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Reconstructing Myself: The Story of a Second Language Teacher of Writing

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RECONSTRUCTING MYSELF:
THE STORY OF A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER OF WRITING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Deepak K. Pant

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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This dissertation explores the importance of voice, representation, and authenticity of lived experiences in writing through the story of my literacy learning and teaching of English. I use narratives to argue that valuing World Englishes, story-writing and identity construction helps students in their writing and literacy learning. The narratives show what first-generation immigrants go through in terms of cultural adjustments and literacy practices in the target culture and how they construct their identities in a changing linguistic, cultural and geographical landscape. The dissertation also shows my evolution as a writing teacher who acknowledges students' varieties of English as World Englishes. It is also a story of a family of Nepalese ethnicity that is torn between their native land and their newly adopted country: the former struggling through political instability and civil war and the latter still linguistically and culturally alien.

The first chapter starts with my boarding a plane to the USA to study at West Virginia University as a graduate student. The narrative sets up the details of the flight, including meeting with Nepalese students also on their way to the US, to set a middle ground between the past in Nepal and the future in the US. The flashbacks recapitulate my past, narrating my literacy practices in Nepal as an English teacher. They illustrate how I believed that non-native speakers should follow Standard English and how I taught my students accordingly. Chapter Two opens with my arrival in the US and my

adjustment to the new culture as a graduate student. Chapter Three includes flashbacks from my childhood and my struggle to learn English in Nepal. It shows the post-colonial influence of English in Nepal and how Standard English was perceived as the model by students, educators and employers. Chapter Four shows my growth into being a writing teacher in the US who values students' World Englishes, story-writing and cultural and linguistic identities. The conclusion suggests how story-writing can be used as an attempt to free student writers from the repression of their voice, identity and authority, and makes recommendations for future research and practice in this vein.