could be used as a part of the research project. The aim of the research, though, was not revealed at all but the participants were given full assurance that their names and identities were to be kept entirely confidential. No disagreement was met from participants.

The other activity required from the participants was to write reflective journals on the sessions they attended. The reflective journal was supposed to be their response to this class as a CoP when they are attending to learn how to write a useful academic essay (one of the main aims of the course). For a more in-depth exploration into the participants' conceptualization of the experience they passed in the essay writing course, the three participants were asked to take part in a semi-structured interview at the end of the sixth session, considered as the last session of the study (see Appendix for the questions). Table 1 shows the design of the study.

Table 1.

Design of the Study

Sessions	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
procedure	Introduction to essay writing – preliminary discussion	Critical discussion on The Code of Hammurabi	Critical discussion on Education	Critical discussion on Freedom	Analysis of the participants' essays	Interview session

Sessions	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
activities		Reflective journal – writing an essay on The Code of Hammurabi	Reflective journal – writing an essay on Education – rewriting an essay on The Code of Hammurabi	Reflective journal- writing an essay on Freedom – rewriting an essay on Education	Reflective journal – rewriting an essay on Freedom	Reflective journal

To analyze the data, each participant's essays, reflections, and voice records were perused several times to extract themes. They were compared across the sessions, and the nuances and changes in each learner's appropriation of the academic discourse were recorded. The categorizations were given to another reviewer for cross checks, then discussions between the two analyzers settled the minor areas of conflict.

Results and Discussion

The path of the LPP of the three learners is analyzed and discussed below. Each participant having their peculiarities, were engaged with his/her conflicts. For each case study, a detailed analysis of the data is discussed.

Fatima: I could do it in Farsi but not in English

The first participant, narrated here, in the community of essay writing class is Fatima, a Farsi native speaker. She was 20 years old, majoring in English translation. She was quite an active learner in her course, who tried to be engaged in the discussions whenever she met the opportunity. Her scores during the four semesters she had been attending were acceptable ranging among the top 20% of her class.

The first question of the interview taken place at the end of this study required her to think of the early sessions of her essay writing class and

how she perceived herself as a writer. She believed that she was quite a weak writer in English. This understanding is different when she "take[s] the pen and start[s] writing in Farsi when it came to poetry but not in class. I was all a dead end, and I could not write a word". Fatima could recognize the change even from the early days. On her first week reflective journal, she showed the struggle she was dealing with: "students want the teacher to bring out the best in them and help them to find the courage to speak out and tell their ideas and experiences, and they want the teacher to be fair."

On the other hand, she presumed this to be a bidirectional way seeing the teacher do his best to bring to life her potential. When it came to writing in Farsi, it seems quite promising that Fatima could recognize the fundamental tenets of an academic essay in the class discussion. As the teacher intended to engage participants into critical thinking of the topic of each session, Fatima could grasp the point in her first reflective journal: "He [teacher] tried to ask many questions to include us in a special topic…when we want to get the ball rolling in the class, we should choose the topic from different aspects of that, an effective discussion and a remarkable conclusion".

However, this reflective awareness of what is in progress throughout the course did not turn into the practical manifestation of writing an academic essay. In her first essay, Fatima forgot all about writing a thesis statement, though she, as well as other participants, had passed the paragraph writing course (in Term 3) successfully and she was familiar with essay writing in general and the paragraph writing in particular. Moreover, her body paragraphs were pointless lacking specific topic sentence preceding the supporting sentences. In her essay on education, she did not mention what was the purpose of her essay (thesis statement), then she started to explain the significance of education followed by its definition, types of education, effect of education on health, its relationship to a prosperous society, and the responsibilities people have toward themselves as educated people and the society at large. The ideas included in the essay seemed to be correlating with the different aspects of the topic

which were discussed in the class discussion; however, Fatima seemed to be making a bundle of ideas overthrown together and neglected the originality of following a straightforward argument to be supported. In one paragraph, being just one sentence, she even forgot to make a sound argument. "In order for a country to see steady economic growth, education must be a priority."

When she was asked how she would compare herself on the sixth session with the early image she had as a participant in the essay writing class, she commented:

> Oh well, I have changed because it had never occurred to me to go and search on the net for reading an article. Of course, I think I had done that once or twice before when I wanted to talk among friends, but it was never this serious to me. I studied for this course. I remember when I emailed you at 4 a.m., I was still reading on the topic of the next session, as if I was so much encouraged to do so, to read other students articles from different languages, English or Farsi, translated or not. It had a significant effect on me.

This suggested being a central source of improvement, and indeed empowerment for Fatima since in the critical thinking approach the teacher had imposed in the class discussion, there were two specific points stressed: 1. To bring reason for any claims or comments participants provided in the class. This was most challenging when the participants responded to the issues raised and did not provide support for it, after which they were met with the question "why?" initially by the teacher and later on acquired and expressed by other participants. 2. To analyze the topic of the class from different angles. This was particularly important as the teacher tried to engage different types of ideas (or groups of ideas) within the discussion. Also, the analysis and questions did not end into a conclusive statement. The change observed in Fatima was evident in her reflective journal during the fourth week:

> [teacher's name]'s class allows me to become a better critical thinker because his course requires us to analyze and reflect on essays and

readings more than just giving a summary about them…he tries to teach us how to learn and how to convince others by bringing unbiased opinions and how to support it.

Although Fatima was a good speaker in the class, she could not have that much improvement expected in reasoning and organizing her essays, as if the writing ability lagged behind her reasoning in speaking. Rewriting another essay on education, she was successful in supporting her ideas more fruitfully in the body paragraphs; however, she had severe problems with her conclusion. In the general structure of her essay, she began her essay by discussing the significance of education, its definition, and then applying the definition for cross-checking the Asian and American schools. She expressed a better critical point of view as her argument seemed to be only inspired, not copied, by the discussion of the class (a source of originality). It is because she did not borrow ideas from the class discussion and report them as they were in her essay but oriented toward having the originality of her own in her analysis of the Asian and American systems of education through extensive reading she had on the two educational systems before writing the essay. Of course, this attitude might be affected by her responsibility as an academic writer to read on the topic about which she was supposed to write. This was particularly evident in the essay in the fourth week. After introducing the American system of education, its sections, and how it operates, Fatima took a critical viewpoint:

> Majority of people ask 'so is everything fine with American education?' of course not. 25% of high school students do not graduate at all, 43% of college students do not graduate within six years. The problem is especially acute for students from less privileged backgrounds. So it is possible to see some problems with the kinds of the education system.

Fatima viewed herself as having more of her potentials to come to life. She believed that the experience of being engaged in the social life of the class was not very comforting for her since she "could not find one person as her type" and "there were a lot of different types of ideas going around among the classmates" (comments in the interview), but this did not stop her from learning how to write in English. She was even surprised by her capacity to reason in speaking when she reported that she started discussing a point in a friendly meeting and how critical she responded to the topic in question there. This experience happened following the week when she took a serious stance on the topic of freedom in the fifth week of the class. In that session, Fatima had a conflict on the political freedom with one of her classmates. She tried to question others' claims as for why some group of people who have different ideas from the majority in the socio-political life should be treated illegally. Although other classmates of hers reasoned that it was necessary for the excellent cause of public safety, Fatima rebuked their claims and reasons critically by constructing an argument based on human rights.

This experience of argumentation expression was in line with her writing when the two-and-a-half-page length of her argument in the first week is compared with her four full pages of argumentation in the fifth week. This was surprising for her when she recited an experience of the same kind writing an essay on politics for a friend:

> Just a while ago, a friend of mine asked me to write an essay for her for a class she attended, and I wrote. When it finished, I realized that I could not have written that. It was the best. Since my taking part in this class, I have become that good at writing.

This reflection shows the positive attitude of the learner toward the end of this study, although her words cannot be taken for granted. Fatima had a different understanding of herself as a writer in general and as an academic member of the social site of the essay writing class in particular.

Nicholas: I Learned Critical Thinking and not Being Biased

The second participant is Nicholas, a male student who was 20 years old. He was the top student of his class and had passed almost all of his courses up to the fourth semester with grade A. He was very much involved in the class activities, tried to be engaged in the class discussion and the topics of teaching. He considered himself a sociable person who easily expresses his opinions. In the interview session, when he was asked how he viewed himself as a writer in the early sessions of the course, he responded that his conceptualization of the essay writing course was very much different from what he experienced. Although he was interested in writing a lot even in diaries, his essay writing was a severe challenge for him:

> I like writing, and I have been writing for a long time. I even wrote loads of diaries. I accept that they were not good, but I wrote whatsoever. In the previous term, I worked a lot on advanced writing, and I tried to learn a lot, but when I came to this class, I thought it was going to be hard for me… I suffered a lot. I did not know what to do.

Nicholas seems to conflict with the course activities since previously he could show a "very satisfying performance" (comments in the interview), while the essay writing course (due to the teaching principles mentioned in the section on Fatima) was a challenge for him. However, the experience and engagement in the class made the difficulty permeable. Nicholas realized this from the very beginning of his reflective journal when he came to figure out that the basic principles the teacher followed were to "make us think about the things we thought are not important." This revelation of the basic principle is aligned with the critical thinking philosophy which dominated the class discussion. Nicholas believed this to be of utmost importance since he mentioned this in different words throughout his six reflective journals. In the second reflective journal, after participating in the class discussion on the code of Hammurabi, he wrote:

The word 'why' was essential to [teacher] because after talking about each law and telling our opinion about it, he asked why you thought so. We had to support our impression for specific reasons… I tried to think deeply before speaking.

The change came about quickly. Comparing Nicholas's first and second writing on the same topic (The Code of Hammurabi), Nicholas reflected his change of perspective from a descriptive approach in his essay to an analytical one. The following samples are the second paragraphs from the first and second essays.

Week 2, paragraph 2

Hammurabi ruled Babylonia with absolute power and dominance. His purpose was to bring justice to society and keep his country out of chaos and disorder. He protected poor and weak people in the lower class of society from people in the higher social class of it. His code of strict laws was written in stones and had been put in public to warn people to be careful of their behavior and treatment because there were no excuses accepted after they had committed a crime.

Week 3, paragraph 2

In Hammurabi's codes of law, the family was considered an essential basis of society, which could have a valuable role in the prevention of many crimes. These laws on family relationships were developed in order to protect and support every member of the family. There are so many important values that are specialized for family, which can help children define behavior in various situations. The most important value of a family can be its stability of the relational structure, which influences on the behavior of the family members in society because a person who has grown up in a stable family tries to observe the certain norms of his/her society. For making this stability, Hammurabi's code of laws gave considerable power to the parents especially the father of the family, and actively wanted children to respect them.

Moreover, he improved organizing his ideas and essay's content. He believed that in his early writings his supporting sentences sometimes

would get far from defending his topic sentence as well as the thesis statement of the essay, but knowing how to write an outline was a cause for progress. His essay on education in the fourth week revealed the principled organization he had acquired in the essay writing course. The following is the outline attached to the fourth writing sample.

Thesis statement: Education helps open doors to many opportunities and skills that may result in having a respectable life and a high-level employment role.

T.S [topic sentence] 1. The first and basic value that a person may get from education is knowledge which can be considered as the most powerful weapon to change one's life.

T.S. 2. Creativity is the second value of education that an educated person may get and utilizes it in her/his daily task, which may result in perfection.

T.S. 3. The third value is self-confidence an educated person gains, which seems to be one of the compelling factors in his/her success

T.S. 4. Morality is the next value that an educated person may get.

T.S. 5. The next value of education is respect which is one of the most precious treasures of everybody's life.

T.S. 6. Money is the last thing an educated person may get.

Another change by participating in the community of essay writing class was moving from a singular perspective to a plural one. Early on, Nicholas focused on supporting his ideas for having coherence with the topic sentence. This was mainly expressed in the interview, reflective journal, essays, and class discussions. This status changed to have different perspectives and ideas within his argument of the essay. He mentioned in the interview that he spent "five to six hours" thinking on the introduction paragraph since he thought "all the essay could be condensed in the introduction paragraph." He, then, moved on to supporting the topic sentences. However, this attitude was developed from the standard five-paragraph essay in his first writing to 13 paragraphs in the fifth essay. The

more he was engaged in thinking on his essay, the more he was challenged in considering "different parts of a specific subject" (reflective journal week 3), after considering the class discussion. This critical analytical argumentation was not only encouraged by the more expert member of the community of essay writing class (teacher) but by the other classmates too. In the fourth week of a reflective journal, Nicholas mentioned that "a positive atmosphere in the class [was created] which made me much eager and passionate to share my ideas with them and get specific views too." The interview was also a case in point. After being asked how he evaluated the psychological aspect of the class, Nicholas responded that:

> The friendly atmosphere was excellent that we could express our ideas freely and say our opinions without fear and anxiety since most of the topics we discussed were critical, most of the classmates feared to talk. That we could talk about different topics freely could help us to write more analytically and gave us different ideas.

The fear Nicholas is referring to is due to the political situation of the country where students study. To be political and talk (criticize) the governing system is a little bit daunting for public members of this society at large and the class participants in particular. It seems that the outer social situation of the country and the political sensitivity of the authorities regarding political issues can affect the behavior of the members of this CoP. This might be the source of difference in changing the learners as the participants of the same classroom procedure, and the very same teaching may result in a different outcome and socialization in a different political environment.

Nicholas realized that being critical involves considering not only the big picture but also the minor points. He was challenged in one of the class discussions regarding essay writing. He could not define what a sentence is, and this pushed him to have a different perspective: "From that moment till now I am trying to scrutinize everything" (reflective journal week 4). Furthermore, he realized that to be critical, he needs to read a lot: "The writer must know the topic well. Otherwise, he/she cannot clarify the

points to the readers because if she/he does not have the needed information to support her/his talk, he/she will not be able to judge about it" (reflective journal week 5). Finally, he became sensitive to his word choice: "He/she should not talk with certainty. Using the words such as 'seems' and 'sound' may be good…nothing in this world is satisfied, so the writer should always consider the probability of his/her speech" (reflective journal week 5).

The latter point mentioned above regarding criticality could be found in Nicholas's essays in much more details. For example, so far as scrutinizing and encompassing different viewpoints of a topic are concerned, Nicholas focused on three viewpoints (See Appendix B) in his first essay, while he expanded the viewpoints to eleven in the fifth essay (See Appendix C). Regardless of the topic of the essays in all of the six sessions of engagement in the essay writing community, Nicholas used only one modal form (could) in the first essay, while in the fifth essay he used 23 modals and words which suggested the academic attitude of showing uncertainty in his argumentation using modals such as "it seems that", "can be considered", "should", "would", "might", "may", and "mostly" abundantly (taken from the fifth essay).

Nicholas strongly suggested that a critical academic essay has to be unbiased and reasonable. He mentioned the importance of being unbiased in the second reflective journal: "Most of our ideas were heavily biased toward our belief in a way that even we did not notice it." He, then, repeated the same point throughout the rest of the reflective journals. In the interview conducted at the end of the sixth week, he said:

> I think we need to be analytical in our essays… we should not believe anything on the first look and think more, think differently…I used to talk a lot in classes without any firm support, but now I do not say anything that comes to my mind.

This indicates to be a source of change for Nicholas in not responding simplistically in the course of discussion in which he can either respond

quickly, or wait and think of how to support his claim: "I know when I say something the first word I hear from you or other guys is 'why', I need reasons, so I don't talk when I have no support" (reflective journal week 5). In his essay, he performed what he preached by referring to his studies. In the early essays there was no sign of reference to other studies while in the fifth essay (See Appendix C), Nicholas referred to specific research findings to support his topic sentence.

Hana: From Ignorance to Engagement

The third participant is Hana, a female student, who is a bilingual speaker of Arabic and Farsi, living in the South of Iran. She was 20 years old, coming from a distinct cultural norm (Iranian Arabs). She introduced herself as having a different perspective and expectation from the social norms, unlike her other classmates. So far as the previous academic achievement is concerned, she had below the average performance in her course grades.

When asked how she perceived herself in the early days of participating in essay writing class, Hana confessed that she did not behave academically. However, her lack of learned behavior was to some extent related to her different socio-cultural expectation toward life. She viewed the world differently from the mainstream groups of students who, unlike her, lived in the central areas of the country in which multiculturality abounds. Although she did not condemn her thoughts, she accepted that the community in which she intended to be a member of (we assumed that her participation in the university was a cause for that), was different from her norms:

> I am an expert in one thing: to see the world beautifully. Ok? This is what people here do not like. For example, one of my teachers here told me directly that these behaviors are all sensational. He ruined me, just like that. I may see things beautifully, but I have my logic. In daily life, people presume that to be selfishness but I know I was not academic.

In a technical sense, what Hana expresses means that the legitimate patterns of behavior and action are a relative point of reference in which different groups may adhere to different principles. Since Hana was grown up in a different place, in a different CoP (education and daily life), she experienced clash with her teacher, and she was criticized.

This ignorance and blockage in letting Hana come into the general mainstream of legitimate participation happened harshly in the early semesters as well. This was also attested by other instructors who observed Hana's marginal role in the student group and legitimate academic membership. In the fourth semester, Hana showed the reminiscent of this ignorance in the early reflective journals. In the first week, Hana ignored the class, all in all, writing about unrelated issues, of what she drank, ate and bought. In the second week, though, she had a different reaction toward the class. The first reaction was a direct negative attitude, exclaiming "I disliked the class." She did not provide any more detail and ended the paragraph. In the second paragraph of the same reflective journal, she pointed to a principle she claims she had in mind but was not concretely observed:

> I was known that when I want to talk or give an opinion, I must study think and then talk but after the session, I believed it so much. Moreover, also respecting people thoughts is very important to and by work on my register I can have a great conversation with people.

It seems that Hana has the potential and readiness for converging to the academic CoP but due to her previous experience of being pushed back, is having certain conflicts. The instructor of the essay writing behaved openly as much as possible to the range of ideas and attitudes she showed in class so that she would stop reacting defensively. The instructor did not focus on personal behavior or viewpoints, but on challenging the reasoning of the participants as well as providing different viewpoints to the topic of discussion. However, to change Hana's ignorance, it took time. Hana expressed her hatred toward the class without knowing why: "I hated

the class, and I do not know the exact reason, perhaps because I cannot do my best. It makes me disappointed" (reflective journal week 3).

Her low performance was also evident in her essay as the first and second essays (on The Code of Hammurabi and education respectively) were a sporadic mixture of ideas and the report of readings she had from online sources. For example, in the first writing, putting the introduction paragraph aside, Hana had no specific point or aim in the body of her essay, without because she wrote no conclusion paragraph.

> [sic] the codes of Hammurabi are 282 laws which contains civil rights, criminal, law merchant and conjugal rights; therefore, based on the situations of that time the laws were well-extended and in great details, but when we want to use this collection in this century, assuredly it would be illogicality and also inequitable especially there are different religions with different statues. For example, the code which arbiters eye to eye, limb to limb, nowadays it rarely executes; even though, it has great details and specific conditions to execute and make it a logical law.

However, as Hana experienced more of the practice of the principles overshadowing the class, she improved and changed her perspective toward herself as a student and the academic environment at large. When she was asked in the interview regarding how she had changed, she claimed that the class turned her to her right side: "I feel I am changing to the good self I had in the past when I studied voraciously." In the academic essay writing in particular, Hana had become more sensitive to the principles which she had in mind and wrote that in her reflective journal in week 2. She responded in the interview that:

> I have improved a lot like I can choose the vocabularies much better, I do not talk from the blue sky. I think about them, look for reasons and try to speak more logically. Not just the logic I have in any daily life, but also in my social relations that how to speak academically in a group of people and convince that your claims are reasonable.

Hana is stressing that essay writing class is giving her the ability to act and speak academically in the collegian and essay writing class community, and more broadly in the social life as well. She reflected on her different worldview and improvement in the reflective journal in week 4 when she mentioned three points which were engaging for her: "1. It is ok to make a mistake but corrects it. 2. Think and learn how to think. 3. Why?". It is as if Hana is adapting her patterns of behavior to be the legitimate peripheral participant of the community she is living and studying. However, she still had a conflict with other participants of the class when she reported on the experience of discussion in one session in which Fatima had an opinion different from the teacher regarding the situation of the freedom in the country. Hana mentioned that the teacher was right: "it was good to see that the teacher attacked her" (comments in the interview). This is merely her reaction though since the teacher was merely trying to challenge Fatima to provide a reason for the claims and criticisms she was making against the government for trespassing the freedom of the people.

However, the residue of the effect of ignorance in Hana's experience does not mean that she could not improve her role as a more relatively legitimate participant. In the process of writing an academic essay, when she was asked to prepare an outline as a technique for organizing an essay, Hana prepared the outlines of the third and fourth writings. The following are the samples of her outlines.

The outline of the third writing	**The outline of the fourth writing**
Title: Hammurabi's codes	Outline:
Background:	Education and learning
Thesis statement: nowadays these laws based on the flexibility of dissonances are lack of details.	Thesis statement: whereas these are separate, also have a distinct difference.
A: topic sentence: what are codes of Hammurabi?	Background:
1. definition	A. topic sentence: what is education?
2. example	a. definition
	b. ambits.

B.   topic   sentence: comparing Hammurabi's law with Islam laws. (implied)

    1. example

    2. details.

C. conclusion

c. performance

B. topic sentence: what is learning?

    a. definition

    b. ambits

    c. performance

        The outline of the third writing, which has a thesis statement, seems to follow a specific aim and a specific structure. Although there are clear topic sentences for the second and third paragraphs, they seem to be vague and very broad in specifying how the claims are going to be supported. Hana only mentioned that she was going to use examples and details (taking examples as the only source of providing supporting sentences for the topic sentence). Although this is an acceptable approach, it is not the only one. Comparing the outline of the third writing with that of the fourth one, Hana seems to be relying on more varied sources of supporting sentences (definitions, ambits, performance). It might be argued that this could be the effect of the topic and in-class discussion on the type of argument the writer has taken; however, the writing outcome shows the difference. In the third writing sample, Hana claims to focus on introducing the codes by providing examples and details, while in actual writing she partially does that and becomes engaged with the illogicality of the codes and the contrast they have with the religious principles.

        Now, this difference regarding the improvement of the outline could be traced in the fourth writing in which Hana seemed to be more faithful to the outline he had written before the actual writing of the essay. Although she needed to improve the quality of her essay, and indeed could do so, by adding the points she had in mind (some of the supporting sentences like 'performance' are ignored), Hana had a plan and a much clearer point to make as the thesis statement also showed. The following is the second paragraph of the fourth writing:

        Education is a process that obtains opportunities for learning or activity which deal with methods and problems. It has cognitive ambit (knowledge, understanding, analysis, etc.), sentimental ambit

(perception, response, organize, etc.) as well as psychological ambit (eurhythmics, nonverbal and verbal association, etc.). Education conveys knowledge. It has proficiency but not creativity; it is limited.

Hana seems to be taking what she needed in improving and changing herself as an acceptable, legitimate participant. Although she still suffered from conflict with other participants until the sixth session, she was delighted when she saw changes in herself as well as others. She was concerned about her way of thinking and her classmates. In the interview session she commented:

> I learned how to think, how to talk, not just for the class but about our thought in general…I have been in other classes with my classmates of essay writing. They do not talk to me much, only making fun of people. For instance, Mr. [her classmate's name] is always joking in other classes, but I felt good when he started to talk academically and scientifically. I can see too. It feels good.

The same attitude was repeated in the fifth and sixth reflective journals. Unlike early sessions when Hana seemed to be ignorant and defensive toward what took place in the academic environment in the class, in the fifth week, she expressed her feeling very positively: "Now I love being in this class to learn more and be myself again." The open environment of inclusiveness and participation in the activities and practices of the community changed Hana to appreciate her and others' status. She acquired and developed the critical principles of an effective academic essay gradually and became a more active member of the community she was mostly excluded from. In her performance, she might still lag behind other members of the class, but in her prospect as a writer, she evaluated her present and coming future positively. She knew that her level of performance was weaker than others, as she mentioned in the

interview, and others might "attack verbally," but she learned how to talk and write academically.

Suggested Model of the Socialization

In the following, the suggested model is presented. This shows how the new-comers into the social site of the academic discourse become more competent after their appropriation of the academic discourse within the social site of the essay writing. The figure below demonstrates the model:
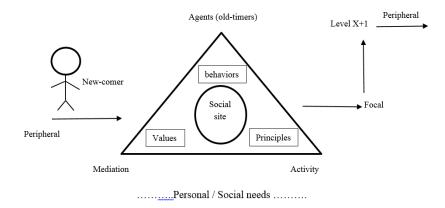

Figure 1. A suggested model of the essay writing socialization

To describe our derived model demonstrated in Figure 1, we will take the case of Fatima to show how the model works. Fatima believed that she was incompetent in writing an essay in the English language. In other words, she accepted the fact that she was a new-comer to the community of the essay writing in the academic discourse community. Taking a peripheral stance in this CoP, she reflected on her deficiencies in the given course. However, the principles of the course (to have reasoning for the claims and investigating a subject matter from different perspectives) as well as the critical values of the course, with an academic behavior toward engaging the argument of oneself and that of the others, pushed Fatima to the central spheres of the academic discourse of the essay writing class. It should be mentioned that the teacher as an old-timer figure of this social community played a key role "Students want the teacher to bring out the

best in them and help them to find the courage to speak out and tell their ideas…" (Fatima's first reflective diary).

This social site engaged the learners to seek for the social requirements of the CoP. Fatima saw it urgent to study, reflect, and practice more, as the community required: "I studied for this course. I remember when I emailed you at 4 a.m, I was still reading on the topic of the next session as if I was so much encouraged to do so to read other students articles from different languages" (Fatima's interview). This was due to the social needs the CoP imposed on Fatima, to conform to the behaviors, values, and principles of the CoP. In other words, Fatima was not only coming to the social site of the essay writing with only her personal needs but also acquire the social necessities of this site. These needs and competencies were mediated by the old-timer of the CoP (the course instructor) so that the new-comer acquires the assumed abilities prevalent in the discourse community: "Frankly speaking [teacher's name]'s class allows me to become a better critical thinker because his course requires us to analyze and reflect on essays and readings more than just giving a summary of them…" (Fatima's fourth reflective diary).

The discussion sessions in which the old-timer agent of CoP mediated others followed a type of reasoning activity since the participants were asked to answer why they thought in a particular way. Through this, the instructor provided an appropriating social site so that each learner can take what s/he needs to be based on her personal and social needs. This happened for Fatima based on her own needs (argumentation in English rather than only in Farsi, and organizing a coherent and unified argumentative essay). This form of social mediation could particularize the learning atmosphere so that the learners merge into the target CoP, that of moving from the outside position to the focal one. However, this is not to end on that occasion of socialization, as Fatima was also on the path of improving, but that it meant the learner has improved in her course of socialization to the next level since the essays she wrote did have the potential to improve and be more argumentative and critical. It was just a

matter of degrees that the peripheral individual could move to the focal position of the CoP. So, in a more advanced level, Fatima could move closer to the discourse community of the essay writing course.

As it is shown in the figure above through moving up to the next level of socialization, the model can be applied to other case studies investigated here, as they were also engaged with their personal as well as social requirements and needs. They were also engaged in the social site through the activities which were mediated by the old-timer agent of practice in the CoP so that they could move up to the next level of socialization.

Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the socialization of three participants of the essay writing CoP in order to figure out if and how they appropriate the critical reasoning of the academy as a rational institution within the participants' social life. The class in which participants were a member of formed a CoP (Morita, 2004), a site through which an opportunity was provided for the new-comers (participants) and old-timers (the instructor) so that the more expert participants of the academic community can transfer the "privileged, expected, cultivated, conventionalized, or ritualized" patterns of speech and reasoning to the new participants (Duff, 2010, p. 175).

The experience was not so much conflicting over legitimacy for Fatima and Nicholas. They lived in the central geographical areas of the country which assisted them in having a profound understanding and flexibility toward the expectations required in the academic setting. However, this does not mean that they could easily appropriate the discourse of the academy. Nicholas and Fatima took different social, cultural, and ideological understandings from the class (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and in some areas, all the three participants shared what and how they acquired, but the path of socialization happen in parallel with each participant's history and needs. The suggested model deconstructed the elements that affect how this happens

The three participants shared the CoP but changed themselves too. They all became the participants of the academic discourse; however, there was a minor/ significant distinction among them regarding the extent of their peripherality and legitimacy. Although some (e.g., Nicholas) quickly became a legitimate participant and tried to move from a peripheral to the central participation, others (e.g., Hana) had a conflict with the legitimacy, let alone peripherality from the beginning of her attending the course. However, it did not mean that Hana was not capable of overcoming the barriers. It only took time. This suggests that there might be and it seems that there are so many paths taken/not taken toward the socialization of the community of practice (here academic discourse). They are much under the influence of how the experience of socialization is presented to the participants. The suggested model illustrated the components of such an experience. Bearing in mind the personal and social needs of each participant, the model focused on how the principles, values, and behaviors of a social site could be mediated by the social agents of that CoP, known as old-terms, within a peculiarized (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) activity (in the sense of activity theory discussed below). However, this does not mean that the socialization is over but that learners can have more profound socialization toward becoming an old-timer.

The different paths of socialization of the three participants in the same setting can be theoretically explained under the activity theory. Lantolf (2000) posits that this theory is "a unified account of Vygotsky's original proposals on the nature and development of human behavior" (p. 8). In this social-developmental outlook, participants have motives that could be biologically, or socially (e.g., to be a member of the CoP) determined (Leontiev, 1981). The motives are constructed by the participants' history and the activity system. An activity system is conceptualized as consisting of the subjects (the participants involved: the learners and the instructor of the course), the object of the activity (to be a member of the CoP in the academic essay writing course), and the mediational means (the teacher's socializing the new-comers by

considering the principles of the course). So Nicholas, Fatima, and Hana came to the setting of the academic essay writing course with their own needs and motives. Although the community shared the same object of the activity, their role as active agents in this community as well as their motives influenced the same mediational action of the teacher (i.e., socializing the new-comers) according to each participant's needs and motives for learning. The same point is also true for the instructor of the course. When Hana mentioned that the teacher "attacked" Fatima on account of Fatima's stance over the discussion on freedom, it became clear that the instructor's motive for challenging Fatima was merely in line with the principles of the course (i.e., critical thinking). Therefore, what Hana presumed to be a harsh (and according to her correct) reaction from the teacher was a socialization move for the instructor. This conflict of motives and their interpretations, though, might affect the outcome of the activity. However, that needs to be investigated in another research project by employing other means such as think-aloud protocols. In other words, the next step could be analyzing learners' internal motives and the emerging conflicts of motives, as well as needs within the same activity system in the process of socializing the new members of a CoP.

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Appendix A

The semi-structured interview prompts

1. How do you perceive yourself as a writer in the early sessions of the course?
2. How do you think you have changed since the early sessions of the course?
3. How do you evaluate the psychological environment of the class?
4. How do you evaluate the physical environment of the class?
5. How do you evaluate the social environment of the class?
6. How do you evaluate the teaching and learning environment of the class?
7. How do you perceive yourself as a writer in the future?

Appendix B
(No correction made)
Nicholas's First Essay
Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi was one of the most powerful kings of Babylonin who ruled it for 45 years. Although he was young when he became a king, he showed he was a very skillful and wise administrator. He is famous for his code of laws which are known as the first code of laws in the world. By the use of these strict laws Hammurabi made Babylonia the most civilized and peaceful city of that time with the lowest average of commiting crime.

Hammurabi ruled Babylonia with absolute power and dominance. His purpose was to bring justice to the society and keep his country out of chaos and disorder. He protected poor and weak people in lower class of society from people in higher social class of it. His code of strict laws were written in stones and had been put in public in warn people to be careful of their behavior and treatment becauywse there were no excuses accepted after they had committed a crime.

Hammurabi's code of laws were organized meticulously to make a civilized society. The government let people know the severe punishment of their disobedient of the laws, so they lived in a cultural and civilized way without any theft, assault and betrayal. The laws covered different significant aspects of Babylonians lives both in personal and society, such as family, work and marriage. The very serious punishment for the crimes Acted as much as deterent. For example, the laws "if a son strike his father or mother, his hand shall be cut off", could be considered as a strong deterent factor because the son knew the server consequences of his action and tried to respect his parents all the time.

Hammurabi's code of laws made an atmpsphere of justice and righteousness while protecting the poors from oppression. Although these laws are considered harsh by today's standards, they were considered fair in Hammurabi's time. Even some of them were progressive and could be compared with laws of modern world. Allowing women some social rights such as the right of getting divorce was one of those progressive laws that has remained till now, the modern world.

In the law "if a woman quarrel with her husband, and say "you are not congenial to me", the reasons for her prejudice must be presented, if she is guiltness and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, the no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall ask her drowry and go back to her father's house". Directly says that getting divorce for women is their right.

Although the code of Hammurabi's laws were terribly strict, and some of punishments didn't fit to the crimes, the results were desirables, at least for the Hammurabi, the king of Babylonia that ruled the people who were not as logical as today's modern world people are. The time and general understandings of a society is very significant in making a specific rule or decision, the things that most people ignore it.

Appendix C
(No correction made)
Nicholas's Fifth Essay
Three fundamental freedom

What does freedom mean to you? Have you ever thought about the true concept of it? Freedom is the right to do as you wish as long as it doesn't harm other's ability to exercise their right to do as they wish too. In other words, freedom is whatever floats your beat if it doesn't sink mine. Freedom seems to be the greatest blessing of our democracy that can be devided into three common and basic parts: freedom of belief, freedom of speech and freedom of press.

Freedom of belief and religion is the first and basic human freedom, which is considered to be as as a fundamental human right. It is a basis and principle that supports the freedom of a person both in individual and community, in public and private, and it also gives him, her the freedom to leave membership in a religion, choose the new one or not to follow any religion, the person also has the right to put his, her beliefs and impression into action by having the right to wear his, her religious clothing or take part in religion community and he/she must be offered certain guarantees for his/her religious practice by government. But is there any limitation on this right?

The government of administration of a country cannot violate a person's right to hold or change his/ her belief or religion. It must provide a respectful place for the person to have his/her beliefs peacefully, but there are some situations in which the government seems to be able to interfere with the person's showing his/her thoughts and beliefs. This may occur only when government can prove that its action of prevention is a necessity and it is done to protect public safety, public order and other people's right of freedom.

There is a question her! do all the countries consider this right for people or easily disgard it?

Islamic republic of Iran as a developing country seems to be one of those countries which violates people right to change their religion. About 90 percent

of Iranians practice Shi'i Islam, and the government mostly support this part much more rather than other parties and religions which exists in minority in Iran. The researches show that in this country, changing your religion from Shi'I into another is forbidden and has a sincere consequence, but changing your religion from another into Shi'I is protected by government, which is totally against the principle of religion freedom.

France is another country which violates its people right to practice their religion. In this country muslims are in minority and the government makes some troubles for them. For example, france government doesn't let muslim students wear their religious clothing, which is opposite of the freedom of the religion. It seems that some countries just pretend they are in fond of religion freedom.

Freedom of speech is the second essential human right, which can lead society to develop and progress. It is the right to express your opinion, ideas and views easily without having the fear of being punished by government as long as you are not making threats or your speeches are not considered of feasive. Not having freedom of speech would make your life a misery because you are not allowed to use your ability to express your opinions which may bring a change in society. A free society very depends on the free exchange of ideas because the golden key of its success is in this exchanging ideas. Each and every one of use may have a unique opinion about a specific issue which can be effective in progress of society. It is better for government's success and power to have the capacity for being criticized big people and to listen, evaluate and use their particular ideas in the true path of scotty success because ability to listen to others can be considered as a important task hearing other's views as well as offering yours is a useful and suitable manner.

But is there any red line for expressing your ideas in countries?

It seems that every country has its own red line for giving the right to freedom of speech, so no person has the absolute right to freedom of speech around the world even in the countries with the most freedom of speech.

The countries such as north korea, new Zealand and Turkmenistan have the least freedom of speech. The people in these countries are not allowed to criticize the government, otherwise they will be strictly punished, and the countries such as Canada, Switzerland and united states have the most freedom of speech. Although people of these countries are free to criticize their government, they have some limitation too. As an example, the statistics below are the result of a research which compared the the amount of freedom of speech in U.S which is one of the three top countries with most freedom of speech and 38 other countries.

People should be able to make public statements that criticize government. U.S 95% yes others 80% yes

People should be able to make public statements that are offensive to your religion. U.S 77%yes others 35% yes.

People should be able to make public statements that are sexually explicit. U.S. 52% yes others 26%.

It seems that there is no absolute freedom of speech around the world.

Freedom of press is the next important human freedom, which help people know about their government actions and decisions. It is the right to express ideas in print without any censorship and restriction by government. Many respectable people such as Ron Paul, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi believed that freedom of press is essential in society and it is so important that the basis of government being the opinion of people. They have the right to be aware of the happenings, plans and decisions of their government, and this is the duty of press to keep people fully informed by writing as a check on government and governors because its their absolute right to know what is going on in their country. So press should be free enough to deliver accurate news.

How much are press and media successful in delivering the complete and reliable news?

The world wide research shows that only one-third of countries let freedom of press. In most countries the media outlets are not allowed to deliver the news without the direct sensorship of government, otherwise they should expect sincere punishments.

North korea, Belarus and Iran can be mentioned as the first three countries that have zero tolerance for negative coverage. Reporters and journalists seems fear the charges made by government and most of them never attempt to openly criticize the government. It seems that the governments don't like people because aware of all the issues of the society becaus they know people have a great role in bringing a change to society.

Freedom is the most important right that a person can have, which consists of three fundamental parts: freedom of religion which supports the person to be free in his/her choosing, leaving religion or belief, freedom of speech which gives the person freedom of expressing his/her ideas without any fear and freedom of press that help people be aware of the plans and decisions making in their country. We are living in age that people are much more wiser than past, they should be given the right of freedom.