

Evolving doctoral writer identities through peer feedback

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This multiple case study investigates the experiences of two EdD and three PhD in Education students conducting peer analysis of English L2 doctoral writers with a particular focus on how the process of providing peer feedback shapes their own identities as doctoral writers. The peer analysis involves exploring the written language choices of English L2 doctoral candidates, specifically, how EdD and PhD students position themselves in relation to their arguments. Each of the five researchers in this study worked with 1-3 participants within their same programmes: EdD and PhD in Education students who use English as an additional language. Portions of a draft of their thesis were analysed for the language used to display different writer identities using an adapted Appraisal framework. As research indicates that PhD dissertations tend toward making and justifying further-reaching claims than EdD dissertations, that tend more toward practical claims in educational administration, these claims were explored in the investigation. The ten participants were interviewed before the analysis of their writing, and following the analysis, they were interviewed again to query their language choices, and to discuss what factors influenced changes to their writer identities. On a practical level, the study generated a bank of useful phrases and expressions for displaying clear and effective writer identities (which, although occasionally offered in doctoral writing guides, has not been supported with empirical evidence). The study contributes to theory concerning the importance and value of peer feedback at the doctoral level, and the inherent differences between the EdD and PhD thesis writing, in consideration of how and why different writer identities are displayed and may be more effective, depending on the arguments being made.