Academic writing as a language barrier
A LEARNING FRAMEWORK

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Research Design:

As part of my CLeaR Fellowship in 2020, and with the generous support of a SEED grant, I designed an Academic Writing Learning Framework with a decolonial perspective that might be an invitation to rethink some university assumptions and expectations that can be reproducing social inequities. My strong belief in all students' right to academic success, led me to design this Academic Writing Learning Framework from a critical reflective perspective and a sociocultural view.

My goals are twofold:

1 Raise students' learning needs awareness in terms of their own and unique academic writing journey, and

2 Explore what equity and inclusion may mean for students with academic language development journeys ahead

As university students build and develop their disciplinary knowledge, a significant part of their university work and assessment is done through their academic writing. Still, the overall expectations regarding writing assignments, and even research writing, often seem to be elusive for students. Furthermore, for some students English academic writing may actually become a language barrier.

I experienced academic writing as a language barrier in my own doctoral journey and I struggled with my identity to find my own voice and overcome this barrier. I completed my doctorate and experienced a shift in perspective on students' identity and students' voice, which also affected the way I view the development opportunities we could provide for academic and research writing at the University.

The sometimes easily dismissed, unquestioned struggle of some EAL and other diverse students with English academic writing, without the provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate learning opportunities, may increase inequity in higher education and reinforce the disadvantage of some already underserved students.

This Learning Framework may suggest an alternative way forward for the scaffolding of diverse students' academic writing, the promotion of learner autonomy, and the rethinking of inclusivity.

Data collection included interviews, and participation in the writing workshops (11 participants, UG, PG, and PhDs; 10 International students, one Pasifika-New Zealander; 10 students in NZ, one abroad; Ages from 20s to 50+; one participant disclosed a learning disability; 10 EAL multilingual students, one English native speaker).

After the first stage of the study, these are the significant themes:
- ✓ Students' views on the nature of academic writing
- ✓ Renewed confidence on their ability to write
- ✓ Raised awareness of their voice as a writer

> "This has enabled me to remember what it was like to write in my [own language], when English was not really part of my life."

> "I'm brave, I am braver to write. I am not scared of that."

> "We just found that academic writing was quite exclusive. It wasn't as inclusive as it could be, in terms of approaching writing and the way to express our understanding."

Reconnecting with their voice?

> "My habits did change and also when I view my lecture notes as well. I try and I try and see what is his voice. And what is he trying to say and what is his opinion? What does he particularly want rather than just the assignment? Yes, very, very useful stuff."

> "It was really, really helpful for me to restore my self confidence for writing in another language like English,"

CLeaR Fellowship 2020

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Research questions
Started by a self-reflective stance and a critical inquiry into my own writing development journey

- ✓ *What elements facilitated my understanding and development of English academic writing as an EAL* *PhD student? And so → What elements may facilitate EAL or other students' understanding and development of English academic writing at the level required by their university degree?*

- ✓ *What was central to my personal process of reconnecting with my writing 'voice'? And so → What might be central to students' own personal process of reconnecting with their writing 'voice' so they feel more at ease with English academic writing?*

- ✓ *How could a critical decolonial perspective to language development and academic writing affect common assumptions held by lecturers and supervisors and transform their teaching practices?*
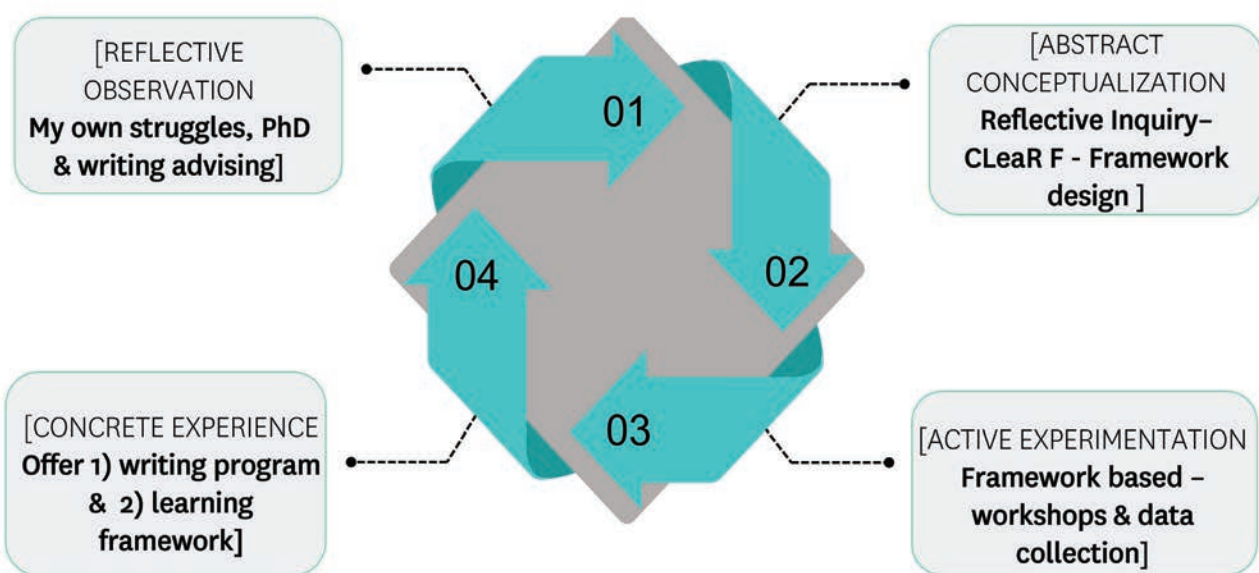
English as an Additional Language student

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To raise awareness of a decolonial view on academic writing process and an approach to facilitate its development

	Reflective process/ Metalearning	Intercultural rhetoric- Decolonial view	Structure, genres - Metalanguage	Finding balance – Metadiscourse	Enabling a scholarly voice →	Writing development plan →
Initial Interview Writing inventory	■					
Silence in writing-Fluency		■				
Noise in writing Accuracy			■			
Balance-Finding your voice				■		
Final Interview- A learning plan					■	■

Dr Ana María Benton Z.

[REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION
My own struggles, PhD & writing advising]

[ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION
Reflective Inquiry– CLeaR F - Framework design]

01
04   02
03

[CONCRETE EXPERIENCE
Offer 1) writing program & 2) learning framework]

[ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION
Framework based – workshops & data collection]

Kolb's model of reflective learning
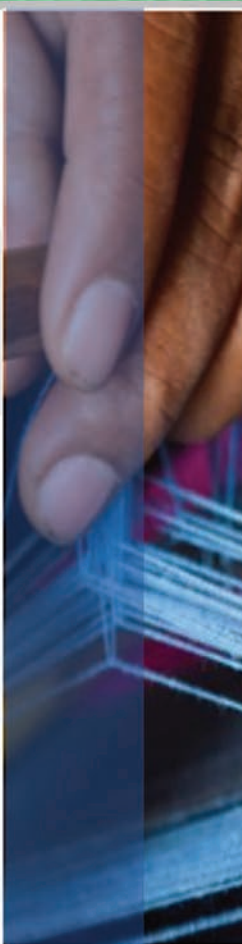### Research process

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A Decolonial view –
LANGUAGE AND POWER

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE AND CONTRIBUTION

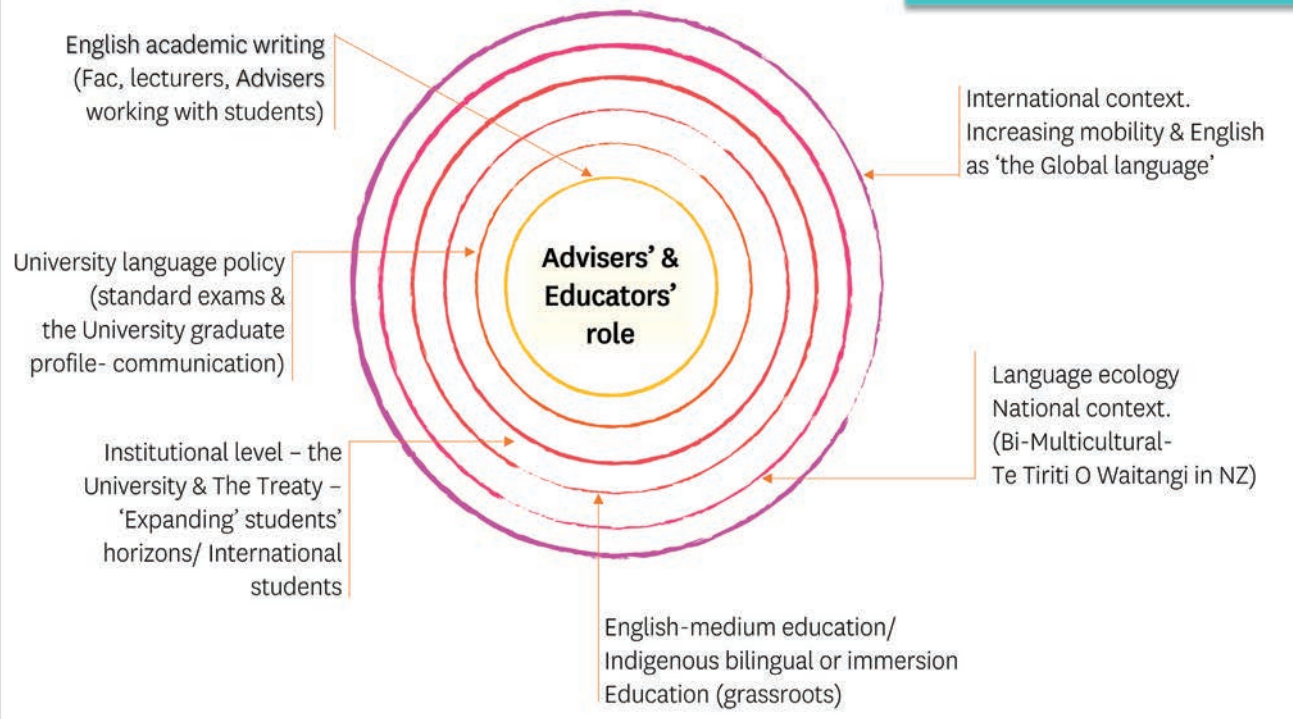*Finding who they are and what they may contribute!*

Your unique perspective: What is your message? ➡ Meaning
Acknowledge:

- the present challenges
- your current knowledge and skills
- your life experience, linguistic and cultural background and values
- your own cultural narrative frames
  Vs   English academic writing frames
- Where do we start? How do we move forward?

Academic writing - The Language Planning 'Pickled' Onion
(Benton, A.M., 2018.)

+ The historical dimension

English academic writing (Fac, lecturers, Advisers working with students)

University language policy (standard exams & the University graduate profile- communication)

Institutional level – the University & The Treaty – 'Expanding' students' horizons/ International students

Advisers' & Educators' role

International context. Increasing mobility & English as 'the Global language'

Language ecology National context. (Bi-Multicultural- Te Tiriti O Waitangi in NZ)

English-medium education/ Indigenous bilingual or immersion Education (grassroots)

Academic Writing at university

Why has academic writing become such a powerful 'language' in recent decades?

Academic writing, as visualized in the Language Planning 'Pickled' Onion (Benton, 2018); its increased complexity

English as a globalised language and its strong presence internationally in research and scholarship

Increased interest and research on this topic following the increasing mobility of students

A significant expansion of universities due to greater social inclusion policies, as well as changes in university structures

An increasing diversity of students in English speaking universities, and the perceived need to 'negotiate difference

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This study will continue to refine the writing program, propose the Learning Framework more widely, and design a sustainable academic writing program focused on encouraging students to reconnect with their 'voice'. (Ethics application approved for three years).