Investigating L2 Writers Investment Toward Constructing a Successful Writer Identity: Case Studies of Arab Students from Saudi Arabia Studying in U.S.

Badreyya Rashed Alkhanbooli

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd/1888
INVESTIGATING L2 WRITERS’ INVESTMENT TOWARD CONSTRUCTING A SUCCESSFUL WRITER IDENTITY: CASE STUDIES OF ARAB STUDENTS FROM SAUDI ARABIA STUDYING IN U.S.

by

Badreyya Alkhanbooli

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

The University of Memphis

May 2018
Acknowledgements

There are numerous individuals I would like to thank for their continued support throughout the various stages of this dissertation project. These individuals have offered encouragement along the way. I begin with a heart-felt appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Emily Thrush for her individual guidance and support throughout the completion of my research study. Her continued support as well as valuable feedback and suggestions on my writing have helped me a lot to improve my academic writing skills. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Teresa Dalle, Dr. Lyn Fogle, and Dr. Mark Conley for their time and suggestions. The different courses I took with them have been very effective for me to shape my research idea. They all have demonstrated a great understanding and attention during the process of completing my research study.

In addition, this research dissertation could not have been completed without my three Saudi participants’ cooperation with their time and effort in my study. I thank them for their candidness in sharing their experiences of being English as second language writers with me. I also wanted to express my appreciation to Dr. Sally Ali and Dr. Suad Al Orami for their support throughout my academic endeavors. In addition, my sincere gratefulness to my English department friends and my colleagues in Applied Linguistics for their emotional support.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my family members. Their love and prayers help me face the challenges and move forward. Special thanks to my mother and husband who never lost faith and hope in me by encouraging me to finish my journey as a graduate student. Their continued love and support throughout the completion of my dissertation have helped a lot.
Abstract

Title: Investigating L2 Writers’ Investment Toward Constructing a Successful Writer Identity: Case Studies of Arab Students from Saudi Arabia Studying in U.S.

Dissertation Author: Badreyya Alkhanbooli

Dissertation Major Professor: Emily A. Thrush, Ph.D.

This study focused on how three Saudi students at a University of Memphis in the U.S. constructed their academic writer identities. The purposes of this study, grounded in sociocultural, constructivism, and discourse theory, were to (a) understand how similar or different were the discourse writing practices in their L1 community (Saudi Arabia) to those writing practices in the L2 community (United States), (b) determine their individual investment in writing academic papers according to writing convention of the L2 community, and (c) elicit aspects of writer identity in their different academic papers written for different courses. I conducted a qualitative case study and collected three discourse based interviews, three graded academic written papers, and one reflective essay from each student.

Based on thematic analysis, the findings indicate that the Saudi students exhibited various approaches in constructing their writer identities. First, Saudi writers’ identities were multifaceted, as they tended to embrace writing knowledge, aptitudes, practices, and views on being L2 writers of English differently in each discourse community. Second, the Saudi students discussed their investment and participation in developing positive identities as L2 writers of English. They took on the subject positions or the social identities that the current discourse of their disciplinary community called upon them to write different assignments. Finally, Saudi students’ identity construction was influenced by many factors such as prior knowledge and
previous writing practices, the current academic discourse, their resistant attitudes toward the
target discourse, and their English writing proficiency. Nevertheless, Saudi students tended to
construct multiple writer identities and negotiated continually for improved identities as writers
in all the assignments they wrote. Not only they were more conscious of the different approaches
required for the diverse written assignments, but also they became sensitive to each writing
context, and gained confidence as they developed more writing knowledge and skills.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives and Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Review of the Literature</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab Students Composing in English</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties at Text Focused Orientation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties at Process Focused Orientation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties at Sociocultural Focused Orientation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 Writer, Academic Discourse Community and Identity Construction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship Between L2 Writing and Identity</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Writer Identity is Socially Constructed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Construction is Complex</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 Writers’ Investment in Academic Writing</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Methodology</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Design</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Participants</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Sampling</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background Information of Study Participants 29

Data Collection Methods 31

Textual Data 33

Semi-Structured Interviews 35

Data Analysis and Procedures 37

Validity and Trustworthiness 39

4 Result and Analysis 43

Overview 43

Section I Saudi Students’ Writing Experiences in L1 and L2 Community 44

Meaning about Doweling, Place and Environment 45

Writing English Academic Papers in the L1 Community 46

Writing English Academic Papers in the L2 Community 50

Meaning about Meaning about Being, Personhood and Identity 51

Being as an English writer in the L1 Community 52

Being as an English Writer in the L2 Community 54

Meaning about Acting, Action and Practice 55

Acting in the L1 Community 56

Acting in the L2 Community 58

Meaning about Relating, Relationships 62

Relating in the L1 Community 63

Relating in the L2 Community 66

Meaning about Feeling, Emotion and Affect 67

Felling about Writing in the L1 Community 68
Felling about Writing in the L2 Community 69

Section II Saudi Students’ Investment in Constructing Writer Identity 72

Writing as a Social Act 73

I joined the IEI program 73
If I got more assignments 74
Teacher’s guidelines 75

Writers Interact in Multiple Ways 76

I asked my husband to help me 76

Writing is a Mediated Process of Invention 78

I hired an American tutor 78
The most used resource for me with writing is the internet 79
I consulted many resources 80
Drafting and Revising are the best 83

Writing is Intertextual 84

I try to not think in Arabic as possible as I can 84
I read more 86
Reading is an important tool to enhance my writing ability 87
Reading in my major 88

Section III Saudi Students’ Identity Construction in Text 90

Autobiographical Self 92

Autobiographical Self Based on Prior Knowledge 92
Positive influence on writer identity 93
Negative influence on writer identity 95
Discoursal Self

Writer Identities Constructed by Current Academic Discourse
Writer Identities Constructed with Resistance

Self as Author

Authorial Identity based on Linguistic Features
First Person Pronoun
Sentence Structure

Possibilities for Self-hood

Writer Identities: Multiple, Shifted, and Developed
Written Assignment One
Written Assignment Two
Written Assignment Three

Summary

5 Implications for the Teaching of L2 Writing and for Research

Overview

Summary of Findings and the Discussion

Limitation of the Study

Implications for the Teaching of L2 writing

Areas for Future Research

References

Appendices

A. Email Recruitment
B. Informed Consent Letter
C. Reflective Essay Prompt 153

D. Interview Protocol for Each Participant 155

IRB Documentation 181
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information about the Participants</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Each Participant’s Three Written Assignments</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meaning about Doweling in L1 Community and L2 Community</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Meaning about Being in L1 Community and L2 Community</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meaning about Acting in L1 Community and L2 Community</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Meaning about Relating in L1 Community and L2 Community</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Meaning about Feeling in L1 Community and L2 Community</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Four Interrelated Components with Developed Themes and Topics</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

English-medium institutions around the globe maintain English academic writing as a core element as well as a compulsory practice of advanced education; this is due to the global statues of the English language as it considered the most significant language for circulating academic knowledge (Saadi & Saadat, 2015) as well as professional scholars in all disciplines tend to publish their academic articles in English rather than their own languages (Swales, 1997). In view of that, native and non-native students of English are required to produce competent scholarly writings, especially at the postgraduate level. They are not only urged to successfully demonstrate familiarity with different varieties of academic writing, approaches, and strategies, but are also required to espouse an identity of a qualified writer in an academic community of practice. However, the process of becoming an English writer, also referred to as constructing L2 writer identity, seems to be relatively complex for many L2 writers. On a wide-ranging scale, Casanave (2003) stresses that English writing is particularly difficult for non-natives because they are expected to show native-like competency in their written products, which is practically difficult due to research evidence of individual differences in learning (linguistic & non-linguistic factors) that affect their ultimate level of achievement (see Ellis, 1985). There is no exception that Arab students who compose in English as a second/ foreign language are excluded from such conceptualization as many preliminary research studies (Alkhasawneh, 2010; AlFadda, 2012; Alzubaidi, 2012; Almansour & Alshorman, 2014) had indicated that Arabic speaking learners of English find it quite difficult to produce native like written texts, and had constantly identified problems related to their English academic texts at various universities.
In spite of their difficulties in writing and as an English academic student, Arabic speaking students are still required to construct a L2 writer identity in order to succeed in a discourse community of practice, which is a community of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The topic of how L2 writers embrace Standard English to inhabit an identity associated with being academically able students has triggered many researchers. Liming (2012, p.302) states that “there has been a growing interest in investigating L2 learners negotiating and constructing writer identity as they approach academic genre writing over the past two decades”. Burke (2010), for example, implies that when students write for academic purposes in their academic institutions, it is important for them to understand the conceptual terms of academic discourse community, academic writing, and academic writer identity. Accordingly, to become a member of the target language community, it is argued that L2 writers should take on identities as members of the community; for example: representing, reading, and responding to research in a similar fashion to target community members.

Previous studies that have attempted to look at Arab students composing in English had extensively analyzed students’ writing in terms of identifying varieties of problems based on Error Analysis and Rhetorical Contrastive research frameworks. Their difficulties in English writing have been detected at text level (Murad & Mahmood, 2015), process level (Alshahrani, 2015 & Ahmed, 2010), along with sociocultural (Al-Khatib, 2001) based difficulties. Although those research studies, to some extent, have maximized our understanding about various struggles Arab students confront when writing in English, the primary purpose to carry out such research appeared to seek improvements in pedagogical instruction for teaching L2 writing and to increase awareness among teachers of writing. Hardly any research has been covered to address how those L2 writers of English –as subjects-construct an identity towards overcoming
their struggles, especially when they are pursuing an academic career in a context (United States) quite different from their own (home country). Considering that writing is perceived as an individual act in which it reveals the personal choices a writer has made and thereby reveals something of her/his habits of mind, ability to connect and shape ideas, and ability to transform or change us as readers, those L2 writers’ own voices in sorting out their writing difficulties, their social roles in their academic communities, and their potential investments in mastering second language writing appear to be missing as the scan of literature review indicates. In other words, despite of all the difficulties addressed in their L2 writing and that they have formerly developed L1 identity (being speaker & writer of Arabic language), how they construct a successful English writer identity, what their investments are to improve their course based writing, and how they adjust to become a successful member of the target language community have not received equal attention as to the topic of identifying their struggles when composing. Therefore, grounded in sociocultural and discourse theory, this study is intended to look at undergraduate and graduate Saudi students’ investment in an English for Academic Purpose (EAP) community, particularly on how they manage their struggles in writing toward constructing a writer identity.

Statement of the Problem

Research informs us that writing itself is hard for native speakers and even harder for nonnative speakers. In addition to that, constructing an identity is also considered not a simple matter as many L2 writers tend to come with complex migratory, linguistics histories, and multiple identities that the construction of a new identity becomes complex. Nevertheless, in coping up successfully in a discourse community of academic English writing, second language writer, in this sense Saudi student of English, is required to adopt and construct a writer identity
as those of target language members. It has been documented through research that Arab students face many challenges in their transition to college, especially during the first semester. Those challenges described not only in terms of reading comprehension difficulties stemming from limited vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and in terms of reading stamina but also students describe difficulties understanding the genre expectations and style of English academic writing (Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014). Seemingly, their English written texts are influenced by other factors such as their first language and identity along with their previous academic practices in their L1 community. Unsurprisingly, most of the previous studies that have conducted on Arab students writing in English as a second/foreign language have focused on identifying their struggles and challenges in producing native like written texts with suggestions and implementations to improve L2 writing pedagogy. Despite of endures difficulties, relatively, little is known about how they construct writer identity by looking at their actual investments toward becoming a successful member in the target language community, which is a community of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) while studying in the United States. Therefore, this empirical research is carried out to fill the research gap missing in the existing literature review.

**Purpose of the Study**

In view of a student-centered approach that shifts the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student and aims to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students, it is significant to acknowledge students’ voices and investments on how they achieve learning goals, particularly, on how they gain skills and effective practices that enable them for lifelong learning by establishing them qualified English writers for desired as well as multiple communities (L1 & L2 community). As the statement of problem indicates, there has been insufficient empirical research carried out on
the issue of how Arab students composing in English construct a writer identity. The main purpose of this current study, therefore, is to look at the investment of international undergraduate/graduate Saudi students studying in the U.S on how they constructed a writer identity upon joining an English academic community.

**Objectives and Research Questions**

To add to the body of knowledge gained from revising the literature review available on the topic of L2 writing and identity development, this study attempts to investigate the investment of Arab students composing in English as a second language toward creating a writer identity similar to those of target community members. Grounded in the notions of L2 writing, identity, investment, and communities of practice (COP), the overall research question the study addresses is: How do Saudi students of English construct a writer identity within an English for academic purposes community (EAP)? In order to answer this broad question, the following questions are used to guide the project:

1. Do their previous discourse writing practices in the L1 Arabic community match the discourse practices in the new community (English)?
2. How do they perceive and position themselves socially, as subjects, in the new EAP community and manage their struggle in L2 writing?
3. What does their academic writing inform us about their identity construction?

**Significance of the Study**

This study focuses on investigating Saudi student’s investments toward developing a writer identity in a given discourse community of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in order to elicit better understanding of their own attempts in producing native like academic written
texts. The results of this study have potential significance in several key areas. First, this study will enhance our understanding of how they succeed in becoming English writers, especially when there is much research informs us about their struggle in English writing and not on how they construct a writer identity. Second, this research study will not only provide a general framework for language teachers and researchers on the vigorous roles those students paly in the acquisition of second language writing, but also will provide university administrators with a better understanding of how to improve writing instruction for multilingual students, who have become a key part of the U.S. higher education mission. Second language students tend to be viewed through a deficit lens by administrators, faculty, and even fellow students; thus, schools need to reexamine status quo curricular and pedagogical approaches (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Finally, I also believe that the results of my research study may support many international ESL/EFL students out there struggling to construct successful writer identity. This can be achieved through informing them about what other students like them have done and have invested to become an English writer.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Arab Students Composing in English

Research studies that are carried out on Arab students attempting to write in English (Alkhasawneh, 2010; AlFadda, 2012; Alzubaidi, 2012; Almansour & Alshorman, 2014) have acknowledged that Arabic speaking learners who compose in English find it difficult to produce native like written texts, and thus have constantly examined problems in their English academic texts at various universities. For many researchers (Zamel, 1983, Matsuda, 1999-2003; Silva, 1990; Leki, 1994; Kroll, 2001, Hyland, 2003; Canagarajah, 2004), those difficulties that ESL/EFL writers tackle are often ascribed to the nature of L2 writing process that not only requires the mastery of a variety of linguistic competency in the target language, but also other cognitive as well as sociocultural competencies that might be quite different from learner’s native language. In addition to that, the learners’ first language (L1), national culture, L1 educational background, disciplinary culture, genre characteristics, and mismatched expectations between readers and writers (Conner, 2002) consequently led to affect the way Arabs students perceive and compose English writing texts. Researchers of L2 writing, mostly in an EFL context, have examined academic writing of Arab postgraduate students from Error Analysis and Rhetorical Contrastive theoretical frameworks to reveal the problems and the challenges they face (Rass, 2011; AbdulKareem, 2013; Pessoa, Miller & Koufer, 2014; Saadat & Saadi, 2015; Elachachi, 2015). Commonly, there are three different theoretical orientations offered to underline L2 writing competencies: text focused, process focused, and sociocultural focused orientation. Arab students are likely to have problems at those given orientations when they learn second language writing. In order to understand how Arab students approach academic English writing, it is
significant to look at what preliminary research informs us about their struggle in each orientation.

- **Difficulties at Text Focused Orientation**

  Text oriented research (Crompton, 2011; Butler, 2002; & Murad & Khalil, 2015), highlights the development of L2 writing in terms of features that very often L2 writers produce, for example, the ability to write effectively in English is tied to the effective use of English morphology, lexicon, syntax, and rhetorical conventions. Thus, the linguistic knowledge is regarded as an indispensable part of an academic written text and any failure to demonstrate this knowledge will eventually result in opposing forms of English academic writing. For example, Elachachi (2015, p.129) analyzed linguistically and rhetorically written texts of sixteen EFL Arab students attending a university in Algeria. Her research findings reveal that common errors and difficulties based on some linguistic factors (e.g., alphabet, letters, writing style, word patterns, grammar) and some rhetorical and syntactic styles (the use of coordination, subordination & metaphorical styles) were found in their English written texts. She concludes that such struggles are attributed to the differences between Arabic and English language. Arabic is from the Semitic language family; hence its grammar is very different from English. As a result, such differences in a linguistics system between two languages lead us to the understanding why Arab students of English usually need much more time to read or write than their English-learning peers from the Indo-European language families.

  Similarly, Abdulkareem’s (2013) study shows that a large portion of Arab students having problems with their academic writing at the postgraduate level. His participants (eighty-five Arab speaking students) come from different Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Palestine, and Syria. He conducted a study mainly by
collecting five writing tasks and a set of questionnaires to scrutinize what problems they face in their academic writing. He emphasizes that Arab students face many problems when writing such as paraphrasing; this is due to their inability to use their own words or format sentences. In reference to limited words and vocabulary, research data has indicated that most adult native test-takers range from 20,000–35,000 words whereas the most common vocabulary size for foreign test-takers is 4,500 words and that can reach up to 10,000 words by living abroad (Johnson, 2013). Abdulkareem (2013, p.1553) further argues that “most students commit many mistakes related to sentence structure” such as grammatical mistakes in syntactical as well as in organizing new word expressions. In addition, at the text level, academic writing only measured as effective writing when students produce not only grammatically correct sentences, but also consideration for cohesiveness and cohesion which also appeared to be a problematic writing area for many Arab students (Ahmed, 2010 & Fareh, 2014). That is, writing sentences should be cohesive (e.g., conjunctions, punctuations, textual meaning and Dixies) and the text needs to be coherent in terms of generic structure, linguistic features, and grammar (Richards & Sampson, 1974).

- **Difficulties at Process Focused Orientation**

  When it comes to the process based research (Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1991; Matsuda, 2003; Atkinson, 2003), its interest underlies the acquisition of successful macro as well as micro writing strategies (see Brown, 2004). Abdulkareem (2013, p.1553) states that “the importance of using strategies in academic writing can support the specialists of second language acquisition for the development and enhancement of learners’ proficiency level”. Some of the writing strategies involve accurately assessing audience’s interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first draft, using paraphrases and synonyms. There were multiple
conclusions given in regards to how L2 writers learn and use target language writing strategies. For example, some support the idea that first language writing process is completely different from second language writing (Silva, 1993). Others believe that L2 writers transfer writing strategies from the L1 to the L2 interchangeably (Berman, 1994). Some conclude that first and second language writing strategies are practically identical (Beare, 2000). Thus far, in the case of Arab students composing in English, research adds that they approach aspects of L2 writing strategies quite differently from native writers of English. These fundamental differences of processing English writing between native and non-native are attributed to the interference from learner’s first language (Arabic) into the acquisition of target language writing accompanied by previous educational practices in their L1 communities. As a result, their writing is highly influenced by Arabic language and identity; unsurprisingly, there is a large potential for errors of interference spotted when Arab learners produce written or spoken English, which is why their final written products are very often do not bear a resemblance to English academic discourse.

Commonly, the differences between the L1 and the L2 writing have been pinpointed in terms of writing processes, writing purposes, and writing performances (Leki & Carson, 1994). Silva’s (1993) study points out that second language writer of English composes writing quite differently from native English writers and hence, his study maximizes our understanding of those suggestive differences. He indicates that differences are observed at the level of composing process, written text features and discourse level of written text. In the composing process, second language writer tends to plan less and devotes more attention to generate materials for a particular topic given. Silva also emphasizes that those generated materials might not find their way into learners’ written texts. As a result, there is less goal setting and difficulty in organizing generated materials that are very common in the L2 writing process. In addition, producing texts
are more likely to be laborious, less fluent and less productive in which the L2 writer spends more time consulting dictionaries. Consequently, slower rate, longer pauses, fewer words, and more time consuming are typically found in L2 writing process. Furthermore, less re-reading or revising are observed in L2 writing. The only form of revisions likely to occur is checking grammar as many language instructors of writing still view writing as a support skill that reinforces the acquisition of grammar by adopting grammar translation method in their curricula. While L2 writing in written text features seemed to be less fluent, less accurate in terms of more errors, and less effective in regard to quality, the discourse level entails the uses of argumentation, exposition, and narration that are quite different and less effective in their written texts.

- **Difficulties at Sociocultural Focused Orientation**

To cope up with the globalization process, L2 writer is required to be inter-culturally competent in a way that a proficient L2 writer is the one who is capable of acting effectively in a new language setting by modeling target language texts. That is why research attention has been broadly considered sociocultural orientation as this research orientation is particularly concerned with context and audience of L2 writing. However, patterns of cultural transfer from writer’s first language into English texts are likely to occur, specifically when the culture of the native language and the target language are too distant such as the case of English for Arab students. Despite of continues suggestions that “students’ writing in the EFL classroom context needs to take into consideration the communicative goal, the reader, and the writing context” (Ahmed & Myhill, 2016), results from research on Arab students composing in English also indicates that they fail to consider audience in their mind when they write in English (Rass, 2011); and that they "usually think and prepare their ideas in their native language (Arabic) and then translate
them into English” (Khuwaileh & Shoumali, 2000, p. 174) which, in many cases, lead to confuse and distract the audience that they are writing for (teachers & scholars). Furthermore, Al-Khatib (2001) investigated Arab Jordanian students writing personal letters in English. He found cultural transfer from Arabic to their English written texts was obvious. They are not only transferred the Arabic style of writing personal letters into English, but also their writing (language use) appeared to reflect the Arabic cultural thought patterns. For example, “the introductions are lengthy in terms of questioning (not concise) and are not to the point” (Al-Khatib, 2001, p.188); supporting that “cultural transfer is likely to happen when students learn to write in English as a second or foreign language because their behavior is influenced by their first culture: the first culture saturates the L2 writing experience and influences its product as well” (Rass, 2011, p.206).

L2 Writer, Academic Discourse Community and Identity Construction

- The Relationship between L2 Writing and Identity

Although a lot of researchers have written and spoken about Arab students’ English writing in the past, how they socially construct a writer identity in a given community has not been sufficiently addressed. The concept of identity has been incorporated in language learning as an important facet in late 1990s because it is believed that identity and language learning are correlated. Ricento (2005, p.895). Underlines that “identity is constituted through and by language”. Since writing itself is one form of language, educational research to major extent has widely addressed second language writer’s identity development (Canagarajah, 1997, Cummins, 1996; Pennycook, 1998; Norton, 2000; Duff & Uchida, 1997). Research views writer identity construction as an integral part of any academic discourse community. Liming (2012, p.303) states that “writer identity, also called academic identity, refers to the positioning or role that
writers create in writing as academic community members”, and that “when they (L2 writers) learn to write, they are also constructing an identity”. Simandan (2010) views writer identity as the various ways the writers employ their personal perceptions in different contexts.

Set on that an academic discourse is the ways of thinking and using language that exists in an academia setting and that each academic discourse has its own convention, L2 writers of English who wish to pursue an academic career are significantly required to know and demonstrate the forms and norms of spoken and written language being practiced and used in the community, a community they wish to be considered member. It is recommended that newcomers of L2 writers should take on identities as members of the community; for example, representing, reading, and responding to research in a similar fashion to target community members. Burke (2010) implies that when students write for academic purposes in their academic institutions, it is important for them to understand the conceptual terms of academic discourse community, academic writing, and academic writer identity; as a result, “the issue of how writers create identities for themselves in their academic writing and discourse community has become once again the subject of research” (Simandan, 2010) primarily in ESL contexts.

This expansion in researching academic writing and identity of an individual underlines that it does not only “reveals key constitutive elements, which incorporate the private and public “scripts” of the professional self in relation to discipline, institution, and the academe” but also allows researchers to look at “how learners identify themselves with their professions, how they are engaged in their professional setting (Brown, 2011). Hyland (2002, p.2) states “academic writing, like all forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary ‘content’ but also carries a representation of the writer”.
A Writer Identity is Socially Constructed

Norton (2013, p.2) asserts “every time language learners speak, read, or write the target language, they are not only exchanging information with the target language community, they are also organizing and recognizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world”. This late view allows us to understand that “identity reflects an individual’s relationship with the external environment, which is reconstructed through interaction with society” (Kouhpaeenejad and Gholaminejad, 2014, p.202). Given that on one hand an identity formation is viewed as an individual’s relation with the surrounding, writing on the other hand is perceived an individual as well as a social act in which writers respond to the people and world around them in specific and prescribed contexts, i.e., writers socially connect themselves through writing with an audience for some reasonable purposes in a given community of practice (see Wenger, 1998). It is viewed that L2 writers’ identity is constructed and shaped through discursive practice and social interaction”; that is “what they write and how they write are simply constrained by the larger disciplinary community with which they are closely associated” (Liming, 2012, p. 304).

Therefore, it can be argued that the L2 writer socially construct their identity in a given community, and that in order for researcher to investigate writer identity development, they must look at the subject (writer) and his relation to the social environment (community of practice) from theories of sociocultural, social constructivist, and post-structuralism perspectives. Theories of identity formations and constructions have emphasized on the role of “social”. Those theoretical perspectives allow us to understand the relationship between the individual and the social by looking at how L2 writers in particular and learners of English in general form their own subjectivities in various social contexts. From poststructuralist perspectives, for instance, identity is perceived in language learning as a socially organized and constructed in which
individuals construct a sense of who they are by taking up different subject positions that may result in conflicting each other (Weedon, 1997), or as Wenger (1998) elaborates that identity construction is a process of “becoming”, in which language learners are socially engaged to become likewise; and those “socio discursive practices in which individuals engage both shape their complex identity and constraint their behavior” (Rubio, 2006, p.2). There are quite number of research studies that have attempted to look at how their participants created L2 writer identity. Liming (2012), for example, conducts a study of six Chinese social science doctoral students constructed their academic identity, especially on how they position themselves in the specific discourse community of drafting, revising, shaping the discussion, and the conclusion section of their L2 thesis. His research finding reveals that the process of the students’ academic identity construction was fluid and dynamic, in which they gradually evolved from novice writers (labeling themselves as new student writers) at the initial stage of their writing to more skilled academic writers at the later stage, a stage where they built a positive writer identity. Liming further elaborates that by means of various social interactions, they eventually developed more genre knowledge and became more competent in communicating with members of their discipline community.

Similarly, sociocultural theory, for example, seeks to understand “how situated meanings of learning are constructed, reconstructed, and transformed through social mediation” (Liming, 2012, p. 304). That is, the more the learner interacts with the social environment, the more he/she attains a higher level of development through scaffolding and zone of proximal development (see Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). To elaborate this further, the more L2 writer engages in social activities by exposing to varieties of target language writing, the more s/he becomes aware of the writing system practiced in that community, and therefore will eventually lead to a
construction of L2 identity. The social constructivist theory, in particular, refuses to see learners with permanent labels, rather sees learners as constructive agents who continue to construct their identities as they emerge and interact within a particular social context. Clegg (2008) states that academic identity of an individual is not predetermined property but rather should be viewed as a part of the lived complexity of the individual’s development. As a result, individual’s identities are tending to change, develop, and shape according to that particular social group.

- **Identity Construction is Complex**

However, one should be aware that construction of identity is not an easy phase for many L2 writers as research implies, especially when it is given that L2 writers formerly developed L1 identity (being native speaker & writer of Arabic). According to Tajfel’s theory, those identities (being bilingual) that L2 writers hold within them are considered interrelated in which an individual possesses multiple identities or several selves, but a representation and an activation of a certain identity will dominant over others in a given time and situation, or as Wenger (1998) puts it individuals make a choice among the different identities within them based on their social participation. For example, if they write for an Arabic community, then their L1 identity as writers of Arabic language will be the one activated at that given time and space. When they write for an English community, they shift to their L2 identity, allowing them to enjoy multiple memberships in discourse communities (Canagarajah’s, 2004). This shift is not always clear-cut and steady, particularly when it is known that while the text in English is expected to be linear, coherent and concise, the organization of the text of Arabic is circular and non-cumulative. As a result, their written texts embrace traces from both languages, which make their writings unique but at the same time alienating them from not belonging to either community. This can be observed through their teachers’ unpleasant comments on their writing, or when their writing
papers are constantly rejected. That is why they very often feel a mixture of desire for and resistance to the identities they must take on (Burgess & Ivanic, 2010) and apparently L2 writing becomes a site where identities can be aligned with, contested, desired and resisted (Olinger, 2011). This can be implicitly concluded from Fernsten’s (2008, p.46) study. Her study reveals that one of her participants, who was taking an undergraduate intermediate composition course, demonstrated resistance and conformation to writing practices in the academy and hence, “created a multiple and conflicting identity” as illustrated from her writing assignments and a recorded writing conference. Moreover, Canagarajah’s (2004) study of multilingual writers and the struggle for voice in academic discourse informs us about how L2 writers construct or negotiate their identities toward more empowering self-sense in a given discourse community. According to him, forms of identity conflicts and negotiations taking place in writing by L2 writers can be observed through strategies of avoidance, transposition, accommodation, opposition, and appropriation.

*Avoidance* is a stage where an L2 writer experiences a conflict between past and present identities because the dominant discourses (e.g. academic English) are approached without giving attention to one’s preexisting discourses (historical/educational/linguistic background); as a result, the L2 writer does not wish to wrestle critically with those competing discourses encountered in the target language community. This also correspond to what Ivanic (1998) refers as “autobiographical self”, in which writer’s written text is influenced by his or her past experiences and literacy practices.

Oppositely, *transposition* is the strategy through which L2 writers develop a critical vantage position to benefit from both native ideologies/discourses and dominant discourses by
adjusting writing according to the different communities they are writing for, thus allowing them to enjoy multiple memberships in discourse communities.

Accommodation is the strategy through which L2 writers deliberately relinquish their past identity for a newly constructed identity to be considered as a member of the target discourse community. Opposition occurs when an L2 writer adopts vernacular discourses in his/her writing that oppose what is commonly practiced in academic discourse of the target language. Appropriation occurs when an L2 writer “takes over the dominant academic discourses to infuse them with strengths from preferred personal discourses” (p.285) which also very similar to “discoursal self”. L2 writer brings his/her self-representation in written texts in which their texts are truly reflect their values, beliefs and power relations in the social context (see: Ivanic (1998).

Canagarajah (2004) argues that L2 writers are likely to adopt a position between the established academic conventions and their own academic discourses and non-academic discourses that they bring with them from their home countries. In view of that, it has been argued that second language writers of English will re-identify themselves upon experiencing different discourse communities, or they will be positioned to engage in constructing a new identity or in a phase negotiating their previous and current identities, which is why many L2 writers very often do not construct L2 writer identity successfully. Casanave (2002) believes that learners who enter a new social world might find target community practices/styles uncommon to them; Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p.7) assert that L2 writers come into academic situations with “many different literacy practices and many different views on the purpose of reading and writing”; as a result, this transition of what is common to them from their past experiences in their academic communities with what is uncommon to them in the new community (academic
setting) creates disquieting stages in the process of composing, which research acknowledges the case of many Arab students struggling in English writing. This transition sparks researchers as it provides them with insights on how they construct L2 academic/writer identity, a matter of becoming a target language member, and how they negotiate their existing identities with the newly constructed one through writing. How previous educational practices might influence one’s academic writing and hence formation of a writer identity can be exemplified from Burke’s (2010) study. She conducts a qualitative study on how six Korean students at a university in the U.S. constructed their academic writer identities ideationally, interpersonally, and textually in the English academic discourse community based on the previous L1 writing practices in their EFL context, and the current L2 writing practices in ESL context. Her research findings indicate that Korean students demonstrated various approaches in constructing their identities influenced by their previous Korean writing practices, favored academic discourse, marginalized ESL social and linguistics identities, program level, resistance and blogging. She indicates that her participants used fewer interpersonal metadiscoursal markers such as hedges, boosters, and writer-oriented markers, an indication of that they did not strongly establish their identities as authorities academic writers. Furthermore, Burke points out that features of Korean discourse (L1 identity) were examined in students’ academic written artifacts; while undergraduate students were more influenced by Korean discourse at lexical and grammatical levels, graduate students relied on more traditional academic discourse and process writing discourses.
L2 Writers’ Investment in Academic Writing

L2 writers who compose writing in a language that is not their first or strongest language generally tend to come with complex migratory, linguistics histories, and multiple identities. The same perception applies to those Arab students who are pursuing their academic studies in a country (United States) that is quite different from their home countries (Middle East). In investigating their identity development to become an English writer; their desire or resistance; their commitment to learn a target language writing; and their changing identities in a particular discourse community, Norton’s (2013) offered a model and that is through the construct of investment that complements construct of motivation. Yet, there is a clear distinction between motivation and investment; Norton argues that motivational theories do not account for equal relation of power between the language learners and the target speakers; and that “while motivation can be seen as a primarily psychological construct, investment must be seen within a sociological framework, and seeks to make a meaningful connection between a learner’s desire and commitment to learn a language, and their complex and changing identity…it signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (p.4). To understand L2 writers’ desire and development of an identity in a given discourse community, their investments must be recognized. Norton asserts that there is an integral relationship between identity and investment; and therefore, in investigating one’s identity, research foci should initiate questions such as what the learner’s investments are in a particular language community, rather than initiating question such as to what extend the learner is motivated to learn, especially when it is given that most L2 writers come with high motivation and determination for success formerly joining an academic community (e.g., seeking postgraduate degree). Cumming (2006) highlights investment as an...
important explanatory construct in language learning, and preliminary research implies that learners’ investments in learning languages, in which their identities affect their participation in second language activities and their access to participation in the activities of their communities in need of further research (Kaplan, 2002).

Taking that into consideration, research that had drawn on Norton’s construct of investment to explain the English language development has expanded in the North American context with focus on the learner and the learning context. For examples, studies that carried out to explain the investment of Chinese students in developing English language literacy are: Mckay and Wong (1996), Liming (2012), Trent (2008), Norton and Gao (2008) as well as De Costa (2010). Sylvester (2002) examined the investments of four Cambodian women in adult English as a second language (ESL) classes in the United States; Potowski (2004) and Bearse and de Jong (2008) focused on investment in the context of two-way Spanish-English immersion programs. Haneda (2005) drew on the construct of investment to understand the engagement of two university students in an advanced Japanese literacy course. Burke (2010) conducted a qualitative study on how six Korean students at a university in the U.S. constructed their academic writer identities. However, little or none is written on how Arab students construct a writer identity in their academic communities by looking at their investments. Therefore, this study is intended to look at L2 Writers’ Investment in Writing Academic Paper students’ investments on how they manage their struggles in order to write effectively in English toward constructing a writer identity.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The main purpose of this case study is to examine at the investment of international undergraduate/graduate Saudi students studying in the U.S regarding how they construct a writer identity upon joining an English academic community at the University of Memphis. The overall research question the study addresses is: How do Saudi students of English construct a writer identity within an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) community? In order to answer this broad question, the following research questions guided the study:

1. Do Saudi students’ previous discourse writing practices in the L1 Arabic community match the writing practices in the new community (English)?
2. How do Saudi students perceive and position themselves socially, as subjects, in their new EAP communities and manage their struggle to write in their L2?
3. What does their academic writing tell us about their identity construction?

Research Design

This research study implemented a qualitative approach. There were various main rationales for selecting a qualitative approach. A few of the rationales concerning how a qualitative approach can contribute to the study were underlined. First, qualitative research produces holistic understandings of rich, contextual, generally unstructured, and non-numeric data (Mason, 2002). Such an approach generates data about human groups in a social setting (Creswell, 2009), justifying the purpose of the current study that investigates Saudi writers writing in a particular discourse community. Second, qualitative research assists researchers by emphasizing “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.4).
was interested in understanding the investment of International Saudi students in addressing their struggles with English academic writing in the process of creating successful writer identities. Taking into account that individual students can have different experiences regarding their potential investment in developing a writer identity, I conducted this study using an interpretive approach, namely qualitative research with an idiographic focus. An interpretive approach aims to offer insights into how Saudi students, in their new community (L2) make sense of their identity construction. This particular approach allows the researcher to focus on interpreting the situation through the viewpoints of the participants. According to Ponelis (2015),

the interpretive research paradigm is characterized by a need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seeks an explanation within the frame of reference of the participant rather than the objective observer of the action. (P.538).

Furthermore, the main procedures used to conduct the research methodology when taking a qualitative approach are collecting the data, coding the data according to themes, and analyzing the data. Thus, the approach provides flexibility, allowing researchers to change the line of inquiry and move in new directions as more information and a better understanding of the relevant data are acquired (see Blumer, 1999).

- Case Study Design

In my study, I adopted a descriptive case study as a strategic qualitative research methodology in order to obtain rich and meaningful data about International Saudi students constructing L2 writer identities at the University of Memphis. Merriam (1988, p.27) stated that a “descriptive case study is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study”. A case study is not intended to be a study of an entire organization, but is intended to focus on a...
particular issue, feature, or unit of analysis. Hence, it fulfills the purpose of my research study, as my focus is on a particular group of students (Saudi students) and their construction of writer identities at an American university.

Similarly, Thomas (2010, p.3) asserted that “a case study is about the particular rather than general”. Therefore, a research design involving multi-case approaches was mainly employed in this study to capture the dynamic process of the particular group of international undergraduate/graduate Arab Saudi students writing academic papers for their university courses and to gain their perspectives regarding their construction of writer identity during the writing process. Given that the number of participants is relatively small in interpretive research and that novice researchers are recommended to begin with a “simple and straightforward case study” (Yin, 2009, p.162), I decided to restrict the number of cases to three; each case was treated as an intrinsic single case study to understand and obtain the intricate details about each case rather than attempting to make generalization. By adopting such research paradigms, my aim was to assure that this study not only provided a description of the significant events relating to the particular phenomenon under investigation, but also identified some of the common trends emerging in the lived stories of the students.

- Study Participants

The participants in this study were undergraduate/graduate International Saudi students who were studying in the United States. The reason I decided to focus on international Saudi students studying in the United Stated as my research participants is that I believe it is crucial to obtain a rich picture of this particular group. My aim was to examine some factual evidence, as well as to touch upon their linguistic background.
**Factual Evidence:** The number of undergraduate/postgraduate Arab students seeking to pursue academic careers in U.S universities appears to increase every year. Open Doors, a survey published annually by the Institute for International Education, indicated that there were approximately 86,372 students from Middle East (10% of all international students in the U.S). In 2016, Saudi Arabia was among the top three countries that represent the total enrollment of international students in the U.S. Saudi Arabia, one of the Middle Eastern countries, is a country tends to send its students to the best universities in the world, and American universities represent a top priority for the Saudi government. Due to the excellent academic programs at its universities, the United States of America has become the preferred destination for Saudi students.

As academic English writing remains a key component of any American university, Saudi students, however, are confronted by problems of various kind in their English academic writing, according to research. To improve their English writing, Saudi students often join intensive English programs (IEP), sometimes termed “English as a Second Language” programs (ESL). Nevertheless, the language classes (IEP) that they took in order to gain admission to universities aimed to improve students’ overall language proficiency in four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking); it has been argued that whatever they learned in those classes may not transfer well into college classes in which the instruction is focused primarily on writing, and not developing students’ linguistic proficiency. Hammill (2014, p.2), for example, asserted that “L2 and L1 writing programs tend to be separate from each other in terms of administration, pedagogical approaches, and assumptions about the nature of academic writing”.

**Linguistic Background:** Saudi students have rarely been given any explicit instruction or training in English academic writing in Saudi Arabia because they study English as a Foreign
Language (EFL), and second-and foreign- language writing instruction and acquisition are perceived differently in an EFL context from the way they are in an ESL context. The differences between two contexts are linked to the status of English, as well as the exposure to English writing. In contexts in which English writing is learnt and taught as a foreign language, the Arabic language remains the primary language of instruction. Students are only exposed to English inside the classroom as an additional language, with little or no exposure to academic English writing, as they study English for a set number of hours per week. As a result, their English competency often does not develop equally with their first language competency in Arabic; thus their L1 identity has been formed and they may not have been in a position to question or negotiate their identity because their L1 identity has been firmly developed. They find developing an L2 identity more challenging. For this reason, upon moving from an EFL context (Saudi Arabia) to an ESL context (the United States to pursue a higher education), they are required to undergo stages of assimilation and accommodation in which they “acquire the language as well as the behaviors, attitudes, resources, and ways of engaging needed to recognizably display the identity of a successful student” (Hawkins, 2005, p. 59) in an academic community. Thus, it can be argued that the context (EFL versus ESL) in which language learning and writing practices takes place is crucial in determining an individual’s language practices, investments, and identity construction.

- Purposeful Sampling

To take the factual evidence and the linguistic background mentioned above into account, the participants were basically selected via purposeful sampling. Eisenhardt (1989, p.537) affirmed that “random selection of cases is neither necessary, not even preferable” and that “relevance” is the key word in purposeful sampling. For example, Creswell (2007) mentioned
that, in purposeful sampling, the participants are selected because they provide cases that are informative as well as rich with regard to the topic under investigation. In this sense, L2 learners and writers tend to have complex migratory, linguistics histories, and multiple identities (Duff, 2015). As a result, the participants were purposefully selected because of their unique experiences of English writing, as little was known about their integration and investment in succeeding to become English writers in a timely manner (the duration of their academic study in U.S) when moving to an ESL context.

Criterion Sampling was used for the purposeful sampling, since all participants in the target group met specific criteria. This sampling strategy was considered to be successful because the participants shared or experienced the same situation or issues that are under study to a certain degree. The following criteria needed to be met in order to participate in this study:

a. Full-time international Saudi student (females or males),

b. From Saudi Arabia and speaking Arabic as a first language,

c. Studying at the University of Memphis (undergraduate/ graduate),

d. Having been exposed to some language classes in the US before enrolling at the university, and

e. Currently practicing or writing English academic papers for classes.

I prepared a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) to inform and invite potential subjects to participate in my study. I contacted the Center for International Education Services at the University of Memphis. I then scheduled an appointment to meet with Clara Nunis, Interim Assistant Director. I met with her at the International Students Services. I briefly explained about my research and requested her to send the recruitment email to undergraduate and graduate International Saudi students. Following this, the e-mail was sent to the prospective participants.
asking them whether they would be interested in participating in a research study of Saudi
students constructing writer identities. Only a few students responded to the email. Of the five
students who responded, three international Saudi undergraduate/graduate students were
selected. Each student had a unique background and experience: Their real names were changed
for reasons of confidentiality; in this study, they were given pseudonyms 1) Dina, 2) Samir, and
3) Sara. See Table 1 for detailed information about the participants:

Table 1

*Information about the Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>English Language Proficiency Test Score</th>
<th>University of Attendance in U.S.</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Stage of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>IELTS/5.5</td>
<td>University of Memphis</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samir</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>TOEFL/72</td>
<td>University of Memphis</td>
<td>Health Studies</td>
<td>BA First Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>IELTS/6</td>
<td>University of Memphis</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>MA First Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I met with each participant to explain and discuss the research methodology. I addressed their concerns and answered questions about participating in my research. They shared their enthusiasm for my topic and willingness to participate in my study. After agreeing to participating, each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B for the Informed Consent letter) prior to the procedure of collecting data. After explaining the collection of document data (their academic writing assignments and reflective essay on a given topic), I asked them about their upcoming writing assignments. They advised me about the deadlines for submitting each assignment based on their course syllabi. I requested them to send me each submitted assignment in order to analyze the data and to prepare the interview questions. I also gave them a writing essay prompt so they could reflect on their academic writing practices in Saudi Arabia (L1 community) and in the United States (L2 community). I set up interview dates with them after I collected each assignment. Each interview was conducted after collecting the student’s written assignment to capture the dynamic process, as well to elicit data pertaining the topic under investigation. Following is background information concerning the Study’s participants.

- Background Information of Study Participants

**Participant One:** Dina was a female graduate student who had been studying in America for four years. She studied English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. She was first exposed to English writing at high school. She attended a university in Saudi Arabia for her bachelor degree, at which the Arabic language was the main medium of instruction. She was more competent and assertive when writing in Arabic. Although she liked to write papers in English, she described her overall experience of writing academic papers as “frustrating”, “hard work”, “not easy”, and “very difficult”. Dina did not start to gain familiarity with American academic
writing conventions until she joined the Intensive English Institute (IEI) program at the University of Memphis. Dina wanted to improve her English in order to meet the university’s requirements for graduate school and be admitted. When Dina came to the United States to pursue her MA degree in Early Childhood Education, her English language proficiency was not sufficient, as she stated in her reflective essay that she “…came to United States with very basic knowledge of English”. As a result, she needed to enroll in English writing classes to improve her written English work. Dina’s goal for writing in English was to write sufficiently well to succeed in her MA program. English writing appeared to be a major concern that was limited to her graduate study in the USA. When asked what English academic writing meant to her, Dina replied:

Honestly, my goal is to succeed in my academic education while I am in America. I want to write good enough to finish my master program. For me, English writing is only a mean to succeed in my master program (Dina, reflective essay).

Participant Two: Samir was a male undergraduate student who had been in America for four years. During our first meeting, he was attending his first semester in the Health Studies program. Samir enrolled in different language institutions to enhance his English in general and writing in particular. In his home country (Saudi Arabia), Samir had never had the opportunity to write complete academic papers in English, as is the established practice at American universities. He reflected on how he learned academic writing when arriving in the USA: “Before I entered university of Memphis, I studied in different English as second language institutions… I learn how to write by putting more time and effort on writing classes”. When I asked him what academic English writing meant to him, he responded: “English writing to me is an important tool to learn and master. I want to make writing a skill that I have and do perfectly,
so I hope that my passion for writing grow” (Samir, reflective essay).

Participant Three: Sara was a female graduate student who had been studying in America for two years. She studied English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Upon her arrival in the USA, in order to be granted admission to the business school at the University of Memphis, she joined an Intensive English Institute (IEI) program to become proficient in English. She felt that her English language proficiency was insufficient, as she commented that her overall writing skills were “not good”. Sara was introduced to English academic writing in her final year of pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Saudi Arabia when she was working on a graduation project. Sara wanted to be a competent English writer, as she was of the opinion that her career success in Saudi Arabia was strongly associated with how well she could write academic papers in English.

Data Collection Methods

Norton (2013, pp.14-15) emphasized that “in fieldwork-based research on identity and language learning, researchers often combine a range of method of data collection such as ethnographic observation, interviews, diary studies, and written responses”. This is why most qualitative researchers, such as Toohey (2000, 2001), Hall (2005), Hyland (2012), Denzin & Lincoln, (1994), and Gee (2012) have used a variety of interconnected methods to obtain a better understanding of the topic under investigation. Strengths of the case study method are its flexibility and adaptability, which allows single or multiple methods of data collection to be used to investigate a research problem (Cavaye, 1996). Merriam (1988, p, 68) stated that “qualitative case studies rely heavily upon qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents”. These views on data collection encouraged me to select a research design taking a multi-case approach in which in-depth interviews were conducted and documents were collected
in this study. Through this research design, I wanted to capture the dynamic process of the particular group of undergraduate/graduate Arab Saudi students writing academic papers for their university courses, and to gather their perspectives on their construction of their identities as writers during the writing process.

I collected the data from two main sources: semi-structured interviews and textual Data. The intention was to use the qualitative data collected from the interviews and documents (students’ written assignments and reflective essays) to investigate their investment in ways of addressing their writing struggles to create identities as writers. Yin, (2009, p.106) as cited in Ponelis, 2015, p.541 asserted that

A primary source of data in both qualitative research and in case studies is the interview. Secondary data can be collected from various sources depending on the research focus.

In view of this, the textual data collected from my participants were mainly used for the subsequent discourse-based interviews. The data collection methods utilized for each research question are outlined in Table 2.
Table 2

*Data Collection Methods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do Saudi student’s previous discourse writing practices in the L1 Arabic community match the discourse practices in the new community (English)?</td>
<td>Interviews, Reflective Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do they perceive and position themselves socially, as subjects, in the new EAP community and manage their struggle to write in L2?</td>
<td>Interviews, Reflective Essay, Students’ Written Assignments(1,2,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What does their academic writing tell us about their identity construction?</td>
<td>Interviews, Students’ Written Assignments (1,2,3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Textual Data**

Merriam (1988) stresses that data collected from text-based sources are more objective than other forms of data collection. Therefore, to gain a fuller picture of the topic under investigation, I decided to collect several different texts from each participant as an initial step towards
collecting data. First, I collected three completed and graded academic written assignments that each participant had written for classes (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Each Participant’s Three Written Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Type of Written Assignment</th>
<th>Title of the Written Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dina</strong></td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Can Teaching Drawing Improve Kindergarteners’ Social Communication Skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Drawing in Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching Drawing to Kindergarteners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Samir</strong></td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>Summary and Reflection on the Class Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>Assessing Utilitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection Paper</td>
<td>State of Nature as per John Locke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sara</strong></td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Major Discussion on System Analysis Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Report</td>
<td>Registration System for Institute of Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Prompts and Responses on Information System Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having access to such textual data allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the participants’ investment in managing their struggles with L2 writing, their construction of
identities as writers, and their personal and historical backgrounds in English writing. As a result, the descriptive and informative data found in these collected documents provided information that could not be obtained via the interviews. In the recruitment email, the participants were informed clearly about textual data, and they were extremely cooperative during the data collecting stage. The textual data collected from my study participants served as the reference for the subsequent discourse-based interviews. The textual data analysis was aligned with the research questions. Most interview questions were generated based on those collected texts.

- Semi-structured Interviews

With regard to obtaining specific data for qualitative case studies, semi-structured interviews have been considered a focal methodological preference for many researchers in order to determine the participants’ thoughts. Therefore, to determining Saudi students’ individual investments in how they created identities as writers, I conducted an interview with each participant after collecting the textual data (each assignment) that each participant had completed and submitted for the teacher’s review. The face-to-face interviews were conducted over an eight-month period. Each interview lasted for about half an hour and was conducted face-to-face to establish rapport, to build trust, and to discuss patterns occurred in their writing assignments that needed more clarification and questioning. Based on the preference and for the convenience of my interviewees, six of the interviews were conducted at the University of Memphis and three interviews were conducted at the Cordova Public Library. There were two female interviewees and one male interviewee. I took the first 10 minutes to explain the purpose of my research study and to discuss informed consent, including confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, withdrawal options and so on. I also informed them that all interview will be recorded using Olympus WS-852 recorder for transcription and further notes.
Since I collected three different written assignments from each participant, I had to read each written assignment carefully to prepare interview questions in order to stimulate responses based on the participant’s experience of writing each assignment. This is why I conducted an interview with each participant after s/he had received a graded assignment in order to capture the dynamic process of writing each academic assignment. In total, there were three semi-structured interviews with each participant. A list of questions was prepared to guide each interview (see Appendix D for all interview protocol), and these questions were aligned with the research questions investigating how Saudi students constructed an L2 writer identity and their investments in becoming members of the target language community. I began the interviewing process in the academic year of spring/fall 2017.

The first round interview questions was designed to elaborate information about the first collected written assignment (such as topic choice, expressions, organization, linguistic choices, and word and phrase choices). In addition, it focused on the autobiographic aspect of writer identity, which revealed how each participant viewed him-or herself as a writer in both communities of practice (L1 & L2). It also covered questions about writer’s personal profiles in relation to their L2 writing experiences, the writers’ comments about learning and composing English academic writing, and the writers’ experience of living in a context different from their own in terms of native language and the educational system. The participants discussed a wide variety of topics during the extended interviews. The second round of interview questions was designed to obtain data about the participants’ second written assignments (such as topic choice, expressions, organization, linguistic choices, and word and phrase choices). In addition, it included answers to such question as how they positioned themselves as writers in their L2 community, how they wrote assignments, how they took action in the development of writing
skills, the L2 writing difficulties encountered and strategies they used. The third round of interview questions was based on the participants’ third written assignments and not only covered a discussion of their linguistics choices, but also their vigorous attempts to develop writing competency.

**Data Analysis and Procedures**

Analyzing data in qualitative research requires researchers to make sense and interpret the phenomena in terms of the meaning the participants assign to them (Creswell, 2009). The accountability for collecting and analyzing data explicitly encourage them to engage in theory development, as well as to promote better understanding of the current knowledge. This study followed Creswell’s (2009) model of data analysis in which the data are analyzed thematically in terms of using both direct interpretation and the aggregation of instances in the form of codes. All qualitative data analysis involves four essential steps, which were included in all three cases in my research. These steps are:

1. Collecting raw data (involves transcription of text/audio data into meaningful units),
2. Coding and categorizing data using thematic analysis (groupings raw data/chunking),
3. Data interpretation and themes, and
4. Data representation (themes become the story or the narrative).

In order to address the research questions, I used the data from the interviews, students’ written assignments, and reflective essays. Thematic Analysis was used to identify themes within the data in order to explore how participants visualized and understood their experiences as L2 writers in an academic discourse community, and their construction of identities as writers.

After collecting each written assignment from the individual participants, I performed a close reading of their texts. I highlighted major points (such as topic choice, expressions, organization,
linguistic choices, word choices, teachers’ comments if any, and phrase choices) and made notes in the margin to use when creating the interview questions. I conducted an interview immediately after analyzing and generating interview questions from each participant’s written assignment. I reviewed all my notes immediately after each interview. All audio interviews were transcribed. I transcribed the interviews in the same order that they were conducted and re-examined each transcribed interview repeatedly to determine initial coding. I read carefully to write notes for preliminary classification schemes and groupings. I created a document for each interview to get a sense of the data, as well as to remove irrelevant data (a process of data reduction).

In addition, I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2009) of all the documents. During this stage of the analysis, each interview document and the student’s reflective essays were read through to form initial codes. After gaining familiarity with the documents and searching for general ideas, coding was done with an eye to identify both descriptive and thematic data (Creswell, 2015). The descriptive codes were used to create an essay (narratives) about each case to introduce readers to the cases. Rich descriptions in the form of case narratives not only allow the reader to judge the transferability of the interpretation but also serve a sound platform for understanding the connection of language learning (writing), identity construction, and the social environment (context). As Pavlenco (2001, as cited in Norton, 2013, p. 167), emphasized,

L2 learning stories . . . are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning and socialization. It is possible that only personal narratives provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal and intimate that they are rarely – if ever – breached in
the study of SLA, and at the same time are at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process.

In order to establish themes for each case, the in-vivo codes (the practice of assigning a label to a section of data) were created directly from the language of the participants, coding names drawn from participant quotes or interpretation of the data. The themes were the grouped to answers the research questions that arose from the thematic codes in order to establish a smaller number of categories. (Creswell, 2007). Themes were compared across cases to identify similarities and differences. The interpretations were derived by using direct interpretation by “drawing meaning from a single instance” (Creswell, 2007, p. 245), or by developing naturalistic generalizations by “making the case understandable and its application to other cases” (Creswell, 2007, p. 246). After the narrative structure for each case had been established, the three cases were coded to identify themes that existed across cases (data Representation stage). This entailed reading through each case to pinpoint ways in which each case was unique or was similar to the others. I returned constantly to the initial codes to make changes as needed when more data was added.

All documents collected from study participants or created by the researcher were typed on the researcher’s computer and a password was set for each folder. I put each participant’s data collected (for example, the students’ three written assignments, one reflective essay, three recorded interviews for each assignment, three transcribed interviews for each interview, notes and other forms of data the participants chose to share with me) in a single folder. I also kept hard copies of all data collected in an organizer on my desk at home.

- Validity and Reliability

My role as the Researcher: As an international student and researcher, I found it
advantageous to conduct the study with international Saudi students. This is because I share the same linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and to some degree, educational background. As a result of these shared features with the study participants, there was a greater possibility of developing a good rapport. In addition, being a second-language learner and writer of English, I understood participants’ L2 writing experiences, particularly when we share the same L1 (Arabic). I asked the Saudi participants to feel comfortable switching between Arabic and English in order to express their ideas during the interview sessions, as well as in their reflective essays should they wish to do.

However, because of the sharing linguistic, cultural, and educational background, I am aware that my own bias might have had an effect on the study. Stake (2000, p. 442) pointed out that a “researcher’s knowledge of the case faces hazardous passage from writing to reading”; therefore, should find “ways of safeguarding the trip”. To ensure validity in qualitative research, the researcher is required to consider methods/strategies for validation. In my study, I used some strategies to ensure validity of the collected data. First, personal reflexivity reflects on researcher’s bias, values, beliefs and experiences and how these can influence the research. Second, epistemological reflexivity allows researcher to think about the ways of generating knowledge/data. Third, triangulation (the data, the researcher, the theory) is an approach to research that uses a combination of more than one research strategy in a single investigation in order to increase credibility. Finally, trustworthiness increases the credibly of the research when the study participants accept the findings by confirming them.

**Personal Reflexivity:** Although it is important to be interested in the topic, a researcher cannot allow emotional attachment to “preclude the open, exploratory learner’s attitude that is necessary for good data collection and analysis” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992 p. 14). Nevertheless,
researchers’ subjectivity or “their tacit knowledge, their knowledge about their field and their project” (Angelil, 1997, p. 271) can also be a positive feature of the research. Based on these perspectives, I avoided adopting a skewed view of the situation and circumstances surrounding my case. I located my own experiences and beliefs on this topic in relation to the information I gathered. For example, during the data collection stage, I found that some of the facets of construction of the identity as an L2 writer were similar to my own, but were also unique because each Saudi student had different perspectives and approaches to L2 writing, which provided much information about my own practices, as well as about their practices and investments in developing identities as L2 writer. Nonetheless, I came to a gradual understanding of how my own experience as an L2 writer who had struggled to form an identity could be an asset rather than a liability, particularly because a good interpretative study relies on the researcher’s retention of transparency and reflexivity.

**Epistemological Reflexivity:** Based on Yin’s (2009) comments regarding the necessary skills for a case study, I developed interview questions that were relevant to the students’ different written assignments, as well as the background to their unique cases. I attempted to be a good listener when my participants shared information about their writing experiences. During the analysis, I often returned to the transcribed interviews and participants reflective essays for confirmation. In addition, when possible, I used direct quotations from the transcriptions to illuminate the participant’s “voice”. This was done in order to provide an opportunity for readers to reach their own conclusions regarding the information presented and to construct their own perspective concerning how International Saudi students approached their English academic papers despite their struggles identified in preliminary research (Creswell, 2007).

**Triangulation:** Esterberg (2002) emphasized that there are strengths and weaknesses in every
research strategy. However, utilizing multiple methods can form a clearer picture (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). Triangulation proposes “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). Therefore, triangulation (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2000) was utilized in my study in form of using multiple data sources/participants, two researchers to check data interpretations, and the use of different theoretical perspectives (constructive theory, discourse theory, sociocultural theory, and Ivanic’s (1988) framework for analyzing aspects of writer identity).

I used data triangulation in the form interviews and documents (students’ written assignments and reflective essays). By implementing three case studies and conducting multiple in-depth interviews with the three Saudi students regarding various aspects of being L2 writer and identity construction, it was easy to attain and compare data based on their descriptions of engaging in different academic written assignments. I found that experiences and perspectives were being repeated and elaborated upon by each Saudi participant. Data from documents allowed me to obtain information and evidence regarding their writing performances, as well as their perspectives that could not be elicited during the interview sessions. In addition, information collected from participants’ documents was also contextualized during the interviews where I asked my participant questions based on their written assignments. Researcher triangulation applied when I checked inter-rater reliability with the assistance of my research advisor, as well as with the help of a graduate colleague in the English department to confirm the interpretations data. Once the analysis of the collected data is complete, I intend to confirm the research findings with my Saudi participants to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of my research.
Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

Overview

Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data obtained from nine semi-structured interviews and textual data from three international Saudi students studying at the University of Memphis. The research question was triggered by examining: How do Saudi students of English construct identities as writers within an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) community? In order to answer this broad question, three questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. Do their previous discourse writing practices in the L1 Arabic community match the writing practices in the new community (English)?

2. How do they perceive and position themselves socially, as subjects, in the new EAP community and manage their struggles to write in the L2?

3. What does their academic writing reveal about their identity construction?

I divided the chapter into three main sections to answer the guided research questions that pertain to L2 writers and the construction of identity.
Section I

Saudi Students’ Writing Experiences in L1 and L2 Discourse Community

This section provides a discussion of Saudi students’ previous experiences of learning to write English academic papers as English writers in the L1 community (Saudi Arabia), and the Saudi students’ current writing experience as English writers in an L2 community (the USA). The discussion of the results of data analysis is provided in the form of relating the case studies to Carbaugh's (2007) framework on Cultural Discourse Analysis (CuDA) which explores the culturally distinctive communication practices through five discursive hubs: (1) Meaning about dwelling, place and environment; (2) Meaning about being, personhood and identity; (3) Meaning about acting, action and practice; (4) Meaning about relating, relationships; and (5) Meaning about feeling, emotion and affect. These concepts are central in any act of communication.

While the above five discursive hubs of Carbaugh were not necessarily conceived with second language writing in mind, they apply to such context as well. This is because writing is one form of human communication that not only presumes but also encompasses social realities. In the case of L2 setting, L2 writers perform writing according to a particular discourse community. As they engage in writing for instance, “they engage in a meta-cultural commentary that is, they say things explicitly and implicitly about who they are, how they are related to each other, how they feel, what they are doing, and how they are situated in the nature of things” (Carbaugh, 2007, P. 168). I present the findings from the interviews based on their papers written for different courses as well as their reflective essays. The findings are discussed with reference to the theoretical assumption that writers’ identities are multifaceted. That is, Saudi students
tended to embrace writing knowledge, aptitudes, practices, and views on being L2 writers of English differently in each discourse community.

1. Meaning about Dwelling, Place and Environment

Research has acknowledged that second language and foreign writing instruction and acquisition are perceived differently in both L1 and L2 communities, and that a community is the environment in which a learner or writer is situated at a given time. In addition, preliminary research has claimed that the lack of proficiency among Saudi students in higher education is related to the proficiency achieved at previous levels. Accordingly, it is essential to examine how the three subjects in this study approached L2 writing prior to their attendance at the American university, as this knowledge informs us not only about how they related to those places when writing English academic papers, but also about their writing proficiencies. According to Carbaugh, (2007 p.176), the meaning about dwelling is concerned with “where are these people (L2 writers) located, and what is their sense of their places? How, if at all are they identifying their landscape, relating to their environment, and establishing their places within it?” Saudi writers’ experiences of the ways in which they wrote English papers in relation to their communities not only provided information about how they located themselves as writers of English and how they embraced L2 writing in Saudi Arabia, but also about how their previous practices in writing influenced their academic papers significantly while at the American university and how they established their places within communities. The themes that presented under meaning about dwelling are writing English academic papers in the L1 community and writing English academic papers in the L2 community (see Table 4).
Writing English Academic Papers in the L1 Community

When recalling their experiences of learning to write academic papers in English in Saudi Arabia, the participants in this study acknowledged that the experiences and practices were different in the two communities. Basso (1996) highlights that messages about dwelling are tellingly and explicitly anchored in the use of places names. Saudi writers not only tended to write English academic papers quite differently according to the place or the community they were situated, but also they used terms such as “second language writer”, “foreign language writer”, “when I write in my country”, and “when I write in America” to identity their senses of their communities. They noticeably established their senses of places within these communities as writers of English, accentuating that “what they write and how they write are simply
constrained by the larger disciplinary community with which they are closely associated” (Liming, 2012, p. 304).

“I used to write with Arabic style”: When asked specifically to reflect upon her experience when writing English academic papers in Saudi Arabia, Dina believed the L2 writing pedagogy practiced in her home country as substandard in comparison to the writing pedagogy practiced in the USA. She had experienced the use of traditional approaches to L2 writing as well as the use of the Arabic language to write academic papers. Dina was exposed to what she preferred to call “traditional” ways of learning to write in English.

Learning English in Arab world is not as good as other country. The learning then depends mainly on memorization as the teaching in my country was traditional in which the teacher repeat words and give us some writing sample and asks us to imitate her (Dina, reflective essay).

According to her reflective statement above, the focus of most of her writing classes was mainly on memorization, the replication of the teacher’s written samples, and translation methods, which did not strengthen her explicit knowledge and practice regarding L2 writing.

According to Dina, the insufficient knowledge in the L2 writing pedagogy to which she was exposed in Saudi Arabia caused her to rely on what was familiar to her as an Arab writer writing in Arabic. She was more familiar with Arabic writing conventions, as she had written many academic papers in Arabic. As a result, the Arabic language played a major role in her academic papers that were written in English.

However, the structure of any standard American academic paper begins with an introduction that provides a main point, followed by a series of paragraphs with sub-points, and
ends with a conclusion. Dina emphasized that she was not familiar with this standard structure when writing English academic papers in her L1 community. Her understanding and previous writing practices entailed different practices from those of an American academic essay (introduction, body, and conclusion). When asked how she constructed English academic papers in Saudi Arabia, Dina explained how she would approach writing an academic paper in English in her L1 community:

We [Saudi students] don’t follow [a]very strict style like English writers (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion). I learned to write small paragraphs. I used to write with Arabic style. I mean that I used to write long narratives with no separate paragraphs and clear main idea. I also used to use “and” a lot, and do not separate the sentences with points. I did not use to the essay formats including introductory and concluding paragraphs (Dina, reflective essay).

Dina explained and gave an example of how she relied on her knowledge of Arabic writing, particularly structure and punctuation, to write academic papers in English. She did not follow a specific structure, as required for academic papers in English, but used long paragraphs with no divisions and no clarity, following the Arabic convention in writing. The tactic of structuring paragraphs in English academic writing tends to provide natural pauses, and very long passages might cause the loss of the reader's attention. However, the above reflection allows us to understand Dina’s practices in her L1 community, as less exposure to English writing conventions and her familiarity with Arabic writing conventions led her to construct most of her academic papers in her L1 community using Arabic sentences and paragraph structures.
Similar to Dina, Sara reflected on the experience of structuring paragraphs in English academic writing. While developing effective paragraphs in English requires a series of sentences related to a single topic, these sentences are connected clearly and provide details, Sara pointed out that the absence of this basic knowledge of how to structure paragraphs to form an American academic essay was a common experience in her L1 community. Sara described how different she found structuring paragraphs when writing academic English papers in each community.

We [Saudi students] haven’t learned how to structure a paragraph or an essay. There wasn’t rules for that. In [on] the other hand, in the United States, the structure of the paragraph was clearly defined. There are steps to write a paragraph or an essay. For example, we had exercises in how to write topic sentences, how to support the main ideas with examples, and how to conclude your paragraph appropriately (Sara, reflective essay).

As Sara mentioned, this knowledge of structuring well-written paragraphs was unavailable before she began to experience explicit writing instruction according to the writing conventions practiced in her L2 community (the USA). The meaning about dwelling for Sara was elicited from the way she located herself “writer of English” in the two communities. She established a sense of writer in L1 community by using plural pronoun “we” aligning herself with those Saudi writers sharing the same writing problem. She used the phrase “in the United States” to locate and establish a sense of her L2 community by describing clearly how different were the writing practices in the L2 community.
Writing English Academic Papers in the L2 Community

When writing English academic papers, Saudi students’ transitions from the L1 community (Saudi Arabia) to the L2 community (the USA) were not easy because they were confronted with many writing challenges in the L2 community. This was because they did not know the conventions of the American academic writing discourse community. That is to say, knowing the different conventions in different discourse communities is important in academic writing. These differences exist in reality and are not overstated. Casanave (2002) stated that learners who entered a new social world might find the target community’s practices/styles unfamiliar. Similarly, Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 7) asserted that L2 writers enter the academic situation with “many different literacy practices and many different views on the purpose of reading and writing”. As a result, this transition from what was familiar, such as previous strategies/methods of memorization, grammar, and translation, in their past experiences in Saudi Arabia to that which was unfamiliar in the new academic community created unease during the process of composing written texts.

“Wiring in Arabic is very different from writing in English”: The Saudi students in this study reflected on their experiences of writing in the L2 community. Their experiences seemed to have been quite difficult and frustrating. They experienced numerous difficulties in writing because they realized that writing in English was not similar to writing in Arabic. Carbaugh (2007, p.176) asserted that “as people engage in communication, they spin a cultural discourse that located somewhere, and thus locates them there in a particular set of ways. How this is done conveys messages about place and dwelling” At a certain point, Saudi writers realized that the way in which they were used to writing in their L1 community was not constructive in their L2 community. However, they came to understand that English writing has its own set of rules,
style, structure, and practice. For example, Dina came to understand that English writing pedagogy and practice were not similar to Arabic pedagogy and practice. This can be illustrated by statements in her reflective essay: “First, wiring in Arabic is very different from writing in English” and “Second, learning English in Arab world is not as good as other country”.

Similarly, Sara described how different was writing English academic papers in the two communities. As she wrote in her reflective essay, “we don’t have rules for writing or they are not explicit. The grammar, alphabet and the structure of the sentences in English are totally different from Arabic”. When specifically asked to think of an example how she wrote academic papers differently in the L2 community, Sara explained the main procedures she adopted to write her assignments by following writing strategies such as brainstorming, collecting materials for her papers, drafting, and proofreading.

Here are the steps that I follow in each assignment. I set points of what I should cover in the assignment. I start searching and gathering sources. Then, I start writing without thinking of grammar and structure issues. I do proofreading after completing each point and go forward. I give it to someone else to read it (Sara, reflective essay).

2. Meaning about Being, Personhood and Identity

Carbaugh (2007, p.176) emphasized that “as people engage in communication practices, they say something about who each person is”, revealing messages about one’s identity as who we are when we perform writing in the two communities. In addition, Carbaugh suggested that messages about identity can be understood at cultural level concerning personhood and personal level. Cultural level concerning personhood is concerned with what beliefs are presumed in order
to be a person here. Identity at a personal level reveals the unique qualities of participants come into focus. Saudi students in this study expressed their identity as writers of English through identity at cultural level concerning personhood and identity at a personal level. Table 5 shows the themes that presented under meaning about being. Being as English writer in the L1 community and being as English writer in the L2 community.

Table 5

*Meaning about Being in L1 Community and L2 Community*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning about Being, Personhood and Identity</th>
<th>Being as an English writer in the L1 Community</th>
<th>Identity at a Cultural Level Concerning Personhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being as an English Writer in the L2 Community</td>
<td>Identity at a Personal Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Being as an English Writer in the L1 Community**

*Identity at a cultural level concerning personhood:* At cultural level concerning personhood, Saudi writers expressed beliefs about who they were as writers of English in the L1 community. For example, “I prefer to write in Arabic”. As a result of having had less exposure to L2 academic writing knowledge and practice, the Saudi students in this study not only tended to
write academic papers in English following Arabic writing conventions, they also tended to prefer and feel more secure when writing in their L1 than in their L2. They envisioned themselves to be “Arab writers of English” when performing academic writing. In particular, Dina and Sara mentioned that they preferred and felt more comfortable when writing in Arabic than when writing in English because their practical experience of English academic writing was not sufficient. Samir did not have sufficient practice of academic writing in either Arabic or in English; nonetheless, he envisioned himself as writing more Arabic academic papers after graduating and when working in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, during the post-writing interviews one and three, Sara stated, “I prefer to write in Arabic”, believing to be an Arab writer. This was because it was difficult for her to write academic papers as required in the United States due to the fact that her courses at university level in her home county (Saudi Arabia) did not focus on producing well-written academic papers in English. Furthermore, when Sara recalled her experience of English writing, she did not remember engaging in any class that focused on instruction for writing in English in Saudi Arabia, or that involved the process of writing complete academic papers at the Intensive English Institute (IEI) program when arriving in the USA. When I asked Sara to elaborate on her writing experience at the IEI program, she explained that she had learnt some aspects of writing in English, but not with regard to what she was expected to achieve:

I think they [at the IEI program] don’t teach you that. Like, how you really write. They just give you a guideline how to paraphrase and how to make a quotation. But, they didn't teach you the process. It was like shock when I start writing for my courses at the university (Sara, first post-writing interview).
In this regard, Sara also commented on teachers’ expectations for being English writer producing academic papers written in English at the university level (a graduate English writer) versus the language-learning program (an international English writer) in which she enrolled prior to admission at graduate school.

After I entered the university, implementing what we had learned in IEI was not easy. In IEI, teachers know that we are international students and their expectations were low. In contrast, professors in the university see you as a graduate student who should have professional writing capabilities. Thus, each assignment I had there [at the IEI program] was lesson to be learned (Sara, reflective essay).

According to Sara’s two excerpts above, Sara joined the IEI program to improve her writing skills, but she barely practiced the production of complete English academic papers, which she encountered at the university level, and she was shocked that the writing skills she had gained previously appeared to be challenging to implement. Sara eventually came to understand that IEI writing practices did not necessarily match teachers’ expectations, and were not similar to those practiced at the university level.

**Being as an English Writer in the L2 Community**

*Identity at a Personal Level:* It has been argued that second language writers of English will re-identify themselves when experiencing different discourse communities, or they will engage in constructing new identities as writers. Once the Saudi writers decided to transfer from their L1 community to the L2 community (studying in the USA), they not only realized that they had difficulty writing academic papers in English, but also their self-images as writers of English had changed to suit the current community. In this study, identity at a personal level revealed what
qualities, as writers of English, Saudi participants embraced. Carbaugh (2007, p.175) emphasized that “identity can be explicitly coded into communication through identity terms, pronouns, terms of address, or membership”; that is, what terms Saudi students used to address themselves as writers of English. For example, when I asked Dina how she perceived herself as a writer in America, she identified her writing skill as that of an intermediate-level student, stating “I still like middle”. As she was sufficiently aware of her writing skills, Dina viewed herself as an intermediate writer who needed more writing practice. I asked Samir how he perceived himself in the L2 community, and he used words such as “average” and phrases such as “first level”. Although the word “average” and the phrase “first level” can be interpreted differently, I asked Samir to elaborate on why he viewed himself in this way. He replied, “I think my writing ability is below average”, emphasizing the need for more knowledge of and writing practice in the L2. Sara considered her writing skills in the new community as “intermediate”, and felt that she needed to improve her writing skills: “I need to do much better”. Writing became a major concern for her, as she viewed herself as less competent when comparing her writing skills to the average writing skills that any graduate student should have while studying in the USA.

3. Meaning about Acting, Action and Practice

Carbaugh (2007, p.176) asserted that this hub is concerned with “what do people take themselves to be doing? What type of action is this that we are doing?” He further suggested that messages about action are often coded explicitly into communication through terms that identify the kinds of activity that are relevant to the participants such as “reflecting thoughtfully and “sharing feelings”. Meaning about acting, action and practice in this study referred to the Saudi students’ experiences with writing academic papers through reflecting thoughtfully on the way they were acting in their L1 community and sharing their feelings about writing current academic
papers for their classes in their L2 community. The themes that presented under meaning about acting are acting in the L1 community and acting in the L2 community (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Meaning about Acting in L1 Community and L2 Community*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning about Acting, Action and Practice</th>
<th>Acting in the L1 Community</th>
<th>Reflecting Thoughtfully about Writing Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acting in the L2 Community</td>
<td>Sharing Feelings about Writing Difficulties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acting in the L1 Community**

*Reflecting about writing practices:* Writing in English is a skill that is often neglected in Arabian schools. This is because English is learnt and taught as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Saudi students are exposed to English as an additional language, with little or no exposure to academic English writing. Dina, Samir, and Sara stressed that they had not been engaged sufficiently in writing academic papers at all levels in Saudi Arabia. This compounds the problem of proficiency in written English. At the university level, research has emphasized that students are experience difficulty in acquiring the level of writing proficiency in English that is necessary to compete in an academic environment, which then affects their academic performances and achievements.
Samir was taught English via a typical grammar translation approach, with emphasis on grammar and reading. According to him, he merely practiced English writing by filling in words to complete English sentences. He learned sets of English grammar rules, and his teacher would prepare a grammar-based test to test his understanding of the learned rules, highlighting that many language instructors of writing in Saudi Arabia still view writing as a support skill that reinforces the acquisition of grammar by adopting the grammar translation method in their curricula. Indicating his actions and practice, Samir reflected on the focus of his writing classes in Saudi Arabia by stating:

Arab students were not used to write either in English or even Arabic in schools.
Learning English in Saudi Arabia is very different than learning English in the United States. Even though in Saudi Arabia student learn vocabulary and reading, but the main focus on learning English writing in Saudi Arabia is grammar. I did not learn how to write in English in Saudi Arabia. Also, there were no speaking classes (Samir, reflective essay).

As the reflection indicates, Samir had not been exposed to writing in English as far as he could recall. For him, the focus of the English writing class was a form of learning grammar rules in addition to learning reading and memorizing vocabulary. This practice had given him limited exposure writing or producing English academic papers.

Similarly, in her reflective essay, Sara mentioned her discourse writing practices in Saudi Arabia. As she recalled, the discourse writing practices were not only different, but were also insufficient in terms of exposure and emphasis with regard to English academic writing.

The experience was totally different. In Saudi Arabia, the teachers were mainly focusing in [on] grammar more than [developing] vocabularies and structuring
good paragraphs. We have learned grammar as [a] separate subject without integrating it in building sentences. Most of our exams were multiple choice questions and true or false. We [Saudi students] haven’t experienced enough English writing (Sara, reflective essay).

According to her reflection, the focus of English writing classes in her L1 community was quite similar to that experienced by Samir. Sara had mainly learned grammar rules in writing classes, without having had the opportunity to integrate the grammatical rules she had learned to produce concrete written paragraphs or essays.

Acting in the L2 Community

Sharing Feelings about Writing Difficulties: Their previous writing practices and actions in the L1 community had significantly contributed to writing difficulties in the L2 community. With regard to her experience of writing academic papers in the USA, Dina immediately realized that her “basic” knowledge and her previous methodological ways of writing were no longer effective. As a result of this awareness, Dina mentioned some of the writing difficulties and how she felt about her writing that she encountered while writing academic papers in her L2 community.

I still have some problems in writing the academic papers such as making the argument strong with coherent ideas. Also, I feel I am using very simple sentence structures. I have no ability to make some complicated structures that sound more academic like the ones I read in scholarly articles or books (Dina, reflective essay).

Because Dina had not been exposed to the English academic language that gives students the knowledge and skills to navigate school policies and expectations successfully in the L2
community in her previous writing pedagogy, she agonized over writing difficulties such as her inability to construct a strong argument, maintaining clear ideas, and using academic language (vocabulary/sentence structure), which are considered essential features of any academic writing in America.

Samir prior knowledge did not include how to construct an academic paper. He began to learn about L2 writing in the new community as he was engaging in a new field of study. He was introduced to English academic writing at the different institutions he had attended prior to his enrollment at the University of Memphis. He reflected on his experience in writing in the new community (the USA):

Before I entered university of Memphis, I studied in different English as second language institutions. Every institution have different approach on writing but they were all using the same format. Which is an introduction, body, and conclusion. It was hard for me to learn how to instruct [construct] this basis at first. I learn how to write by putting more time and effort on writing classes because it was a new field of study for me (Samir, reflective essay).

He explained that, although he did not find writing academic papers in English easy, he had learned to familiarize himself with the basic concepts underlying L2 writing in his L2 community in the classes he had taken.

As is the case for many L2 writers, Sara encountered numerous difficulties in her new community, particularly when attempting to produce well-written academic papers for her classes. During the interviews, I asked Sara to specify some of the writing difficulties she had encountered while completing her written assignments, and she mentioned unfamiliarity with the use of effective pre-writing strategies such as “I didn't do like brainstorming”. She also found
maintaining clarity throughout her written assignments to be quite challenging, as she had to cope with many grammatical issues, such as the misuse of punctuation, misspelling, and articles (a, an, the). Another problem that Sara appeared to have was time management when attempting to complete her assignments on time. She stated:

I want to accelerate my writing process. In average, I take 8 hours to complete an assignment with 250 words. I spend most of time generating ideas, searching for sources and trying to concise them into paragraphs. For example, I get confused sometimes in which point should I keep and which one is not worth to mention. So, I want to reduce the amount that I spend before I start writing (Sara, reflective essay).

As this reflection indicates, Sara spent much time translating academic words and collecting data for her papers prior to each assignment; however, she found it difficult to incorporate such data in her writing. She explained that she changed her mind constantly when writing, which not only confused her during the process of writing but also caused her to think about increasing the speed of her writing process, as well as keeping track of the amount of time she spent on writing. Sara further elaborated on how the issue of time management affected her written assignments. She said that she had difficulty in comprehending reading materials and acquiring the academic vocabulary necessary to write her papers.

Improving reading comprehension is one of the goals that I really need to achieve. Generally, I don’t get the purpose or the main ideas of any paragraph from the first time. I have to read it at least two times to understand it which make the writing process longer. Also, acquiring most academic word and see their uses (Sara, reflective essay).
This reflection suggests that Sara not only had problems reading, she also had other difficulties with writing, such as her obvious lack of a well-developed academic vocabulary and inability to use academic words in her writing, which made it time consuming to complete each assignment.

In addition, English academic writing requires not only lexical richness, but also productive knowledge and the appropriate use of high-frequency academic words (Laufer & Nation, 1995). When L2 writers lack the vocabulary used in their academic settings or disciplines, it effects their written work negatively, as well as their understanding of the reading materials prescribed for the classes. Sara understood the importance of having a large academic vocabulary. However, her current lack of academic vocabulary was influencing her writing, particularly when paraphrasing. As she explained during the interview,

The most difficult thing for me is to do paraphrasing. Finding synonyms that go with certain context is not easy for me because my vocabulary in academic writing is weak. I don't have a variety of vocabulary when I'm writing. And maybe some of my sentences that is it's complicated to understand. Most of my answer to test has to be paraphrasing because I can't give a new information. It should be paraphrasing. But it's difficult to paraphrase if you don't have enough vocabulary and to create your own style in writing (Sara, second post-writing interview).

Sara also provided an example of how having a limited academic vocabulary influenced her writing when elaborating on her ideas. She said,

This is that what I find difficult for me that I don't have enough vocabulary. There is no many ideas to write. It's like I have a specific idea and I can't make it wider. I just write some general idea and then I think it's enough. I'm not good in saying
the details. That’s the most difficult thing that I faced (Sara, second post-writing interview).

As she stated, transforming her own ideas into words and expanding them in detail were among the most significant writing difficulties she encountered in her L2 community. When I asked Sara how she ensured that she understood the content of what she was reading, used correct academic words, and structured sentences to express her ideas when she struggled due to having limited English academic vocabulary, she responded:

I translate the words into Arabic when I read in English. Usually, I didn't use any complex vocabulary. When I learn new vocabulary, I didn't use it immediately. I have to read it many times and listen to it many times. I'm not encouraged to add it to my writing if I didn't know it really well. So you will find all my vocabulary is simple (Sara, second post-writing interview).

As the reflection suggests, Sara implemented the strategy of using Arabic for the purpose of translation. Although she stressed her hesitance to apply newly learned academic words, she used academic words with which she was familiar when writing academic papers in English.

4. Meaning about Relating, Relationships

Carbaugh (2007, p.175) asserted that this hub is concerned with “how are we being related”. He further elaborated that “As people engage in communication practices (writing in this sense), they are being related. Yet, in some, the relationship is presumed prior to the practice”, and in others, “the practice is the activity in which relations are forged”. All Saudi writers in this study related themselves to L2 writing. Regardless of whether English academic writing was a main requisite in their two communities, they all expressed what English academic writing meant to
them. The themes that presented under meaning about relating are relating in the L1 community and relating in the L2 community (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Meaning about Relating in L1 Community and L2 Community*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning about Relating, Relationships</th>
<th>Relating in the L1 Community</th>
<th>Relating in the L2 Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I won’t need to be [an] excellent English writer.”</td>
<td>“I want to write good enough.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t think that I will continue to write in English.”</td>
<td>“I want to write in English.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“English writing will translate how I’m going to be successful.”</td>
<td>“Now I use to write in English.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relating in the L1 Community

It is crucial to understand how Saudi participants related themselves as second-language writers of English in their L1 community (Saudi Arabia). The significance of this understanding
is related not only to their actual practices when producing academic papers in English, but also with regard to their attitudes that shaped their identities as L2 writers in Saudi Arabia. Brown (2011, p. 11) pointed out that research on academic identity not only “reveals key constitutive elements, which incorporate the private and public scripts of the professional self in relation to discipline, institution, and the academe” but also reveals “how learners identify themselves with their professions, how they are engaged in their professional setting, and how their identities are scripted or resisted”. Correspondingly, Cozart, Jensen, Wichmann, Kupatadze, and Chiu (2017. p. 300) emphasize that “L2 writing is inevitably shaped by students’ self-perceptions and attitudes.” Given this, when asked what English academic writing meant to them as English writers in Saudi Arabia, all the Saudi writers in this study were driven by their L1 discourse practices. For example, Dina and Samir viewed themselves as writers who did not necessarily need to engage in producing English academic papers due to the nature of their professions in Saudi Arabia. Sara felt the urge to write in English believed that her career success, as a professional, was strongly associated with how well she could write in English.

When Dina was asked what English academic writing meant to her as a writer in Saudi Arabia, she indicated that she was not required to be an “excellent English writer”. She provided reasons for such an identification, as she stated in her reflective essay, “I will teach in Arabic as I am expected to work as a kindergartener or elementary teacher, so I won’t need to be [an] excellent English writer”. This statement indicates her attitude, as well as how she identified as a writer in her L1 community. It can be said that Dina’s access to and practice of writing in English would remain limited as she would continue to work as a teacher in a community dominated by the Arabic language and discourse practice. Thus, she aligned herself with the community practices in Saudi Arabia; her
knowledge of English overall and of English writing in particular would remain “basic”, as she described in her reflective essay.

Similarly, Samir’s attitudes to and goals with regard to L2 writing in his L1 community were identified. Samir asserted that he did not view himself as continuing academic English writing in his L1 community. Samir Said, “I don’t think that I will continue to write in English after I finish my degree, for the fact that my major does not require writing academic papers (Samir, reflective essay).” Samir did not view writing skills as an act that he could embrace in both communities. His practice of writing English academic papers appeared to be limited to the L2 community. He aligned himself with to the career he intended to pursue in Saudi Arabia; thus, he believed that writing in English would not be a major requirement.

By contrast, Sara’s attitude towards English writing and her goals for learning to write in English in her L1 community (Saudi Arabia) were not identical to those of Dina and Samir. Sara stated that “English writing will translate how I’m going to be successful”. She viewed herself as an L2 writer who would engage vigorously in the writing of academic English papers in both communities. She saw writing in English as a necessary skill for success. The following excerpt is from her reflective essay, in which she expressed how she viewed herself as L2 writer writing in Saudi Arabia.

Regarding to continuing writing in English, my job in Saudi Arabia requires me to publish academic papers. Therefore, I will be continuing writing academic researches when I go back home. Since my career is heavily relaying on academic papers, English writing will translate how I’m going to be successful in my field (Sara, reflective essay).
Sara related her career success to her ability to write effectively in English. She would consider herself to be a successful L2 writer only if she were capable of achieving academic writing requirements for her profession in Saudi Arabia, which required her to write and publish academic papers in English.

**Relating in the L2 Community**

Dina’s attitude toward L2 writing in her L1 community changed from “I won’t need to be [an] excellent English writer” to “I want to write good enough” in the L2 community. In the meantime, Dina began to align herself with the community for which she was currently writing by writing “good enough” in order to succeed in the new community. Academic writing became an obligatory act in which she had to demonstrate a successful writer identity.

Samir realized that L2 writing was not the same as it was in his L1 community. In order to succeed in his studies in the USA, he needed to write English academic papers effectively. His current writing practices were mainly driven by the desire to receive good grades for the written assignments. Samir commented on how he viewed himself as an L2 writer of English:

My goals for learning to write in English at the moment is completing assignments and getting good grades. However, I think with time I want to write in English to write my own articles and do my researches. At this point I only write to get a grade. I don’t write because I like to write. However, I want to make writing a skill that I have and do perfectly, so I hope that my passion for writing grow (Samir, reflective essay).

Although he stated that he did not write because he liked to write in English, his attitude while in the L2 community changed from his attitude “I don’t think that I will continue to write
in English” while in the L1 community. His attitude became more positive. He not only expressed a desire to write “perfectly” in English, but also identified himself as embracing writing skills to become a researcher who would conduct his own research in future, and would pursue graduate studies in the USA.

It is interesting that Sara’s attitudes while in her L1 community changed when she was in the new community. Sara indicated her preference for writing in Arabic because Arabic was her first language: “Of course I prefer in Arabic, because [it is] my first language”. However, Sara seemed to adapt to the new community in which she began to become familiar with academic English writing, as she stated “but maybe in academic now I use to write in English”.

5. Meaning about Feeling, Emotion and Affect

According to Carbaugh (2007, p.176), this hub is concerned with “how do people feel about what is going on, what is the feeling of this practice”, and that “when people engage in communication, they are involved in an affective performance”. Thus, exploring the feelings of Saudi students writing academic papers in English allow us to understand about their writing practices and its effectiveness. The themes that presented under meaning about feeling are feeling about writing in the L1 community and feeling about writing in the L2 community (see Table 8).
Table 8

Meaning about Feeling in L1 Community and L2 Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning about Feeling, Emotion and Affect</th>
<th>Felling about Writing in the L1 Community</th>
<th>Emotion Terms and Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felling about Writing in the L2 Community</td>
<td>Emotion Terms and Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Felling about Writing in the L1 Community

According to Dina, the use of the Arabic language to produce most of her academic papers written in English seemed to be effective, particularly when she had limited access to L2 writing conventions. For example, Dina relied on the use of her first language’s style, format, sentence structure, and grammar to write most of her academic papers in English in Saudi Arabia. Dina’s use of the Arabic style and structure of paragraphs to write academic papers in English at her L1 community appeared to be accepted. This situation remained unremarked for Dina in her L1 community as most of her written academic papers were accepted by her teachers. She believed that her writing was good, as she never received comments on her English writing. She continued to use approaches following the Arabic convention to write in English each time she
engaged in writing in English. When Samir was asked how he felt about writing in English as an English writer in Saudi Arabia, he commented: “Writing in English is difficult for me.” During the third post-writing interview, Sara shared her thoughts about writing academic papers in Saudi Arabia. The following interaction describes Sara’s attitudes towards English academic writing. She viewed writing as an obligatory act that she was forced to do regardless of how she truly felt about writing in English.

Interviewer: Do you think you will continue to write English academic papers in Saudi Arabia?
Sara: I have to.

Interviewer: So it’s required?
Sara: Yes. It’s required even if I don’t like it.

Interviewer: Okay. So you don’t like to write academic papers?
Sara: Yes. I don’t like it at all

Felling about Writing in the L2 Community

When I asked Dina how she felt about her writing skills, she said “I think it's not good as a native English writer”. She began to compare her writing skills to those of the L1 English-speaking students in her classes, and believed that their skills were superior to hers. However, this comparison led Dina to work harder on her written assignments. Similarly, when asked if had encountered any difficulties with writing, Samir reflected on the difficulties that he had experienced when practicing English writing in the USA and how those difficulties had effected his writing.
The difficulties I am facing with writing in English are putting my thoughts on a writing and how to structure a sentence well. Also, lack of academic vocabulary, I write papers like I am speaking and I think it is somewhat confusing (Samir, reflective essay).

As stated, Samir’s major difficulties were formulating his thoughts as words when writing, constructing meaningful sentences, and having insufficient academic vocabulary. Samir commented that his written academic papers sound more like the spoken form of the language; as a result, his teachers found his work confusing and difficult to understand. It could be said that Samir did not understand that written English needs to follow the rules of grammar much more closely than does spoken English, and that spoken English is much more spontaneous than is written English. In spoken English, mistakes do not necessarily affect the ability to communicate clearly; however, in written English, it is important to think about how to write for the intended audience and hence there is a need to understand who will be reading the work.

Sara’s experiences of writing different academic papers in the new community shaped her attitudes about writing in the L2. Her self-attitude toward L2 writing was established in terms of how she felt about writing in English. Common expressions were highlighted in the three interviews that were based on her experience of writing academic papers. The urge to write according to the writing conventions of her L2 community by improving her writing skills become crucial; as she said, “I feel like I have to work more, finding some assistance to help me in writing”. Sara expressed her feelings and attitudes about her current writing by stating, “I think it's below the graduate level and it should be
more professional, more academic, yeah”. When asked to express her feelings about writing her academic assignments, Sara explained, “I feel frustrating to accomplish a writing assignment”, “it is hard to write”, “no, not satisfied”, and “I was lost in the first”.
Section II

Saudi Students’ Investment in Constructing Writer Identity

Section II provides a discussion of Saudi writers positioning themselves socially in the target community in order to become writers of English, particularly by considering their individual investments when developing writing competency in the L2, and thus their identities as L2 writers in their new community. When examining the construction of identity as an L2 writer, the consideration of social aspects is crucial. I adopted a sociocultural view on academic literacy and a closely related perspective on writing and identity. In particular, I am drawing on current approaches that view literacy as situated (Gee, 1996; Norton, 2013; Rish, Bylen, Vreeland, & Wimberley, 2015). Based on this view, individuals read and write in ways specific to particular social groups. According to Gee (1996), focusing on language alone in its social context is not enough as focus should include discourses as well because discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing. From this perspective, in order to write successfully, Saudi writers in this study took on the subject positions or the social identities that the current discourse of their disciplinary community called upon them. Consequently, the discussion of the results of data analysis is provided in the form of relating the case studies to Rish, Bylen, Vreeland, and Wimberley (2015) four main tenets of a conceptualization a sociocultural theory of writing: (1) writing as a social act; (2) writers interact in multiple ways and on multiple levels with others in the process of writing; (3) writing is a mediated process of invention; and (4) writing is intertextual (Bakhtin, 1981). Slavkov (2015) argues that those four tenets of a sociocultural theory of writing are applicable to the context of L2 writing, emphasizing that L2 writers are not only seen to engage in various stages of learning the linguistic, socio-pragmatic, and cultural norms or conventions of the target environment, but
also participate in the processes entailed in the four tenets. I present the findings from the interviews based on their papers written for different courses as well as their reflective essays. Remarkably, the Saudi students in this study discussed their investment and participation in the processes described in these four tenets.

1. Writing as a Social Act

Norton’s (2013) construct of investment and the sociocultural perspective both contribute to the “social” aspect in language learning. While the construct of investment posits an integral relationship between identity development and investment in a given social context, the sociocultural perspective views learning as a social act. Turning specifically to writing within those perspectives, writing as a social act maintains that social contexts shape both the way in which authors write and the content of their writing (Rish et al., 2015), emphasizing that writing is affected by social relationships, institutional belongings, membership in various communities. Saudi students in this study were conscious of their individual investments that they employed to write and expand their academic papers according to the social contextual situation in which the writing took place. Saudi students’ investments were seen in their vigorous attempts to overcome their writing difficulties and to develop L2 writing competency by taking several practices in the L2 community.

“I joined the IEI program”: Dina realized that she needed to engage more in writing (producing written texts), as she no longer felt confident about reading abstract concepts pertaining to academic writing. She believed that the key to becoming a good writer was to write more, stating “I think the practice of writing improve the writing abilities more than reading books about learning writing.” After becoming aware of her difficulties in the L2 community, she was determined to overcome her challenges in L2 writing. Dina understood that she needed
further assistance to develop her competency when writing in the L2. Her personal investment in developing her identity as an L2 writer can be seen in the decisions she made when joining L2 community. For example, she took writing classes at the Intensive English Institute (IEI), where she was first introduced to English academic papers. She was able to navigate different types of academic written texts. Dina enriched her knowledge of English academic writing, particularly via the IEI courses. She liked writing-intensive courses because they gave her a sense of empowerment when practicing reading, speaking, listening, and writing in English. She was able to study and write various genres, such as essays, research papers, and stories. She learned how to use quotation marks, to summarize, to paraphrase, and English grammar and structure. During the interview about her written assignments, I asked Dina where she had learned to write in a particular way, or why she had decided on a specific format. Her reply was usually “I learn this in IEI”. For Dina, this initial step of taking writing classes before attending MA classes was a great investment in accessing ideas and engaging in activities to comprehend aspects of academic English writing. In her reflective essay, Dina emphasized that enrolling in the IEI program at the University of Memphis had not only helped her to become familiar with academic English writing, but had also allowed her to practice and produce written academic papers. As she stated in her reflective essay, “I joined the IEI program in the University of Memphis. I worked hard to improve my English. I have improved after the English program and more practice”.

“If I got more assignments”: Similar to Dina, Samir mentioned that the more often he received assignments, the more he learned about how to write. For him, the key to mastering writing in English was “practice”. He said that “writing assignments help me tremendously with improving my writing skills. I think if I got more assignments it will improve my writing ability,
especially with different type of writing, such as, reflections, research papers, different formats, etc.” This supports the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that the more the learner interacts with the social environment, the more the learner attains a higher level of development through scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, the more Samir, as an L2 writer, engaged in social activities by exposing himself to varieties of writing in the target language, the more he became aware of the writing conventions practiced in the target community, and therefore he developed an identity as an L2 writer.

“Teacher’s guidelines”: Motivated by achieving success in the course and receiving good grades for her academic papers, Sara wanted to ensure that she wrote according to her teacher’s guidelines. Thus, she followed each guideline that her teacher gave to her. She asked for clarification each time she received an assignment. She also sent emails to confirm that she had done what her teacher wanted.

Interviewer: Did you talk about the topic with anyone before writing?

Sara: Yes. I sent her an email asking about the first questions. What did they mean, of these questions? And she made a clarification about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Was the communication easy with the teacher? Did your teacher explain what she wanted?

Sara: Yes, it was easy. Yeah, she explained. Yeah.

Prior (2006) argued that teachers are coauthors in their students’ writing in many ways, as they may help to identify topics, provide advice on organization and style, and give feedback on sentence and word level aspects. Sara further explained how her teacher’s specific guidelines
allowed her to write according to the teacher’s preference, and how the teacher’s specific guidelines prevented her from making a random selection when writing her papers.

She gave us some guidelines to answer the questions and how we write the paper.

Yeah, that's it. It was very helpful and it makes me think more than just go ahead and write what I know. I covered all the points that she wants (Sara, second post-writing interview).

In addition, Sara took the teacher’s guidelines regarding how to write academic papers to a different level. For example, she implemented the same writing guidelines when writing other academic papers in her various courses. As she stated, she followed a similar format to write a research paper for a different class “[b]ecause I have to follow some format in the project and that's helped me a lot to follow it in other research”.

2. Writers Interact in Multiple Ways

Writers interact in multiple ways and on multiple levels with others in the process of writing, and these interactions affect the content and style of the writing (Rish et al., 2015); as a result, those interactions affect the content and style of writing. While attempting to complete their different written assignments, Saudi students interacted in multiple ways to write according to the current discourse convention. To enhance their written assignments, they appeared to interact with other experienced writers who seemed to have better knowledge of English academic writing. That is, “writing is always collaborative and essentially constitutes a form of coauthorship” (Slavkov, 2015, p 82).

“I asked my husband to help me”: The primary source of support for Dina when attempting written assignments was her husband. Dina believed that her husband’s language proficiency
was superior to hers because her husband had a degree in English. She asked her husband’s assistance in most of her academic papers. In her reflective essay, she mentioned that her husband had monitored and followed up each assignment that she wrote. According to Dina, her husband not only spoke and wrote better than she did, he was also available to help her whenever he could. Dina commented on how her husband helped her when writing English academic papers:

I asked my husband to help me and tutor me to finish my assignments. I used to show my tutor and my husband to help me fix the mistakes and give me some suggestions. Clear ideas, good and correct grammar, supporting ideas, coherence (Dina, reflective essay).

As she stated, the assistance she received from her husband mainly concerned proofreading and generating ideas for her written papers. In addition, the following interaction occurred when I asked Dina about her understanding of what teachers required for each assignment, or whether she had asked someone for help during the process of writing academic papers. Dina replied that she asked her husband to help when she had difficulty understanding what each assignment required

*Interviewer:* When you read the question or the assignment title, what was your first impression? What did you think about the assignment?

*Dina:* Not easy. Not easy.

*Interviewer:* It's not easy for you. So how did you make sure that you understood the question in order to write this paper?
Dina: Sometimes my husband helps me. He has a PhD in English so he speaks and writes well compared to me. That's why I seek his help.

Similarly, when writing academic papers, it was very common for the Saudi students to ask family members for assistance if they seemed to be competent in English writing. Similar to Dina who asked her husband about writing, and Samir who often consulted his sister when writing, Sara asked her husband for assistance when writing her academic papers. Like Dina, Sara believed that her husband’s writing skills were better than hers “because he's better than me in writing academic writing”; as a result, she often sought her husband’s help during the process of completing the three assignments. For example, when asked to specify what help she received from her husband, she responded that most of the assistance she received from her husband was related to understanding difficult concepts and proofreading her assignments once she had drafted them. She stated, “some of the questions, I asked my husband to read the answer and see if he understand my writing or not” and “If there's sentences that it's not clear, I give to my husband to read it again and see if it's clear or not” (Sara, post-writing interviews).

3. Writing is a Mediated Process of Invention

According to Rish et al., (2015), writing is a mediated process of invention, and writers use a number of resources or tools that may inform or influence the nature and content of the writing. Saudi students in this study used number of resources to enhance their academic papers.

“I hired an American tutor”: In conjunction with her husband’s help, Dina hired an American tutor to help her with her academic writing. The tutor helped Dina to increase her understanding of English writing. The tutor, who seemed to have been a friend of Dina for the duration of the IEI, had since moved to Washington, DC. Dina stayed in touch with the American tutor via email. Dina would often send her written papers to the American tutor for a
grammar check and to ensure cohesion. Dina reflected on how the American tutor helped her to develop her writing skills:

I also hired an American tutor; she spent around six hours weekly to teach me particularly in writing skills. She used to bring me some work sheets with some activities about writing. With help of my teacher and husband, I read some writing samples and try to imitate the style, ideas organization, and some English sentences structures (Dina, reflective essay).

This reflection reveals Dina’s investment with regard to how she aligned herself with current discourse practice because she studied examples of various types of papers before writing her own papers for the purpose of producing written academic papers similar to those of the target language writers. It is thus seen that “L2 writers’ identities are constructed and shaped through discursive practice and social interaction”; that is “what they write and how they write are simply constrained by the larger disciplinary community with which they are closely associated” (Liming, 2012, p. 304).

“The most used resource for me with writing is the internet”: The Internet can help students to improve their writing, as there are many websites that contain helpful information regarding many different topics and queries. Students consult these documents because they might prove fruitful for their written assignments. Samir mentioned how the Internet played a major role when writing academic papers. Samir said that the Internet was his main resource to address issues and concepts related to writing in the L2.

The most used resource for me with writing is the internet. I use translation a lot to get different synonyms of a word. Also, I use the internet to know how to
structure a paper. Moreover, I use the internet on citation and to know the right way to cite. Consequently, internet is my biggest resource with writing. For example, the reflection paper assignment, I had no idea how to do it, so I looked in the internet on how to write reflection papers, and I wrote it at the same format it was on the internet (Samir, reflective essay).

As he stated, the Internet was purposely used for translating words, finding synonyms, structuring papers, looking for sample written papers similar to the one he was writing, and checking the correct method of citation to imitate them in his writing.

“I consulted many resources”: Professional help on-line, the Grammarly.com website, and Google search engines were among the resources that Sara often consulted when writing her papers. For example, she mentioned that she used a Google search engine to find correct sentence structures and academic words: “one of my techniques is to use Google and write the sentence and see if someone else uses the same word as I am using it.” She also stated, “I use the Grammarly website which gives a good synonym within my [writing] context”. During the process of writing, she needed to think carefully about her choice of words, which is not only very important in academic writing, she also wanted to avoid embarrassing herself by using words that were not relevant as it would make her teacher laugh at her writing. “If I misuse something like maybe in spelling or words will change the meaning of my paper and it will make my teacher laughing” (Sara, second post-writing interview).

Sara appeared to use a post-writing strategy, as she mentioned that “I do proofreading by giving it to someone else who can give me good synonyms and suggestions on my writing.” This is because she was aware of her struggle to build an academic vocabulary. Sara realized that
academic writing in the new community was expected to be clear and straightforward, that that words need to be precise and correct, and that writing must be concise. Thus, she wanted her written assignments to be accepted by her professor. When asked to elaborate on the use of proofreading for her assignments, the following interaction occurred during the third post-writing interview:

*Interviewer:* What did you actually do to write your assignments? Did you go to writing center or did you asked someone to look at it?

*Sara:* Yeah. After I finished the whole paper, I sent it to some homework assistance that gives you like reading your responses.

*Interviewer:* You mean feedback?

*Sara:* Yeah. And then make a comment, and that's helped me a lot.

*Interviewer:* So is this an official website on-line or a writing center at the university?

*Sara:* I think it's on the Internet

*Interviewer:* Can you tell how they help you in your writing assignment?

*Sara:* I have to like first when I send them my paper, I have to choose the assistant from which field. Yeah. I choose the big data because the paper was about the big data and the ethics in the big data. They check my response and they add more comments on my response. For example, they would give comment like, you said, "Okay, your idea is correct, but you have to say you forget this idea," and like this. I consider their feedback and then I go edit and add what was missing.
Interviewer: *That's good. So you think it was helpful to improve your writing academic papers?*

Sara: It was so helpful. I get 10 out of 10 in this, 100 out of 100. It's make the paper more professional and more legible to my teacher.

Interviewer: *So do you think they are more informed like experienced professional?*

Sara: Yeah-yeah professional. I think they’re native speaker. I receive good comments from them about how to improve writing.

Furthermore, Sara mentioned that she did not like to consult other students in her class in the belief that, as they were also students, they might be confused or wrong. This was why she preferred to seek help directly from her teacher or to look at other Saudi students’ written samples who took the same class to understand the format and to generate some ideas regarding how to write her own papers. When I asked Sara to elaborate on how looking at Saudi students’ written samples helped her when writing her own paper, she commented:

Actually, I asked some of the student who taught the class before and asked her to give me the midterm, yeah, her answers. It was good. Yeah, it was good. But because we are all international, I think all is similar to each other. Yeah, I follow her writing sample when write my paper. It help me in my ideas (Sara, first post-writing interview).

From her response, Sara followed a Saudi student’s writing, as this person seemed to be an international student like herself. She believed that Saudi students shared a common writing style. This is why it was easy for her to get some ideas that helped her when writing the designated assignment.
“Drafting and Revising are the best”: Sara was conscious that academic writing was a process that involved several distinct steps, and that it was important for her, as an L2 writer, to work through each of the steps in order to ensure that she produced a polished, complete piece. This was exemplified from the writing strategies that she implemented, which helped her when writing the three assignments. These strategies were outlining, collecting resources, drafting, revising, and proofreading. As Sara stated in her reflective essay,

I usually list the points that I would cover before I start writing. I do searching and gathering sources. I start writing without thinking of grammar and structure issues. Then, in the end I use proofreading which include myself or anybody else who has more knowledge than me. So, basically, I’m using outlining and proofreading strategies and they are work great for me (Sara, reflective essay).

Furthermore, Sara felt that implementing these strategies when writing the academic papers that were assigned by her professors not only improved her three written assignments, but had also given her confidence in her writing skills, as she saw herself as having gradual improvement as an English writer.

My writing ability has been improved since I entered the university. Assignments and projects that ruled by the professor’s instructions help me to improve my English writing proficiency. For example, one of the courses that I’m taking now requires assignments that need very concise structure. Every week we have to read a case study with 30 pages and summarize it in only one page (Sara, reflective essay).
4. Writing is Intertextual

This tenet of the conceptualization of a sociocultural theory of writing, as discussed by Rish et al. (2015), views that writing is intertextual (Bakhtin, 1981), in that authors lend and borrow ideas, linguistic structures, and lexical material to and from complex networks of other writers, texts, and discourses. That is, authors position themselves according to the writing convention dominated by current discourse community. In this study, Saudi writers were seen to be aware about writing similar to those of target members, as they took several actions to ensure that their current written assignments include intertextual knowledge.

“I try to not think in Arabic as possible as I can” Sara realized that she needed to improve her knowledge of L2 writing in order to write academic papers effectively. She wanted to show her teachers that she could produce well-written assignments as a graduate student at the business school. According to her, she wrote academic papers as required by the current contextual community, and she preferred not to use Arabic writing convention that could influence the nature and content of her written assignments. Recent studies on the use of L1 in the acquisition of L2 have acknowledged that the L2 writer’s first language plays a substantial role in the acquisition of the second language, particularly with regard to writing. For example, Friedlander (1987) implied that avoidance of the L1 in the L2 writing process is impossible because writers will transfer writing abilities from their first language into their second language. However, Sara did not believe that her first language played a major role when writing in her second language. Sara attempted to avoid the use of her L1 (Arabic) when writing academic papers in English. She limited the use of the Arabic language to the translation of English words that she found difficult. When I asked Sara about the role of Arabic language in her writing of
English academic papers, the following interaction occurred during the second post-writing interview.

**Interviewer:** Does Arabic language help you in your writing?

Sara: No-No. I try to not to think in Arabic as possible as I can.

**Interviewer:** Can you explain why?

Sara: I think it's difficult to think in Arabic because when I'm thinking Arabic, it will be different if I translate it to English, it will not be understandable. For example, the structure of statement will be confusing or like misleading. It's difficult because it will never be the same. It will take a long time rather than just thinking about English.

Even if I was writing for a Saudi institution, I didn't do this.

**Interviewer:** So you did not use your Arabic in writing your papers?

Sara: Yeah. I try to think in English and write it down. And that's it. If I write it in Arabic and then think of English, it will be more difficult.

**Interviewer:** Can you think of an example of how you make sure you don't use Arabic when you write in English?
Sara: The writing style is different in Arabic. I think the two languages follow a different rules, different format. Even the punctuation is different. Like when I stop and when my ideas have to be continue and when I should stop my idea, like ends my idea, and when I'm writing, it’s different. For example, what is called? Transition word, we don't have this in Arabic. And it's more important when you write your English paper. It make your ideas more connected.

According to Sara, Arabic and English languages do not share a similar grammar, writing structure, or style. She believed that the differences between the two languages would make her academic papers written in English sound complicated. For example, she emphasized that thinking in Arabic when writing in English was not only more time consuming, it was also frustrating, and that translating her ideas from Arabic to English might confuse her teacher. Thus, thinking and writing using the target community language appeared to be more convenient for her.

*I read more*: Dina frequently said “I read more” during the interview to indicate her new habit and eagerness to master writing in the L2. Although Dina still read scholarly articles written in Arabic for inspiration before writing English academic papers, she emphasized that she had started to read more in English than she had done in Saudi Arabia, when she had hardly ever read in English. Most of the time, she consulted Google Scholar, which is a web search engine that has access to full texts of scholarly literature across all disciplines. Reading different scholarly articles written in English helped her to understand how to write her own academic papers, particularly by increasing her vocabulary and helping her to structure her academic
papers. In her reflective essay, she commented how reading and revising academic papers had had a positive influence on her writing skills, particularly with regard to developing her academic vocabulary and improving her sentence structure.

With more reading and revision of my writing I can rewrite to improve the final draft. Online websites Google scholars, articles from the library of university of Memphis Of course writing help improve my English and expand my vocabulary.

The more I write and use different vocabulary and structures, the better and easier I write (Dina, reflective essay).

In this reflection, not only did she notice the development of her writing skills as a result of reading, but she also started exploring different resources to improve her written work. For example, she consulted the gramrly.com website for additional support. She also used dictionaries to translate look for academic words.

“Reading is an important tool to enhance my writing ability”: Research has acknowledged that regular reading is a stepping-stone to better writing and helps learners to strengthen their writing skills. It helps to expand L2 writers’ vocabularies and shows them different ways of using words. This also makes it easier for writers of English to use these words in their own writing. In addition to practicing different genre of academic English writing, Samir was of the opinion that there was a correlation between reading and the development of writing skills, as he stated:

“I can tackle these [writing] difficulties with practice writing and reading. I think reading is an important tool to enhance my writing ability. Reading can help me expand my vocabulary and give me more ideas on how to structure a paper” (Samir, reflective essay).
According to his reflection, not only did reading enhance his ability to write effectively, it also allowed him to increase his academic vocabulary and taught him how to write his papers.

“Reading in my major”: All the Saudi students in this study viewed reading as an important tool to enhance their academic writing practices. Sara realized the importance of reading in the new community to enhance her writing. The following interaction occurred during the third post-writing interview that indicated how Sara clearly correlated reading with writing well.

*Interviewer:* Did you read enough to have a clear idea on how you would write your report?

*Sara:* Yes, reading was very important.

*Interviewer:* Do you see a connection between reading more to improve your writing skill?

*Sara:* Yes, of course.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me more about how reading helps you in your writing?

*Sara:* It can help me to know when to use some words, academic words, and to know how to use it. It helps me to see how to write good academic papers.

*Interviewer:* When you write this paper, where does your knowledge come from?

*Sara:* Internet. Most of them Internet. Yeah. Reading article after articles until I make knowledge about the topic and then write it. For example, the four questions - I think there are four questions in the first part. It's talking about some topic. So I read topics about them and then write it down. And the final part was to find article and I forget. But you have to
find article that follows some certain structure. Yeah. It's like a case study that I have to find to form my own responses for each question.

Sara found that reading several books and scholarly articles in her field of study increased her ability to write. For example, Sara attempted to read more in order to overcome her difficulty with paraphrasing texts, generating ideas for writing, and finding the correct academic words/synonyms.
Section III

Saudi Students’ Identity Construction in Text

Section III encompasses the discussion of international Saudi students’ construction of writer identities through their different written assignments. The discussion is mainly focused on answering the third guided research question. In an influential study that provided a framework for the analysis of writer identity, Ivanič (1998) suggested four interrelated components: the autobiographical self, the discoursal self, the self as author, and the possibilities for self-hood.

In the present study, I have drawn upon these four components as the main categories to develop themes and topics for the investigation of Saudi writers’ identity construction through their different written assignments (see Table 9). Through the collection of three final written assignments from each Saudi participant, along with instructors’ written comments, I present the findings from the interviews based on their papers written for different courses. The findings are interpreted and discussed with reference to the theoretical assumption that writers’ identities are not fixed, but relatively complex and multiple. As elicited, Saudi students’ identity construction was complex because the construction was influenced by many factors such as prior knowledge and previous writing practices, the current academic discourse, their resistant attitudes toward the target discourse, as well as their English writing proficiency. Their writer identities are multiple because they tended to construct multiple writer identities and negotiated continually for improved identities as writers in all the assignments they wrote.
### Table 9

**Four Interrelated Components with Developed Themes and Topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Autobiographical Self</td>
<td>Autobiographical Self Based on Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>Positive influence on writer identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative influence on writer identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Discoursal Self</td>
<td>Writer Identities Constructed by Current Academic Discourse Writer identities Constructed with Resistance</td>
<td>Accommodation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opposition Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self as Author</td>
<td>Authorial Identity based on Linguistic Features</td>
<td>Stance Marker/First Person Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Possibilities for Self-hood</td>
<td>Writer Identities: Multiple, Shifted, and Developed</td>
<td>Written Assignment One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Written Assignment Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Written Assignment Three</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Autobiographical Self**

In this category, I present how international undergraduate/graduate Saudi students constructed their writer identities in terms of the autobiographical self-based on prior knowledge, particularly how they identified their autobiographical selves in their written academic assignments. The autobiographical self of the writer in L2 writing was best explained by Burgees and Ivanič (2010, p. 238), as follows:

This concerns the sense of who person is, which the writer brings with her to the act of writing, that is, the unique consequences for selfhood of all her experiences of life up to that moment with their associated interests, values, beliefs, and social positionings.

**Autobiographical Self Based on Prior Knowledge**

SLA researchers have indicated that L2 learners are capable of acquiring abstract properties that could not have resulted from any kind of instruction; accordingly, second language acquisition is based on first language acquisition. Language learners very often acquire a second/foreign language by drawing heavily on their background experiences and prior knowledge in their first language. For example, Brown (2007) argued that each learner has stored information and, whenever new information is received, it subsumed by the previously stored information. In this regard, most L2 writers’ prior knowledge influences the way they approach writing in a second language to certain degree. Similarly, Burk (2010) emphasized that the previous experiences of a writer may have an impact on the formation of his or her identity in the new community.

Writers are reminded of their autobiographical selves when writing. As their previous experience influences their social and cultural identities, they construct
their writer identities based on “the identity of the writer-as-performer: the person who sets about the processes of producing the texts” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 178), something that they had built previously.

The Saudi writers often relied on prior knowledge. That is, they tended to look back at what they had done previously to apply stored writing skills and ideas about writing to their academic writing in English. Relying on previous beliefs about writing and writing practices had both a positive and a negative effect on the L2 writers’ identities. This was based on how good their previous writing skills were and how well their previous beliefs about writing benefitted them in the new academic community. Based on their previous writing skills, L2 writers can construct positive identities as writers in which the application of prior knowledge assists their current writing practices. A negative influence on developing a writer’s identity, on the other hand, has a negative influence and makes the writing experience more challenging.

**Positive Influence on Writer Identity:** Instances of a positive writer identity have been found across three cases. For example, Dina identified herself as a good writer in Arabic who was more confident about and more conversant in Arabic academic writing. Dina believed that L1 writing strategies could be transferable into English academic writing. She described incidents in which she applied some L1 strategies to her written assignments in English, particularly at the pre-writing stage of the writing process. This stage may be seen as an incubation period or a rehearsal for writing. In the pre-writing process, Dina established an initial organizational strategy that took the form of outlining, collecting pertinent materials for her topic, ordering information, clustering thoughts and ideas, and talking about the selected topic with other Saudi students. It is interesting that, in her pre-writing strategy, Dina relied on the use of Arabic as the main source to continue the process of the pre-writing stage. For example, she
said it was easy for her to read scholarly articles written in Arabic to generate the main ideas for the topic about which she was writing in English at her American university. She then translated selected written artifacts from Arabic into English using Google translate, which is a free multilingual machine-translation service. Although she forced herself to read in English in the new community, she still found reading in English difficult, and felt more secure when reading in Arabic rather than in English because she was not exposed to the reading of English for the purpose of writing in her previous practices. For Dina, the strategy of reading in Arabic to generate concepts for assignments written in English seemed to be effective, particularly at the stage of comprehending the designated assignment topics. Dina also used the strategies of outlining and brainstorming in Arabic. She jotted down her thoughts and notes in Arabic. She also felt more comfortable consulting other students from her culture to discuss the topic about which she was writing. Thus, it could be said that pre-writing not only motivated her because it established the purpose of writing, but that it may also have triggered the retrieval from memory of a variety of pertinent experiences and prior knowledge that she, as an L2 writer, relied on when writing academic papers in English in the new community.

Similarly, reliance on previously learned practices in the L1 community (Saudi Arabia) was also observed in Samir’s case. Samir, who experienced discomfort regarding the extensive use of the grammar translation method in the writing classes in his home country (Saudi Arabia), seemed to benefit and apply it to his written assignments. The autobiographical self of Samir as a writer was clearly presented at the stage of the drafting strategy. At this stage of the writing process, the L2 writers generally put their collected information onto paper, concentrate on content, and explore the possibilities of their topic as they write. Furthermore, invented spellings, blanks, crossing-outs, and abbreviations are acceptable because they promote fluency. For Samir,
this was not the case, as he was more concerned with accuracy in his academic papers. According to him, he did not pay as much attention to the content or ideas as he did to checking for grammatical mistakes. He wanted to show his professor that he could write well by producing mistake-free written assignments. During the first post-writing interview, Samir stated that he checked constantly for grammatical mistakes in each sentence before he proceeded to next sentence. If the sentence sounded grammatically correct to him, he would move on. Grammar appeared to be the most important feature of his English academic assignments as the result of his acquired knowledge and practices in previous academic discourse.

Sara was familiar with how to write different types of business reports due to previous experience in her L1 community. Thus, the knowledge of how to construct business reports was transferred into the current academic community in which she experienced writing business reports. Although she identified slight differences when writing reports in the two communities (L1 and L2), she commented that the general knowledge of how to write a business report had helped her and made it easy for her to write the business reports encountered in her current academic community.

**Negative Influence on Writer Identity:** However, previous experiences and an understanding of L2 writing may interfere with the development of a writer’s identity in the new community, making the writing experience challenging. Two instances that showed the negative influence of relying on previous writing practices were found among the three cases. Dina used to write long paragraphs and had barely considered revising her academic papers for more coherence and cohesion. This previous practice of writing, which was acceptable to her, was transferred to the revision stage of the writing process. Although this stage is more concerned with the quality of the content and L2 writers need to rewrite for clarity and the smooth flow of
ideas, Dina was unable to provide sufficient examples to support her arguments in the first assignment she wrote due to her conviction that writing in English was similar to writing in Arabic. For example, she did not feel it necessary to support her arguments with examples in her first written assignment, which was returned with the instructor’s feedback “What do you mean by this?” The instructor also asked her to provide more explanations of certain points and to include clarifications and examples. When I asked Dina about her feelings about writing her first assignment, she mentioned that she was not happy and that this particular incident had affected her grade for her first written assignment. In her second written assignment, the instructor deleted an entire paragraph. When asked to provide an explanation for the deletion of the paragraph during the second post-writing interview, Dina said that the paragraph was unnecessary because it contained repetitive information. Dina said, “She [the teacher] did not need that paragraph. There's much more information there may be”. The instructor also indicated the incorrect use of some paragraphs in her third written assignment.

The second instance was noted in Samir’s case; in his first semester, Samir was asked to write a reflective paper based on the class reading. He was shocked to be asked to write a reflective essay, as he had never done so before. Eventually, he looked at some written samples of reflective writing on-line and he considered copying the layout, which included a summary in the first part and reflection in the second part. Samir positioned himself as an impartial writer in the reflection section of his first written assignment. For example, in his first written assignment, his teacher commented that he did not include his personal views and thoughts. His teacher’s comments about his first assignment were as follows:

“Your summary of the Apology is good and very detailed, but your discussion of your own views is very short by comparison. Your reflection could have
improved...had you gone into more detail regarding your own thoughts about Socrates and what he was up to” (teacher’s feedback for Samir’s first written assignment).

The goal of a reflective essay in Western writing is to not only discuss what was learned, but also to convey the personal experiences and findings that resulted from such learning. Samir was able to write a summary of the reading successfully, but he was unable to reflect on the reading because he did not include his own thoughts about the selected reading. The writer’s reaction to the topic, feelings associated with that reaction, and an analysis of why the writer reacted in a certain way are common components of reflective writing. For Samir, the understanding of these major components of a reflective paper was not familiar, and he believed that his own thoughts about the reading were not important; thus, he decided not to include them.

Like Dina, Samir also believed that missing such a major requirement in a reflective assignment had affected his grade. Samir agreed that the grade he received for his first assignment was fair because he failed to include major requirements concerning the structure of the reflective essay, such as the title, page numbers, and his personal thoughts on the reading. He also took action to overcome his negative experience by learning to contemplate his standpoints and thoughts in the other two reflective assignments he submitted for the same class.

2. Discoursal Self

The discoursal self is more concerned with the self-representation of the writer in the text, which emerges from the text that a writer creates. It is “constructed through the discourse characteristics of a text that reflect values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they were written” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 25). While studying at an American university, the University of Memphis, the undergraduate/graduate international Saudi students recognized the
power of academic writing in the attempt to succeed in their choice of programs. They familiarized themselves with the English academic writing styles and conventions.

As proposed by Canagarajah (2004), forms of identity conflicts, and the negotiations that take place in writing by L2 writers can be observed via strategies of *avoidance, transposition, opposition,* and *appropriation.* In my study, two forms of these strategies were identified: accommodation and opposition. According to Canagarajah (2004), accommodation is the strategy whereby L2 writers deliberately relinquish their previous identities and adopt a newly constructed identity in order to be considered a member of the target discourse community, whereas opposition is interpreted as an L2 writer adopting particular vernacular discourses in his/her writing that oppose that which is familiar and practiced in the academic discourse of the target language. Underlying their struggles with writing in the L2, this category exhibits how the study’s participants were mindful of constructing their identities as writers by understanding the privileged discourse and power relations in their written academic assignments. Two main themes emerged for this category:

(1) Writer identities constructed by current academic discourse, which supports the accommodation strategy, and

(2) Writer identities constructed with resistance, which supports the opposition strategy.

**Writer Identities Constructed by Current Academic Discourse**

Abasi, Akbari, and Graves (2006) pointed out that one valued identity that L2 writers embrace in any discourse community is the representation of self as being aware of the contours of academic writing; that is, the representation of one’s self as what they called “intertextually knowledgeable”. The participants in my study were conscious of completing their assignments
according to their professors’ guidance and perspectives. They encountered different forms of academic writing with which they were not familiar. They felt the obligation to imitate these form in order to earn good grades and succeed in the courses in which they were enrolled. Examples of adopting successful identities as writers who were as “intertextuality knowledgeable” as were members of the target language community were found among the Saudi participants.

During the first post-writing interview, Dina said: “I did not use to the essay formats including introductory and concluding paragraphs”. In the past, she had been used to writing long paragraphs and sentences, connecting them with “and”. Comparing her previous writing with her collected assignments (1, 2, and 3), which were sections of a research paper, revealed an interesting element about her new identity formation as a discoursal self. Although Dina did not include a conclusion section in her assignments, she showed knowledge of how to write an academic research paper. During the interview, I asked Dina to provide me with the rationale for the structure she used to construct her first assignment. She began her first page with title followed by an introductory paragraph. She was aware of what each paragraph entailed. Dina also divided her paper using main headings and subheadings as an indication of her textual knowledge regarding how to write an introduction to a research paper. She began to align herself with the current context of academic discourse expectations by learning how to avoid long paragraphs and adopting the habit of narrowing down the introduction, using topic sentences carefully, taking positions, providing reasons and examples, and dividing the paper by using main headings and subheadings.

In her second assignment, which was a literature review, Dina’s representation of self was noted in being mindful of the range of literature in the qualitative research tradition. Dina not
only expressed her identity as a strong writer attending graduate school, or as knowledgeable
writer by acquainting and practicing the current L2 writing style, also she expressed her identity
as a reader-concerned writer and an independent writer by exercising her autonomy when
selecting the references for her literature review assignment. In particular, she relied heavily on
citations and referencing to represent herself as a knowledgeable writer who had consulted many
sources. She attempted to include critical views on the topic, to discuss the strengths and
weaknesses of sources, and to join the conversation in her field. As she had not been exposed to
the habit of reading in English in order to write an academic paper in English, Dina’s situation in
her discourse community encouraged her to become a capable English reader as she navigated
through scholarly papers written in English prior to writing her assignment.

Samir had struggled during his writing assignments. As he found class readings complicated
and he was incapable of comprehending and using academic vocabulary, he was unable to write
a summary using his own words and a reflection that included his own opinions about the
reading. After his first assignment, Samir began to immerse himself in surround himself to the
embedded ideology behind the dominant academic discourse by developing an identity as a
flexible writer. According to Samir, “I work on writing assignment as the teacher instruct me to
do”. Thus, Samir appeared to disregard his knowledge and practice concerning how to approach
L2 writing in his L1 community (Saudi Arabia), as he preferred to consult his instructor for
information about the best way to write good academic papers in his L2 community. Paltridge
(2007) claimed that many writing conventions would remain unobserved for L2 learners unless
teachers brought these forms and patterns of language use to their conscious awareness.
Therefore, the teacher’s active involvement, through explicit explanation of the contextual
dimension, can scaffold L2 writers in the distinctive use of the language that is appropriate for
various genres (Henry & Roseberry, 1998). Motivated by receiving good grades on his written papers, Samir followed all the instruction, advice, and comments he received from his teacher regarding how to write designated academic paper. He depended heavily on the outline his teacher provided for him prior to each written assignment and, if an outline was not provided, he would talk to his teachers. Samir began to write current academic papers according to his teacher’s guidelines, as he stated:

I asked the teacher what's the structure of the paper and how I'm going to write it.

And he told me, first paragraph, he needs a summary and second paragraph, he needs a reflection on it (Samir, first post-writing interview).

Further commenting on how his teacher’s guidelines had helped him to write according to the designated academic discourse, Samir said, “but he [the teacher] gave example from questions, and I wrote based on that question”, or “guidelines help me to arrange my writing or the way I’m going to write the paper”. He expressed his identity as a consistent writer by relying on the guidelines for writing that he received from his course instructor. He considered these guidelines to be reliable, and that they contained the necessary information for him to write his first, second, and third assignments, which were summaries and reflections on class readings.

Samir not only considered his teacher’s guidelines, but also comments about how to write specific type of academic papers. Samir believed that if he wrote in the way that his teacher required, he would presented himself as “a good writer” in the new community. As he mentioned, “I ask the teacher if I need to write it again because he's the main person I'm writing for”. In addition, he developed an image of himself, as a writer, via his teacher comments and feedback on his writing. According to Samir, the “teacher’s opinion and feedback is very important because I have another writing and I want to know how to do best and how to do
better”. An example of how teacher’s comments on his writing affected the way in which he approached the subsequent academic assignments was shown in his first assignment. Samir was unable to include his own thoughts about the class reading. After he received comments from his teacher about his reflection, as well as regarding the proper use of citations, Samir decided that the teacher was right and that he would consider the feedback in his next paper. He took action and wrote the second assignment as his teacher had recommended:

> When I wrote the first one I saw what my teacher feedback for the first one, and I tried to fix it on the second one. In the first assignment I didn't put my own thoughts but in this assignment I more I put my thoughts in the reflection part

(Samir, second post-writing interview).

As a result of writing a reflective paper according to his teacher’s suggestions, he received positive feedback from his teacher for his second written assignment. The following excerpt is the teacher’s comments on Samir’s second assignment:

> You demonstrated a good understanding of Mill’s utilitarian position. Nice work! In particular, you did a nice job of including relevant example in the second part of your reflection. The examples you included, of smoking in public and lowering wages, were both relevant and supplemented your discussion. Nice work!

(Teacher’s feedback, Samir’s second written assignment).

Samir continued to follow his teacher’s suggestions and he also received positive feedback for his third assignment regarding his reflection. As his teacher commented, “In your reflection, you demonstrated a good understanding of Locke’s position of nature and the social contract”

(Teacher’s feedback, Samir’s third written assignment).
Sara constructed her discoursal self by drawing on the discourses of her field of study. She acquired business-writing skills by using words, phrases, and writing styles that were used by her instructor and field of business. By doing so, she aligned herself with the discourses accepted in her field of study or by her professor. Being a graduate student at business school, Sara showed an identity as an intertextually knowledgeable, thoughtful, and independent writer in all three of submitted assignments. First, her written academic assignments included words, acronyms, or phrases (such as JAD, model diagrams, stockholders, information systems, SDLC, and so on) specific to her area of study. Second, Sara followed the usual sequence for organizing a paper, including the background, design, methods, anticipated results, anticipated problems, and references. For example, for her first and third assignments, she was expected to write a business report organized around the identification of problems or difficulties and corresponding solutions. Although Sara did not receive any guidelines from her teacher regarding how to write the report, she not only followed the structure of a report successfully, she also displayed an understanding of dividing her report according to clearly labeled sections, and used bulleted points for the discussion sections.

Moreover, Sara expressed her discoursal self through the use of organization, graphics, pictures, and tables in all three of her written assignments by following the convention of academic writing specific to her field of study. When I asked Sara to provide reasons for her decision to include many tables, graphics, and pictures, she commented:

It’s the steps that you have to. Some of the steps require a diagram that you have to do. It's like data modeling that you have [to] create tables to show to your teacher what the entities are that you have in your system (Sara, second post-writing interview).
Her response indicated not only her knowledge and awareness about the genre in which she was writing in the new community, but also her consideration of the teacher as she took pains to ensure that the teacher would understand her written assignment.

**Writers’ Identities Constructed with Resistance**

Although the Saudi participants showed their commitment to writing in the L2 writing by adopting the accommodation strategy (Canagarajah, 2004) to develop identities that were valued in the target discourse community, there were occasional instances of resistance in which some writer’s identities were constructed by adopting a resistant attitude toward the target discourse (opposition strategy). Burgess and Ivanic (2010, p. 230) explained how L2 students, or writers in this case, embraced identities in an educational setting:

> For most students, identities in educational contexts are transitory, mediating identities; hence, the practices in which they engage while attending courses may be for extrinsic purposes, not part of the identities to which they aspire for the rest of their lives. Students may be in an ambivalent relationship with this identity: partially desiring and partially resisting being constructed as “someone in education”.

The Saudi writers in my study brought their own life histories to the act of writing, which occasionally tended to create tensions. All the participants felt that they had no choice but to write. For them, writing was compulsory act, which is also interpreted as their resistant attitude toward aligning themselves with target community members. Organizing the work according to a formal order or structure and the correct use of referencing were among the examples of resistance found in the three cases.
Typical American academic writing follows a formal structure that requires some kind of structure such as a beginning, a middle, and an end. Structuring academic papers according to their preference and understanding were aspects of resistance that the Saudi writers of English showed. For example, Dina appeared to express her identity as a resistant writer by omitting the conclusion section in the three assignments that she wrote for a particular class, believing that conclusions were not necessary. Including a conclusion in English academic writing not only reinforces a writer’s argument, it also briefly summarizes how a writer has proven the validity of the argument. As noted, her three written assignments were missing conclusion sections in which she could have summarized the points she had made in the preceding paragraphs and aligned herself with common practice in the target discourse community. However, Dina preferred to take a stand by deciding how to construct her written assignments. Dina structured her first assigned essay by including two main paragraphs, each of which was headed by an open question: “Who I am as a Professional” and “How My Research Relates to My Work Context”. She did not mention the purpose of her essay (introduction) and did not summarize (conclusion) her points. However, her second assignment was structured in a slightly clearer format, beginning with an introductory paragraph that provided information about the nature of the topic, and proceeding with paragraphs (main discussion) demarcated via bold headings, in which she summarized and synthesized the literature. However, she still did not include a conclusion. Her third assignment was also missing a proper introduction and conclusion, as she structured her paper using two main paragraphs with two main bold headings. The first paragraph entailed a discussion of the “Advantages of Teaching Drawing to Kindergarteners”, while the second paragraph entailed a discussion of the “Disadvantages of Teaching Drawing to Kindergarteners”.
When L2 students are left to discover the complexities of how language works in different genres for themselves, they are likely to fall back on the discourse conventions of their own cultures (Christie, 1999). They may then fail to produce texts that are either contextually adequate or educationally valued in the American context (Freedman, 1999). When I asked Dina about the format of her written assignments, she provided different reasons for not including the conclusion section, saying “He is easy” - referring to her teacher’s reaction to her choices for structuring her papers. Upon receiving the assignment topic, she structured her paper according to her understanding because her instructor had not commented on the structure of the assignment. Being at graduate school and having engaged in a great number of academic literacy program, Dina had the choice to develop and display a strong sense of identity as an academic writer by indicating thoughtful attitudes toward structuring written assignments, and following the conventional format in the target community. However, she expressed her identity as a writer who was resistant via the choices she made regarding the structure of her three written assignments.

Similarly, due to a lack of adequate transition time in the academic setting, familiarity with genres of papers, and language proficiency, Samir established and showed resistance to developing an identity as a writer. This was shown clearly in his first and third written assignments, which were reflective essays. Samir wrote his papers using multiple paragraphs. Although a reflective essay entails a structure that has an opening paragraph, a main body, and a conclusion, Samir did not follow this format. It could be difficult for the reader to get a sense of the content, or perspective of Samir’s essay at first glance because he avoided the use of a title, an introduction, and a conclusion. Furthermore, the paper was not structured clearly in terms of labeling paragraphs to show which part was the summary and which part was the reflection.
When I asked Samir about the format of his first assignment, he confirmed that he knew how to structure an English academic paper from his prior attendance at different English-as-second-language institutions: “Every institution have different approach on writing but they were all using the same format. Which is an introduction, body, and conclusion.” However, Samir expressed his identity as a resistant writer by justifying his decision not to include the title, introduction, and conclusion or to label each paragraph because he was mainly writing for his instructor, and he assumed the instructor would know the topic. As he mentioned, “I only write for my teacher. I don't expect someone else will see it”. Therefore, he felt no need to include these major sections when structuring his first and third assignments. He maintained this attitude until he received feedback from his teacher regarding the structure of his assignment. His teacher commented, “Your paper could have been structured a bit better (see my comment on the first section regarding sentences and paragraphs)” (Teacher’s feedback, Samir’s first written assignment).

Samir then began to consider the structure of his written assignments seriously. He organized his second assignment following APA format. For example, he structured his second written assignment by including a short title, labeling each paragraph such as “Summary” in the first part and “Evaluation & Response” in the second part of his paper. He also included the instructor’s name, course name, and date. He cited reading resources using the APA format and included a reference list.

In addition to organization using a formal order or structure, the use or lack of use of some writing strategies are among the areas in which most L2 writers could display resistance to the forms practiced in the target community. Even though writing strategies are considered focused ways of thinking about writing, and successful writers use mental processes to control
the production of writing to certain degree, all the study’s participants showed some hesitance and resistance with regard to applying writing strategies in their paper. Samir, for example, indicated his identity as a resistant writer by not using some writing strategies such as outlining, drafting, and brainstorming, although he knew they would contribute significantly to writing a good academic paper.

I don’t use writing strategies. When I write an assignment, I don’t do an outline or a draft. I don’t do brainstorming. I just write the assignment and read it when I finish, and I fix grammar if I did not understand what I wrote (Samir, reflective essay).

Furthermore, citing the work of other authors is central to academic writing. Even though the participants showed knowledge of including numerous citations and references to support their ideas, they demonstrated different attitudes towards citing information about the source. For example, Samir expressed his identity as a resistant writer in the way in which he presented citations and references in his written assignments. His teacher’s feedback indicated that Samir had not quoted the source from which he had obtained the information, and he did not include proper citations in his paper. The teachers provided Samir with comments regarding citation as follows:

At one point, you quote the text without indicating this with quotation marks and you do not cite the passage. Please go back and correct this. I’m assuming this was an oversight, but it could be considered plagiarism (Teacher’s feedback, Samir’s first written assignment).

As the teacher’s feedback shows, the teacher clearly asked Samir to consider proper citation in his written assignment. However, Samir expressed his identity as a resistant writer because he
was familiar with different practices in terms of using other sources in his writing. For example, he paraphrased source information by merely replacing some words in the source texts with synonyms. Samir responded to the teacher by saying that he had used correct citation in his paper and asked the teacher if he wanted him to do something different. “I put the citation but I am not sure what you meant or do I need to something else” was Samir’s response to his teacher’s feedback for his first written assignment.

Sara’s written assignments indicated the use of many reading resources. However, she preferred not to cite those sources in her assignments, believing that rewriting the source information was not required, and the words should indicate her ideas.

3. Self as Author

‘Self as author’ investigates how the participants expressed their authorial selves in their writing. The self as author component addresses such questions as “How do people establish authority for the context of their writing?” and “to what extent do they present themselves or others as authoritative?” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 27). L2 writers’ perceptions of themselves as individuals and as members of different social and discourse communities are expressed through the different authorial voices they adopt when writing (Hyland, 2004; Matsuda, 2001; Tang & John, 1999). In this section, I will discuss how undergraduate/graduate Saudi students expressed their identities as writers in terms of self as author, which is another important aspect of writer identity. As proposed by Hyland (2005), authorial identity refers to how authors present their works to readers in their disciplines, expressing their points of view or self-representation, and showing their presence, which can be revealed through an expression of stance. The Saudi writers in my study were mainly guided by the conventions in their fields of study or by their professors’ expectations, which determined whether and how the students should express their
selves as authors. Some participants were explicitly asked to express authority, as in case of Samir’s reflective essays. Others expressed their authorial selves in the text via their choices, as in Dina’s and in Sara’s cases. Authorial selves in the different written assignment were identified via the students’ use of some linguistics features, particularly those related to authorial stance or self-mentions (such as I, we, me, and us), and their personal preferences for structuring sentences.

**Authorial Identity based on Linguistic Features**

*First Person Pronoun:* Hyland (2002) found that personal pronouns are used to indicate authorship, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Ivanic and Camp (2001, p. 25) stated that “references to the first person position reflect the writer as asserting the right to have a voice…the writer is claiming authority both as an act of self-assurance and as a statement of belief that knowledge and understanding are subjective”. For example, Dina expressed her authorial identity through the use of stance markers by including and excluding her own views and thoughts depending on the genre of writing. Stance markers can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and include features that refer to the ways in which writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that “writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement” (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). This was obvious in Dina’s three written assignments.

Dina’s first written assignment contained the extensive use of first person pronouns, such as “I am trying to contribute to children education” or “I intend to both”. The number of first person pronouns in her first assignment was higher than it was in her second and third assignments. Dina established subjectivity and an authorial self in her first assignment by using “I” twenty-three times, unlike her second and third assignments, which were an expository paper.
and an argumentative paper. In her first assignment, she wanted to use her own voice to express herself and to convince her professor that the teaching of drawing improved kindergarteners’ social communication skills. Therefore, she thought using the first person pronoun “I” and using simple sentences would not only contribute to conveying her message, but would also indicate her strong beliefs, feelings, and interest in the topic about which she was writing. However, in her second and third assignments, she positioned herself objectively via the use of more complicated sentences, and avoided the use of “I” to discuss and synthesize the existing literature related to drawing activities in young children’s instruction. It would seem that the first person pronoun was not used in her expository paper or in her argumentative paper because Dina was aware of what each genre of the assignments required. She expressed her authorial self-based on how and when to use personal judgement words (I think, I believe), and when to use what the evidence suggested to establish a position on the topic in a concise manner. Dina used the passive voice in her second and third written assignments in order to sound more objective. For example, “The meanings of art and drawing are presented” and the use of the third person or “it” construction, as in “It appears that, There is evidence that when children…”

The use of the first person pronoun was found in Samir’s and Sara’s written assignments. Samir expressed many opinions and used many personal markers throughout his three reflective assignments, such as “I think Socrates was right”, “if I lived unjust”, “I do not agree”, and “I will feel guilt” to form authority and to express his thoughts about the assigned readings. He used the first person singular “I” to relate the readings and classes to his previous knowledge and experiences. In Sara’s case, although business documents are generally written without the use of personal pronouns, that is “I”, “you”, “we”, "they" and even "it", particularly when writing reports and contractual documents, Sara appeared to express her authorial self by using personal
pronouns (for example, “we have to insure that the system”, “they have a good base for installing”, “It is worth mentioning”, “We will start with collecting information”, and “we have huge number of applicants”), as well as via determiners as in “During our gathering process”.

Ways of expressing opinions and beliefs also were common in Sara’s first and third assignments: “I think the requirement determination process that I explained above is suitable for global context”, “in Services R Us, Inc. case, I think the agile methodology is appropriate method”, and “In my opinion, this was ethically wrong.”

**Sentence Structure:** In addition to the use of personal pronouns, Dina, Samir, and Sara adopted a strategy of using simple sentences as a way of representing their authorial selves when writing academic assignments. This was shown in their attitudes towards structuring sentences in their different written texts. Although the Saudi students had studied English grammar and syntax for years in their home country, their passive knowledge of forming complex structures and sentences does not automatically and spontaneously transfer to their L2 writing. Although they were at university level, they still preferred to simple sentences to more complex sentence structures. They believed that simple sentences were the best way to write academic papers because simple sentence would allow them to avoid making grammatical mistakes and assist them to describe their ideas to their instructors.

Dina indicated her preference for making her writing simple because of her difficulty in writing. She confirmed that “because my idea is little” had led her to write using a simple structure rather than a complex one. In addition, she explained that her inability with regard to “how I can choose the words”, “how I can order sentences”, and “spelling” were among the main reasons for using short sentences and paragraphs.
Samir expressed his authorial self by using a simple sentence structure due to his personal preference when reading others’ written work. As he had difficulty in understanding complex academic texts and vocabulary, he preferred to read simple and clearly structured and organized texts. As a result, he embedded the use of simple sentences in his writing and believed this to be the most important feature of English academic writing:

I think a good English writing features is how you make the context easy and fun to read. In my opinion, this is what make me exited to read something. If the paper has easy vocabulary and organized, it invite[s] me to read it. So I think organizing and simplifying sentences are the most important features in writing (Samir, reflective essay).

Sara expressed her authorial self and identity on two occasions with regard to the use of a simple sentence structure when writing a business report, even though typical business reports should be written in the active voice and not the passive voice. This is because it makes sentences more immediate and easy to understand, as well as helping to decrease sentence length. Sara’s lengthy business report (seven pages) indicated her choice and authority by using both the active and the passive voice. Second, Sara’s preference for using simple sentences was mainly to avoid confusion. She mentioned that it was not easy for her to translate her complex ideas into English when writing her assignments. She also had difficulty in going into detail regarding her ideas once she had them down on paper. Sara justified her use of simple sentences when writing her assignments as follows:

I have a specific idea and I can't make it wider. Yeah. I just write some general idea and then I think it's enough. I'm not good in saying the details. Yeah. That's the most difficult thing that I faced. Because when we write in English, the simple
is the best. But sometimes, we like to think more complex. I don't know why. So we like to make this into small, difficult [and] sounds heavy. And it's not. That's why it makes confusion, maybe it's not what make the teacher more happy about writing (Sara, second post-writing interview).

This complexity caused Sara to express her self-authority in the choices she made in her first written assignment, which was a prompt and response paper. For example, Sara’s writing tended to be marked by short, simple sentences without many indicators of transitions or logical connections between sentences. In addition, her writing took the form of bulleted and numbered lists. She seemed to avoid writing more complex sentences because she was uncertain about how to use such structures and wished avoid the risk of errors by keeping her writing syntactically simple. As she explained, “When I have a complex idea, I don't know how to translate it in English. I think when writing in English, the simple is the best.”

4. Possibilities for Selfhood

This component is a more abstract notion of writers’ identity concerning the socially available possibilities for self-hood within sociocultural and institutional contexts and how they shape and constrain individual acts of writing. It relates to the circumstances in which students are expected to write, as they are positioned by the discourses in which they participate (Ivanic1998), and eventually work toward situating themselves in a particular discourse community by adopting appropriate and beneficial identities as writers. The relations of power that exist between lecturers and students, as well as the beliefs, values, and practices of their academic communities, both enable and constrain their possibilities for selfhood. Burgess and Ivanic (2010, p. 237) asserted that:
Discourses, and the “possibilities for selfhood” inscribed in them, are likely to be multiple, diverse, and contradictory, even within a relatively clearly defined social space, and what is “socially available” may vary considerably for the writer and the reader(s).

Based on this perspective of the possibilities for selfhood in writing, I will present some features of writers’ identities that emerged from this study, namely that the Saudi writers’ identities tended to be multiple, to shift, and to develop.

**Writers Identities: Multiple, Shifted, and Developed**

The undergraduate/graduate international Saudi students’ identities as writers were multifaceted, shifted, and developed through the social practice of academic writing in the English academic discourse community. Their identities were shifted and conflicted when their previous discourse community practices in Saudi Arabia did not match their current practices at the American university. They came to the United States with different views and understandings with regard to the approach to English academic writing. What they had in common, to certain degree, affected their current writing assignments positively and negatively. They adopted similar autobiographical selves and experienced challenges in which instances of resistance were identified. As a result, their previous identities conflicted with their new identities in the target community. Even though their habits, attitude, and strategies when writing in the Saudi context influenced them when writing in English, they constructed new identities as writers that they did not have previously in Saudi Arabia. It can be said that their identities tended to be complex, flexible, multiple, and developed according to different contexts, as seen in their different written assignments. This can be seen in their constant views and the labels that they applied to held about themselves. Examples of labels were identified as ESL writer, EFL writer, undergraduate
writer, graduate writer, business writer, beginner writer, intermediate or average writer, non-native writer, and good writer. That is to say, their identities as writers changed constantly.

Furthermore, according to Ivanic (1998), the socially constructed possibilities for self-hood in a particular community will differ from one act of writing or reading, to another; thus, the possibilities for selfhood that are socially available in any social space will transcend the act of writing, being in circulation both before and after it, and are likely to change over time. Though there are particular possibilities for selfhood that are specific to a recognizable period of time in a particular context (Burgees & Ivanic, 2010, p. 238).

It was noticeable that the Saudi writers no longer adopted a single fixed identity when writing their first, second and third academic assignments. When students overcame their struggles with writing, they tended to construct multiple writer identities and negotiated continually for improved identities as writers in all the assignments they wrote. The three Saudi students in this study showed that they had increased their knowledge of writing skills and genres. They became sensitive to writing contexts, and gained confidence gradually.

**Written Assignment One**

*Less skillful writers*: As a result of prior knowledge and practices of L2 writing in Saudi Arabia, their first assignments included examples of a low sense of identity as academic writers. They expressed contradictory identities by drawing on both academic discourses (L1 and L2). In their first written assignments, all the Saudi students (Dina, Samir, and Sara) acknowledged that that the initial stages of composition were not easy, as they all had encountered difficulty with writing. Limited academic vocabularies, constructing complex sentences, transforming ideas into words, understanding concepts, paraphrasing, spelling, and meeting teachers’ expectations were
among some of the difficulties they experienced when writing their first assignments. Their identities as writers at this point were as less skillful writers because they all compared themselves to the native English writers, and indicated that they were in need of more skills in order to write like native English writers. This was clearly exemplified in the possibilities for selfhood that the Saudi writers created for themselves in the context of the first written assignments, which appeared to be conflicted and multiple.

It would seem that none of them was satisfied with their first written assignments as they failed to demonstrate some aspects of good academic writing. For example, Samir did not reflect his own views on the class reading, Dina did not provide sufficient clarification to support her arguments, and Sara felt she was incapable of expanding her main ideas in more detail. Common expressions pertaining to the dissatisfaction they experienced during the process of writing their first assignments were collected. For example, Sara explained that her first assignment lacked efficiency and did not meet the standards for written work by a graduate student, which made her feel that her writing skills as a graduate student were low.

It was so difficult to accomplish that assignment. I don't know what I will write," like everything is not clear. I don't have a variety of vocabulary when I'm writing as I'm not encouraged to add it (academic vocabulary) to my writing if I didn't know it really well and maybe some of my sentences that is it's complicated to understand. I’m not satisfied because this is not a level of graduate students. It should be more professional, more academic, yeah I think my writing is below the graduate level (Sara, first post-writing interview).

Similarly, Dina not only expressed her dissatisfaction with her first written assignment because she felt that her writing skills as a graduate student had not improved, but also
mentioned the pitfalls of drawing on previous knowledge of L2 writing when writing her first assignment. She said:

It’s hard. I didn’t have more practice (referring to unfamiliarity with genre writing). I translate the ideas from Arabic to English and that’s what makes it (my writing) difficult to understand or confuse the teacher. I still learn. I’m not happy about the score because I am in my final semester in master. I’m still middle lot (referring to her skill as intermediate level) (Dina, first post-writing interview).

In addition, Samir felt he was limited in terms of having acquired writing skills in English because he was a first-year undergraduate student, which caused him to create a less powerful identity as a writer in his first assignment when compared to other assignments he wrote. During his first interview, which was conducted following his first written assignment, Samir stated: “I was nervous”, and “I had no idea how to write”. Samir explained that he found writing his first assignment to be difficult due to his limited academic vocabulary, unfamiliarity with how to write a reflective paper, and not knowing how to apply pre-writing strategies that could enhance his writing. Samir mentioned that:

I did it on my own because I wanted to know how my writing is, how my writing skills is. My teacher said it's like a fragment sentence and this is a problem I have the most, the fragment sentence. I don't put a whole sentence on my writing and I think it is because of my Arabic. It’s difficult for me, so I need to practice more writing. I was nervous, actually, because it's the first time I write something like this. So I had no idea how to-write. I had no idea how to outline and barnstorm before start to write my paper. I need academic words. Yes. Vocabulary most like
most the reason of why my writing is not good as a native American (Samir, first post-writing interview).

Nevertheless, Samir indicated a gradual increase in confidence in his identity as a writer during his second and third interviews (assignments 2 and 3), as revealed in statements such as “I don't need anyone assistance”, “I have did it before, so I know what to do”, “I'm satisfied”, “I had a good idea how to do it”, and “I think I can do more complex writing”.

Written Assignment Two

More skillful writers: Unlike when approaching their first assignments, the Saudi writers realized that they would have to take further action to improve their second written assignments. The motivation was mainly to get good grades and to pass the course. At this point, the possibilities for selfhood that the Saudi writers created for themselves in the context of the second written assignment were recognized in terms of not adopting single fixed identities, but adopting more critical and flexible identities instead. It was notable that the possibilities for selfhood had changed between the act of writing the first assignment and the act of writing the second assignment. All the students showed confidence in and satisfaction with their writing as they began to internalize a critical view of the academic writing preferred by their professors. Samir, for example, contacted his teacher and asked for clarification concerning how to write the second paper. His teacher provided him with a guideline sheet for writing a reflective essay.

The writing part is not easy, but I felt comfortable more than the reading part. He gave us a sheet and explained everything. It was very helpful. I did not need anyone’s help because I have did it before (writing the first assignment), so I know what to do. Actually, I'm satisfied about it (Samir, second post-writing interview).
Samir found the writing task easier than the reading task, emphasizing that he found the class reading very challenging: “It's very academic”. When I asked him how he managed to understand the class reading in order to write his second paper, his response indicated the possibilities of the selfhood that he created for himself as writer to complete the second assignment:

When I wrote the first one I saw what my teacher feedback for the first one, and I tried to fix it on the second one. I tried to put reading passages in parts, read every day parts, and analyze it. I had help from dictionaries. It gave me another synonym for the words I wanted to choose, more academic words. And some websites as I looked online on how to write a reflective essay (Samir, second post writing interview).

The Saudi writers in my study began to align themselves with how their instructors wanted them to write. They considered their teachers’ comments regarding the first assignment when writing their second papers. For example, when I asked Sara how important she considered her teacher’s feedback to be and whether it affected the way in which she wrote her second assignment, her response indicated possibilities for selfhood that she created for herself by not only valuing her teacher’s feedback, but also via her determination to succeed and her efforts to produce a well-written academic paper.

For achieving the class, I'm getting my degree. Yes, of course, it will affect. That's maybe will make me think more about ways to improve my writing. Yeah I will take her feedback to work on the next paper. I will focus more on the other paper because it's a midterm. Yeah. I think it will make me better. Because of her feedback and like I said before, I didn't go in any one professional to see my
In addition, the Saudi writers appeared to consult more resources when writing their second assignments than when writing their first ones. They also appeared to be more conscious of their writing before submitting their papers. For example, they reflected on how they could improve their papers through the use of drafting and revising strategies. They considered how their ideas could be expressed to suit current perspectives in the discipline by seeking an expert assistance; for example, in Dina’s and Sara’s cases, they believed that their husbands’ writing skills was much better than were their own. They also paid attention to how they, as writers, would be seen by their professors, thus considering their teachers’ comments when writing their second assignments.

**Written Assignment Three**

*Confident writers:* The Saudi students seemed to have been aware of the possibilities they were creating for their selfhood as they wrote their papers using their particular discourse choices. For example, in their third written assignments, they put enormous effort into their writing process, and they became more experienced writers. They gradually improved their understanding of academic writing as well as their own identities as writers. They became more confident in evaluating academic writing and more familiar with the writing conventions with which they aligned themselves as they reflected on their writing practices and confidence. Dina was happy with her third written assignment and believed her writing skills had improved when compared to other two assignments because she did not receive comments about her writing, which increased her confidence in her writing skills. When I asked Dina if she would be able to write academic papers without the help of her husband and teacher, she replied that she would
still need help but that she would not rely completely on her husband as she had improved her knowledge of writing. Sara mentioned that she felt more skillful and confident when writing the third assignment because she had previously worked individually on writing a project for an organization. The students constructed strong identities as writers when they considered the social context of writing; for example, the purpose, the audience, the genre, and the importance of the academic discourse community. Dina indicated that she wanted to work on editing her paper for publication in Saudi Arabia, as she believed that her written work would increase Saudi teachers’ knowledge about drawing in early childhood education. Sara was familiar with the context and audience for her third assignment, as she was designing a project for a Saudi organization.

When I asked Samir if he had written the third assignment differently from the way he had written the two previous assignments, his response showed how he felt about his writing skills despite his dissatisfaction with the third assignment.

I am not so much happy with this assignment because I didn't have time to write it. But I think I can do much better if I have more time. I don’t think this assignment represents my writing ability because it's only a response. It's not like a research paper and it's not like another academic paper. It's only a focus on a specific thing. I think I can do more complex writing (Samir, third post-writing interview).
Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter focused on three international Saudi students’ writing experiences in order to understand how they constructed their identities as writers in the academic discourse community (the University of Memphis). The chapter had three main sections. Section I presented the analysis of the Saudi students’ previous experiences of learning to write English academic papers as English writers in the L1 community (Saudi Arabia). The findings of this section suggested that, since the differences between the two communities highlighted the status of English and the exposure to English writing pedagogy, Saudi students’ writing practices in Saudi Arabia were quite different from their writing practices in the USA. Their writing practices and views on being L2 writers of English in Saudi Arabia did not necessarily match their current practices and views in the new community, which supported the assumption that writer identity is multifaceted.

Section II presented the analysis of how Saudi students perceived and positioned themselves socially, as subjects, in their new EAP community and managed their struggle to write in the L2 by considering their individual investments in developing identities as successful writers. The Saudi students appeared to develop identities as successful writers by taking various actions when writing academic papers in English according to the norms of the new community. As noted, the Saudi students in this study discussed their investment and participation in the processes described by Rish’s et al., (2015) four tenets. The findings in this section support the theoretical assumption that writers’ identities are socially constructed. Regardless of their difficulties in L2 writing, the Saudi students tended to take several actions and invested in developing positive identities as writers in order to align themselves with the new community.
Section III presented the discussion of L2 writers’ construction identity by following Ivanic’s (1998) concept of writer identity that includes multiple facets, with four interrelated aspects, namely the autobiographical self, the discoursal self, the self as author, and possibilities for self-hood. Based on the Saudi students’ various written assignments, their identity construction was influenced by many factors such as prior knowledge and previous writing practices, the current academic discourse, their resistance, and their preference for using particular linguistics features. It would seem that all the participant in this study sought to align themselves (as English writers) with their disciplines despite the positive and negative experiences they encountered. They showed that they became more conscious of the different approached required for the diverse written assignments. They became sensitive to each writing context, and gained confidence as they developed more writing knowledge and skills.
Chapter 5

Implications for the Teaching of L2 Writing and for Research

Overview

In this dissertation, I investigated how undergraduate/graduate Saudi students constructed their identities as writers at the University of Memphis. To understand their identity construction, I drew upon their different discourse practices in English writing, their individual investment in writing compared to that of the target members, and their different written assignments to elicit aspects of writer identity. I will now present my arguments and conclusions regarding how the research question and the research outcomes explain the construction of L2 writer identity. I will also present the limitation of my study, as well as potential implications for the teaching of L2 writing and research.

Summary of Findings and the Discussion

The present study demonstrated that multiple writer identities are constructed within socio-academic contexts, and can be realized in different layers of writing contexts. Influential studies (Swales, 1988; Wenger, 1991; Bulcholtz, 1996; Johns, 1997; Norton, 2013; Gee, 2000) of discourse communities and communities of practices have further deepened our understanding not only of text and knowledge production, but also of identity construction in a given social context. When investigating the complex process of constructing an identity as an L2 writer, researchers should examine many different language aspects surrounding the “L2 writer”, including interpersonal, ideational, and textual dimensions (Halliday, 1994). Taking this into consideration, I focused on understanding how Saudi writers constructed identities as writers in
their academic settings. In particular, the focus of the guided research questions aimed to determine

(1) whether Saudi writers’ previous discourse community practices matched the current discourse community practices by examining their academic text production, their self-attitudes, and perceptions as L2 writers in their two communities, as well as their potential difficulties with writing in the new community;

(2) how they positioned themselves in terms of producing academic texts that were considered acceptable in the target community by examining their individual investment; and

(3) what their different written assignments revealed with regard to identity construction.

First, particular discourse practices and knowledge of L2 writing affect the way Saudi writers construct their identities as writers to a great extent. In terms of writing discourse practices in both communities, Saudi writers discourse practices in their L1 community (Saudi Arabia) did not necessarily match the discourse practices they encountered in the new community (the USA). I argue that their identities as writers should not be seen as single or fixed identities. This is because it is significant that they constructed multiple writer identities depending on the context for which they were writing. As the findings revealed, they tended to embrace writing knowledge, aptitudes, practice, and views on being L2 writers of English differently in each community. Saudi students’ L1 discourse preference, degree of exposure to L2 writing knowledge and practice, personal interest and perspectives, and their experience of difficulty when writing were among the factors that contributed to their identity construction. For example, Dina relied on the knowledge of Arabic discourse to write her academic papers in English due to limited access to L2 writing knowledge and practice. Samir and Dina did not
think they would continue to write in English for personal and professional purpose Sara felt the urge to continue to produce academic texts in English, although she stated her preference to write in Arabic rather than in English. Therefore, it can be argued that those Saudi undergraduate/graduate writes held within themselves multiple writer identities, and these identities shifted and were expressed in terms of how they identified and aligned themselves according to different writing contexts and communities.

Second, Wenger (1997, p. 13) stated that identity is “concerned with the social formation of the person” and that identity construction is the process of “becoming”. It was important to consider the social aspect of L2 writers, particularly how Saudi writers positioned themselves socially in the target community in order to become English writers. “Another important factor in the construction of writer identity is taking action” (Burke, 2010, p. 316), which emphasizes the relationship between the social context and the writer writing in a given social context.

Similarly, Norton (2013) viewed the process of investment as another aspect of identity development that signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners and the target language. Realizing not only their writing difficulties but also their previous practices of L2 writing, which were not effective in the new community, the need to be accepted in the new community led them to establish more positive identities that were similar to those of target members. For example, Saudi writers’ process of investment was seen in taking extra actions to write according to their teachers’ guidelines or adopting writing conventions applicable to their field of study. Their individual investment was an attempt to develop academic writing skills and writer identities similar to those of the target community members. Examples of their actions and investments were:

(a) Attending language classes at an IEI program;
(b) Seeking assistance from knowledgeable people such as husbands in the case of Dina and Sara;

(c) Seeking available resources from the University of Memphis library, the Internet, dictionaries, students’ previous written samples, and professional writing websites;

(d) Initiating the habit of reading more written English in order to write academic papers;

(e) Following teachers’ guidelines and feedback on written assignments and papers.

Therefore, I argue that Saudi writers embraced social actions and that investment played a major role in how they eventually constructed positive identities as writers despite the difficulties they experienced and their previous practices.

Third, when investigating L2 writers’ identities, consideration of text production is fundamental because students’ written assignments reveal aspects of identity construction. The students’ written assignments and interview data conveyed various aspects of writer identity. Saudi writers constructed multiple writer identities by expressing different aspects of writer identities such as the autobiographical self, the discoursal self, the self as author, and the possibilities for self-hood that a writer created within a particular writing context.

The autobiographical selves of the undergraduate/graduate Saudi writers were presented in their written assignments. They tended to embrace previous writing knowledge and practices in order to write their current academic papers in the new community. They believed that L1 writing skills and strategies were transferable to the L2 academic community. Therefore, based on the incidents noted across cases, it can be concluded that their writer identities in the English academic community tended to be similar to those that they embraced in Saudi Arabia. Their positive or negative writing skills and practices helped them to construct the same
autobiographical identities that they had previously. However, via adjustments to the English style of writing (for example, considering the instructors’ comments), their writing skills developed throughout the three assignments; thus, their writer identities were constructed positively in most cases because their assignments were graded and accepted by their professors.

In addition, L2 writers can either comply with or reject the pre-established discoursal conventions of their communities, as the discourse community is a site of resistance as well as of compliance with the discipline’s preferred discourses and social practices. Based on discourses that were accepted in their field of study or by their professors, the L2 writers in my study expressed their discoursal selves as committed academic writers in their L2 community. Despite their struggles when writing in the L2, they revealed different images of themselves as knowledgeable intertextual writers, reader-concerned writers, reliable writers, flexible writers, and so on. These identities were related to the norms and expectations of conventional written practices in the target academic community. Saudi writers also expressed their discoursal selves as resistant writers in terms of organization according to a formal structure, correct use of referencing, writing for an audience, and maintaining clarity in their written assignments.

Furthermore, the Saudi writers in my study expressed their interpersonal meanings through the resources of linguistic features in their writing. Their selves as authors or writers were presented clearly in their use of an authorial stance (personal pronoun), and their attitudes and preferences for constructing simple sentences. Ivanić (1998) asserted that, when writing, academic writers not only offer ideas, but also negotiate a credible self-representation in their writing in order to collegiality align themselves with an intended audience; in this case, their instructors. It can be said that, based on the writing genre, Saudi writers displayed their authorial
identities in various ways, by asserting their own views, voices, and preferences in the different written assignments that they had submitted for their classes at an American university.

As a final point, all the students were aware of the possibilities in their particular social context of writing and chose those identities that aligned them with academic discourses or with the topics assigned by their professors. Their gradual practice in L2 writing the different assignments that they were given allowed them to explain their writing struggles. They aligned themselves with the current context to develop a sense of what constitutes a good writer by following the common writing conventions desired by their instructors, and made them more confident about the writing skills that they learned in the new community.

**Limitation of the Study**

This qualitative case study is limited in terms of generalization. This is because the number of participants involved in this study was relatively small. Thus, the findings are mainly limited to discussing the construction of identities as writers of three international undergraduate/graduate Saudi students who were studying at the University of Memphis. Despite this limitation, I am of the opinion that this study has achieved its purpose in providing an in-depth understanding of each Saudi participant’s construction of identity as an L2 writer, particularly when writing English academic papers in the USA.

**Implications for the Teaching of L2 writing**

To assist L2 writers of English to become successful writers, teachers of writing play a vital role in the acquisition process due to the fact that writing is a skill that is generally developed in formal instructional settings such as schools, colleges, or language programs. My study can contribute to the current ways of teaching L2 writing by (1) expanding writing
teachers’ and educators’ general awareness regarding Saudi students who are writing in a second language, and (2) by increasing educators’ knowledge about such students’ construction of identity as L2 writers.

Enhancing awareness of students’ autobiographical aspects among teachers of L2 writing assists not only in creating a better environment for the teaching of writing, but also allows students to develop effective identities as writers. Understanding their previous discourse practices in writing provides teachers with an understanding of the students’ difficulties when writing academic papers according to the conventions of the target community. As educators in L2 writing, we need to be highly sensitive to the writing identities, writing knowledge, and writing practices that L2 writers of English often embrace; in this case, Saudi writers. To maximize L2 writing literacy as accepted by the conventions of American writing, research suggests that teachers and curriculum designers should explore theories of written literacy development whereby they could determine the demands and the expectations of their L2 writers (Silva & Matsuda, 2001). Effective instruction will lead students to consider the discourse community for which they are writing in order to become an accepted member of that community (Swales, 1990). Given this, teachers could initiate a discussion about English academic writing at the beginning of the semester, providing students with explicit guidelines and instructions for how to write the designated assignments. For example:

(1) the selection and intensive study of source materials appropriate for a given topic, question, or issue;
(2) the evaluation, screening and organization of relevant data from sources;
(3) the presentation of those collected data in an acceptable academic format (Kroll, 1990);
(4) logical aspects of organizing an academic paper and paraphrasing; and
(5) summarizing source information.

These are all aspects that must be taught as soon as possible because L2 writers need practice in order to learn and apply these aspects of academic writing, which takes up a significant amount of time.

In addition, students’ interactions with teachers or peers might promote the development of positive identities as writers. Teacher-student conferences, and collaborative writing among students on projects are included in the effective techniques that teachers can implement. The relationship between writer and reader is very important with regard to producing a coherent text. Teachers can encourage students to clarify their topics, arguments, and organization to the reader by presenting and specifying the topic and problem clearly. The content should be accessible to the reader in order to prevent frustration with understanding the core concepts of the written paper. Proofreading and feedback from actual readers, such as teacher or peers, are considered effective techniques to ensure cohesion in written texts.

Teachers of L2 writing should be compassionate towards the student writers, and should support them when they encounter challenges and are attempting to reinvent their identities as confident writers. Unfortunately, few L2 writers are exposed to the various writing strategies that could assist them in their writing processes. Therefore, teachers can play a non-directive role by facilitating classroom activities that promote writing fluency and control over the act of writing. Examples could be helping students to discover ideas, showing them how to plan through the use of outlining, engaging them via the process of editing, and providing them with sufficient and constant feedback on their work. In addition, teachers should engage students through invention and prewriting activates, such as asking them to draw an outline before initiating the writing process, and to produce multiple drafts before submitting the final product. It is suggested that
this will help students not only to develop powerful strategies for effective writing, it will also enable them to gain self-awareness of their individual processes and will help them to develop positive identities as writers. Cumming (1989) argued that, as the proficiency level of learners improves, the better they become at wiring in the L2 because they produce more effective texts. Accordingly, gradual improvements will occur in learners’ grammatical knowledge, literacy-related knowledge, communication style, and phonological awareness.

**Areas for Future Research**

I believe that more qualitative studies on student writers’ identity construction could be carried out to better understand how L2 student writers approach different literacy practices, to and identify ways to help students become confident academic writers. Since my study was limited to few Saudi participants within a particular research design, I strongly argue that future research is need in this area. For example:

(1) Future studies could use different empirical inquiries, including a longitudinal case study, or an intensive ethnographic observation that includes more Saudi students.

(2) An in-depth longitudinal case study would allow researchers of L2 writing to understand student writers’ trajectories as they grow and develop personally and academically through their multiple interactions with texts, classrooms, and professors.

(3) A study that uses a multi-method qualitative inquiry and methods, such as observing the participants in classes and interviewing the participants as well as their instructors, may provide rich data and different perspectives of L2 writers’ construction of identities.

Abdulkarim, Mustafa N. (September, 2013). An investigation study of academic writing problems faced by Arab postgraduate students at University Technology Malaysia (UTM). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(9), 1552-1557.


Retrieved from

Saadi, Z. K., & Saadat, M. (2015). EFL learners' writing accuracy: effects of direct and 

Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research 

http://www.simandan.com/writer-identity-in-academic-writing/

Slavkov, N. (2015). Sociocultural theory, the L2 writing process, and google drive: Strange 
bedfellows. TESL Canada 32(2).


Sylvester, E. (2002). Should I stay or should I go? Investigating Cambodian women’s 
participation and investment in adult ESL programs. Adult Education Quarterly, 53(1), 


Appendices

Appendix A: Email Recruitment

University of Memphis

Research Participants Wanted for the Research Study:

Investigating L2 Writers’ Investment toward Constructing a Successful Writer Identity

My name is Badreyya Alkhanbooli and I am a PhD student at the English department. I am doing a research on how undergraduate/graduate Saudi students construct a successful English writer identity by looking at their investment in coping up with English academic papers. I am looking for International undergraduate/graduate students (male & female) from Saudi Arabia studying in the United States in order to carry on my research study. I will be conducting mainly interviews and collecting students’ course assignments and reflective essays over a period of one semester. The number of interviews will depend on the number of assignments you will submit for the course enrolled in. After each assignment, I will interview you and most interview questions will be generated around your written assignments. The interviews are expected to vary in length from 30 minutes to an hour. You will also be requested to write a reflective essay (two pages) on a given topic: Research in second language writing acknowledges that learning English writing in an EFL context is relatively different from an ESL context. Reflect on your own English writing practices in your EFL community (Saudi Arabia) and ESL community (United States).

As English is not your first language, and you come from Saudi Arabia studying in United States of America, you are in an ideal position to give me valuable first-hand information from your own perspective on how you cope up with your course based writing assignments to produce
well written academic papers.

Your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to general understanding of your vital roles in second language writing acquisition. You will not be given any compensation (monetary & non-monetary incentives) if you participate in this research study.

The research procedures will be conducted at the University of Memphis. This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Emily Thrush, Department of English. To learn more about this research, contact me at: Blkhnb@memphis.edu.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Investigating L2 Writers’ Investment Toward Constructing a Successful Writer Identity:

Case Studies of Arab Students from Saudi Arabia Studying in U.S.

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about Saudi students constructing a writer identity. You are being invited to take part in this research study because English is not your first language, and you are from Saudi Arabia studying in United States of America. You are in an ideal position to give me valuable first-hand information from your own perspective on how you cope up with your course based writing assignments to produce well written academic papers.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Badreyya Alkhanbooli (blkhnbli) of University of Memphis Department of English. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Emily Thrush (ethrush@memphis.edu). There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

By doing this study, we hope to learn about the investment of international undergraduate/graduate Saudi students studying in the U.S on how they construct a writer identity upon joining an English academic community.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You should not take part in this study if you are originally from Saudi Arabia but have lived and received your education since childhood in United States.

You should not take part in this study if you are not enrolled in any undergraduate/graduate university classes.

You should not take part in this study if you do not speak Arabic as your first language.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at the University of Memphis. You will need to be on campus in order for the interviews to take place. Each interview will take about 30 minutes to an hour. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for interviews is approximately three times over a period of one semester.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be interviewed after each assignment that you have submitted. Your written papers/assignments will mainly serve as the reference for the subsequent discourse based interview and will be collected at different stages of your course writing assignments to tract your gradual improvement starting from your initial assignments toward the last assignments you
submit. The number of times we will meet for interview will depend on the number of written assignments you will write for a particular class. For example, your teacher assigns you three written assignments during a specific course you enrolled in; then, expect that there will be three interviews. You will be asked to notify me (researcher) about the number of written assignments once you have received your course syllabus. That way we will together arrange and plan ahead for interview dates. During the interview, I will prepare a list of questions and you will be asked to answer interview questions. The interview questions will be about your written assignments and your experience in English writing. Each interview is expected to vary in length from 30 minutes to an hour. All interviews will take place during an academic term (one semester). You will also be requested to write a reflective essay on your previous and current English writing practices (1-2 pages). You will be given a guided question for reflective essay. The question will be: Research in second language writing acknowledges that learning English writing in an EFL context is relatively different from an ESL context. Reflect on your own English writing practices in your EFL community (Saudi Arabia) and ESL community (United States).

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

**WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, your choice will have no effect on your academic status or grade in the class.

**IF YOU DON’T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

**WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

**WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written
materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. The researcher will keep all data (e.g., notes, interview transcriptions, tape recorded interviews, documents, and any other identifying participant information) in a locked file cabinet in researcher’s personal possession.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Memphis.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Badreyya Alkhanbooli at blkhnbl@memphis.edu or Dr. Emily Thrush at ethrush@memphis.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

What happens to my privacy if I am interviewed?
The data collected from you will be used and shared for research purposes only. If you feel uncomfortable answering to any or all questions during the interview, you should feel free to not answer or to skip to the next question. If results of this study are published or presented, your names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. The researcher will assign you code names/numbers on all research notes and documents.

_________________________________________  ____________

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study  Date

_________________________________________

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_________________________________________  ____________

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent  Date
Appendix C: Reflective Essay Prompt:

Research in second language writing acknowledges that learning English writing in an EFL context is relatively different from an ESL context. Reflect on your own English writing practices in your EFL community (Saudi Arabia) and ESL community (United States). You can consider these points in your reflection:

- How did you learn to write in English in Saudi Arabia and how did you learn to write in English in United? Is the experience similar or different? Describe your experience?
- Can you describe the efforts you made to enhance your English proficiency and writing abilities before and after you entered the university?
- How do you work on your writing assignments? Can you give an example?
- What are the features of good English writing in your opinion?
- What are your goals for learning to write in English (producing academic paper)?
- What are the most difficulties in your English writing? Describe with examples
- How did you solve/tackle these difficulties? What does English writing mean to you?
- What resources do you often use in your writing?
- What do you think of your English writing assignments? Are they helpful in upgrading your proficiency in English writing? Do you think you will be able to continue write academic papers after you are done with your courses and leave for Saudi Arabia?
• What strategies do you often use in your writing (for example: outlining, brain storming, mapping, revising, drafting, and proofreading? Why do you think it is important to use different strategies in your writing? Does it make better or worse?

• Why do you think Arab students have problem in English writing?
Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Each Participant

Participant Dina:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Interviews</th>
<th>Interview Questions based on Written assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Do you study English as a second or foreign language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How long have you been studying in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What do you think about writing in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>4. According to your experience, how different/similar is English writing to Arabic writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/17/2017</td>
<td>5. When did you start learning to write English academic papers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. How do you feel about writing in English? Is it frustrating or easy? Please explain why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Can you tell me a bit more about this writing assignment, like title, number of pages, purpose? What does your teacher need you to write? Can you tell me more about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. How many pages does your teacher say to write? Is there specific instruction your teacher gave you in order to write this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. What is the purpose behind writing this assignment? What does your teacher need to know about this assignment? What are your goals for this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What is the name of the course you are trying to write this</td>
<td>assignment for? Is this a research paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Was there a specific guideline your teacher has given you to follow</td>
<td>for this assignment? If yes, did you follow all guidelines/instructions while writing this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How did it help you in writing? Did teacher’s guidelines help you</td>
<td>in writing your assignment? Can you explain more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Did your teacher give you a previous student-written work as a</td>
<td>sample to see how to write this particular assignment? If yes, how did it help you in achieving your writing assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When you received the question or the assignment, what was your</td>
<td>first impressions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How did you make sure that you understand the question?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. When you received this assignment, did you plan on how you are</td>
<td>going to write about it (any strategy) can you give me example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What kind of strategies you use to approach this assignment? Did</td>
<td>those strategies help you in writing your assignment? Can you explain more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 18. When you wrote this assignment, did you seek your teacher’s help, your American peer help—or any Saudi student help? Can you explain why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 19. Do you feel your writing skill is good as an English writer? Can you explain more?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 20. How would you perceive yourself as an English writer? Tell me about yourself as a graduate students writing academic papers. What do you think about yourself as writing in English?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 21. Did you face any difficulty while attempting to complete this assignment? If yes, what kind of difficulty?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 22. Can you explain why did you have such difficulties in those writing areas?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 23. Let's talk about your teacher feedback on this assignment? As I see here, first, what do you think about your teacher feedback?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 24. Can you tell me why your paper was constructed in this way? Did you know where the introduction is, where the main topic or the main body, and the conclusion? So did your teacher say to write it in that way or you write based on your knowledge?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 25. Tell me why you use more paragraphs. As I see, here's one paragraph, here's one paragraph, one paragraph. And I see more of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
them, paragraphs. Can you tell me more about that? Why you structure your paragraphs in that way?

26. So tell me, you use main heading and then subheadings. Okay. Why do you use main heading and subheadings for your paper?

27. So I have another question here for you. You used “they” to introduce your paragraph. Who are they? You used the word they in this sentence. Can you read the sentence aloud?

28. Okay. And here the word-- I mean, there are few words in this paper. For example, this one and the word partaking equips-- so how you make yourself sure that you use the right words in that sentence?

29. Did you use resources to enhance your writing paper like use of dictionary or writing center?

30. Did anyone looked at your paper for clarity and grammar before you submit it to your teacher?

31. Was it help? Did you learn anything new during this process?

32. I see, your teacher has deleted a lot of words such as-- she mentioned the, with, and. And what do you say about that?
33. So here is the word “development”, your teacher highlighted. Did she need you to explain more—what did your teacher wanted you to do?

34. There is also your teacher seemed to delete a whole paragraph here. What happened? Can you explain more why your teacher deleted a whole paragraph?

35. Your teacher wrote in the last sentence" What do you mean by this?" can you explain why your teacher say that one?

36. How do you feel when your teacher didn’t understand your statement or your writing?

37. What did you do to improve your writing assignment? Can you think of examples?

38. Have you looked at other writing samples before you approach this writing assignment? If yes, what do you think about them? Did they confuse you or help you in your writing?

39. Did you do Drafting, for example, you write the first paper and then you revise it and you do second, third till you decide this one I want my teacher to grade?

40. How do you feel after you receive your grade for this assignment?

41. Do you think you will continue writing academic papers in future?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Can you tell me more about this assignment? What do you have to do for it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did you ask for clarification from your teacher, or classmate, husband, to understand what this assignment require? Can you specify who?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you make sure that your husband understands the assignment requirement very well?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you feel about your paper? Was it easy or frustrating to write this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Did your husband help you in writing this assignment? Can you explain how he help you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did anyone else help you in writing this assignment, like your teacher or writing center?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did you follow all the guidelines/instruction your teacher has given you to write this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What strategies if any you have used to write this paper? Strategies, for example, brainstorming, outlining?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. Did Arabic Language help you in writing this assignment? If yes, can you explain how?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Did you use Arabic or English to brainstorm and form ideas/sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for your paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How about editing? Do you do editing as a strategy? Can you explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Did you enjoy when you wrote this assignment, or did you write it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because your teacher asked you to do it? How do you feel about writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in English now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. When you wrote this assignment, did you consider a larger audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in your head? Can you explain more?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Can you tell me more how Arabic language helped you to improve or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to write an English paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do you think your Arabic language and culture influence the way you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write in English? If yes can you explain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What kind of difficulties you find when writing this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What did you do to solve problems in your writing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Did you do revising and editing before submitting your paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. You constructed your paper starting with a small paragraph. This one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this? Can you explain the purpose of this paragraph?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. In your introductory paragraph, you mentioned three main points which underline your discussion. However, there are indeed five main headings. Can you tell me what the other last two main headings are?

20. As I see, you have sectioned your main body discussion into bold main headings. Can you explain why?

21. What is the general format you use for your assignment? Is it MLA or APA style?

22. How you make sure you use the right one? Do you have a book or website?

23. Did your teacher tell you how to organize the paper or you decide on the format of your paper?

24. I have seen your paper, you did not include the title and you did not include the reference page even though you use a lot of references, a lot of citations work. Why do you think you have not included?

25. Did you do pre-research to understand about the assignment topic, or to gather data for your paper?

26. You supported your discussions with many past research. Citation using direct and indirect quotes. Why do you think it is important to reinforce your ideas with a solid base of support?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Can you explain what resources you consult? Did those resources help you in writing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. What kind of feedback your teacher gave you on this writing? What do you think about them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Can you tell me about this assignment? What is this about? What do you have to do to write this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are there specific requirements your teacher given you to write this paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did you know much about the assignment's topic? Before you start writing the assignment, did you have background information about the topic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How did you get your ideas for this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Did you have target readers for this assignment, like did you write this assignment for a specific people?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are your goals for writing this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did you talk about the topic with anyone before you start writing the assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What did you actually do to get ideas for this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have your ideas about the assignment changed since you started the writing paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How do you feel about this assignment? Can you tell me how do you see yourself as a writer now?

11. Can the final version, like this assignment, reflect or represent your writing ability? Can you explain more on this?

12. Do you think you have written this assignment different from the other previous two? Like your first assignment and your second one? In what ways can you explain?

13. Can you explain to me why your teacher deleted your name and positioned this paragraph over here? Can you explain why he told you to move down this paragraph?

14. What tools, for example, internet, websites, dictionaries, and research papers, you used in your writing this paper?

15. Did you read prior to writing this assignment and did you include it in your writing?

16. What were the difficulties you faced to write this paper? If any, can you mention them?

17. Why do you think you still have writing problems and you have been writing many papers?

18. How did you manage, whatever the difficulties you have, in writing this assignment?

19. Did you draft and revise your paper before submitting?

20. Did your husband help you in this assignment as well? If yes, can you mention how?
21. Can you think of examples when you use Arabic language to write a paper? When do you use Arabic mostly?

22. Did you translate from Arabic to English/ English to Arabic? Can you give examples?

23. Did you use Arabic to self-evaluation? For example, you were writing in English and then you were thinking in Arabic like, "Okay, this-- I don' think?"

24. Do you think your writing paper is a result of two languages?

25. How your teacher feels about your paper? And how do you feel about his feedback?

26. Did you communicate with the teacher about the assignment?

27. What did you learn from the communication? Was the communication helpful?

28. Have you seen any written sample before writing your paper?

29. Let me ask you here several questions about your teacher feedback. So can you explain to me why there's a deletion of this paragraph? And then why there's a deletion of this paragraph?

30. So it looks like you mention only one advantage. Can you comment on your teacher here saying like to mention more advantages about the drawing?

31. Can you explain here also, "This sentence seems out of place," can you explain why you think you have that comment from your teacher?
Participant Samir:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Interviews</th>
<th>Interview Questions based on Written assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Do you study English as a second or foreign language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How long have you been studying in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What do you think about writing in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>According to your experience, how different/similar is English writing to Arabic writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When did you start learning to write academic English papers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How do you feel about writing in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Can you tell me a bit more about this assignment like title and purpose? What did your teacher want you to write in this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What is the name of the course you are writing this assignment for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Was there a specific guideline your teacher has given you to follow for this assignment? If yes, does the guideline/instruction help you in writing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview 1
03/31/2017

32. Do you think you can write academic papers without the help of your husband and teacher?
10. Did you follow all the guidelines teacher asked you to do in your paper?

11. Did your teacher give you a previous student written work or a sample to see how to write your paper?

12. What was your first impression when you read this assignment? Was the assignment topic familiar to you?

13. Did you ask for someone clarification or help to understand the assignment?

14. Did you plan on how are you going to approach the assignment (any strategy that work for you)?

15. Can you tell me about the summary part? You applied some “while writing of strategies” the assignments. Can you explain more?

16. Why do you think those writing strategies would be effective, and where did you learn them?

17. Do you feel your writing skill is good as an English writer? Can you comment on your writing skills?

18. Did you face any difficulty while attempting to complete this assignment? If yes, can you tell me what are they?

19. Why do you think you have such a problem--?

20. How did you solve that problem to write this paper what did you do to improve your writing assignment?

21. Let's talk about your teacher feedback. Okay. Here's the teacher feedback. Can you tell me more about the teacher feedback?
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>How do you feel about his feedback?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>How important you consider your teacher feedback? Does it affect the way you see your writing, or the way you write your upcoming papers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Did you translate in Arabic? Or did you think in Arabic and then translated it in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>How Arabic Language helped you in writing this paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Did you have difficulty deliberating your thoughts and ideas into written words?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>When you write this paper, did you think of larger audience in your mind?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Do you think you will continue to write academic papers after you receive your BA degree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Did you draft and revise your written assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Why your paper does not have a title, or page number, or anything? It seems you started writing and did not format it? Can you comment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How do you feel if you are not required to do any academic writing in your class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you think you will continue to write academic papers after you get your BA degree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Can you tell me more about these assignments? What do you have to do for it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Was it easy or frustrating to write this assignment, as English is not your first language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Did you ask for clarification from your teacher, classmate, sister, to understand what this assignment required? Was it helpful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How do you feel about your writing in this assignment comparing to your first assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What kind of writing difficulties you faced in this assignment? How did you overcome the difficulties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Did anyone help you in writing this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What tools or resources you use to improve your assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Did your teacher give you a guideline to write this paper? Was it helpful in writing your paper? Did you follow all the guidelines?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>How similar or different you write your second assignment comparing to your first one? Can you explain more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Were you familiar with genre writing of an academic reflective paper? if no,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Have you looked at the other reflection paper to write your own reflection assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Have you used any pre writing strategies or any other strategies in this assignment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Have you used drafting and revising strategies in your paper before submitting it to your teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What were your goals to write this paper?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Did you think in Arabic to form sentences, ideas, in Arabic while writing this assignment? If yes, can you think of examples?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Do you think your Arabic language and culture influencing the way you write in English? If yes, can you explain how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Can you recall incidents that happened to you when you write something but the American teacher did not understand what you wrote?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. What were your teacher comments about your writing? How do you feel about them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Your teacher’s comment on your paper, does it encourage you to write better your upcoming papers and do your best?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. You constructed your paper starting with a small paragraph. Can you explain why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. In this paper, you included your name, title, and main headings (summary &amp; reflection) with much organization and much details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
171

that you missed in your first assignment. Can you explain why you have constructed your paper in this way?

24. What would you do if you cite a source incorrectly? How do you make sure you used it right, the same citation format consistently in your paper?

25. Why did your teacher comment on miss use of citation in your text? Can you explain what happening here?

26. You use paraphrases such as, "I personally believe," "I think," "I do not agree." What are the purpose for them? Why do you think it is important to include your thoughts and voice in this assignment?

27. Do you often do pre-research like gathering data for your paper on the topic before initiating the assignments?

28. Did you consider a larger audience in your mind when writing this assignment?

1. Can you tell me about this assignment? What is it about? What do you have to do to write this assignment?

2. Is this a reflection paper based on a class reading?

3. Did you know much about the assignment topic?

4. How did you get ideas for this assignment?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you have target readers for this assignment? Did you write your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignment for a specific audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What were your goals for writing this assignment? Do you think you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have achieved them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did you talk about the topic with anyone before writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What tools and resources you used to enhance your writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have your ideas about the assignments topic changed gradually since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you started writing the paper or they were steady?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How did you feel about this assignment? How do you see yourself as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an English writer now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Can the final version, like this assignment, reflect or represent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your writing ability? Can you explain more on this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you think you have written this assignment differently from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other two previous assignments? If yes, in what way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do you think you have improved your writing from your assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one to your third assignment? If yes, can you explain how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Did you seek your sister help on this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What do you think about your teacher comment on your paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What did you learn from the feedback?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Your teacher said he would like to see longer response in your paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you comment on that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. What were the writing difficulties you faced in this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. What did you do to improve your written assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Sara:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Interviews</th>
<th>Interview Questions based on Written assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>1. How long have you been studying in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/06/2017</td>
<td>2. What do you think about writing in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. According to your experience, how different/similar is English writing to Arabic writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. When did you start learning to write academic English papers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Did you take any language classes to enhance your understanding about English academic writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. How do you feel about writing in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Can you tell me a bit more about this assignment like title and purpose? What did your teacher want you to write in this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. What is the name of the course you are writing this assignment for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Was there a specific guideline your teacher has given you to follow for this assignment? If yes, did the guideline/instruction help you in writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. What was your first impression when you read this assignment? Were you surprised?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Did you know much about the topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Did you use pre writing strategies for this assignment? If yes, can</td>
<td>you tell me what were they?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Did you use writing strategies such as drafting, revising or</td>
<td>proofreading while you wrote this assignment? Is yes, can you tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proofreading while you wrote this assignment? Is yes, can you tell</td>
<td>me about them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Have you asked someone to assist you during the process of this</td>
<td>assignment? Can you specify who and in what writing areas they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignment? Can you specify who and in what writing areas they</td>
<td>helped you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Can you comment on your writing ability? How do you perceive</td>
<td>yourself as an English writer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Did you face any difficulty while attempting to complete this</td>
<td>assignment? If yes, can you tell me about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignment? If yes, can you tell me about it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What do you think you have those difficulties in writing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. What did you do to overcome those difficulties?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. What do you think about your teacher comments on your writing?</td>
<td>How important you consider them to write your paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Have you looked at the other writing samples? If yes, what do you</td>
<td>think about them? Were they effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think about them? Were they effective?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Did you draft and revise the written assignments before submitting</td>
<td>to your teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to your teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How do you feel after you have received your grade? Are you</td>
<td>happy? Can you explain more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy? Can you explain more?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Would you like to add anything?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>09/06/2017</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How do you feel if you are not required to do any academic writing in your class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Do you think you will continue to write academic papers after you get your BA degree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Can you tell me more about these assignments? What do you have to do for it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Was it easy or frustrating to write this assignment, as English is not your first language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Did you ask for clarification from your teacher, classmate, husband, to understand what this assignment required? Was it helpful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Did your teacher give you a guideline sheet or clear instruction on to write this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>How do you feel about your writing in this assignment comparing to your first assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Did you receive comment from your teacher about this project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Have you looked at other writing samples to write your assignment? If yes were they helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Can you explain how your husband helped you in your writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Did you learn anything from this assignment? Do you think it upgrades you writing skills?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Where did you get your ideas to write your paper? Did you do pre-research or reading?

13. What strategies, if any, have you used to write this paper?

14. Did you pre-write or draft and revise or kind of like editing this project? If yes, can you explain more?

15. Did you think in Arabic to form sentences, ideas, in Arabic while writing this assignment?

16. Can you explain how Arabic language helped you in writing this paper?

17. Do you think your Arabic language and culture influence the way you write in English?

18. Let's look for the assignment here. You constructed your paper with many main headings and subheadings. For example, this is the main headings and then here is the subheadings, as I see. Can you explain why?

19. Does your report have a clear opening and closing paragraphs? Can you talk about them?

20. Why have you decided on this format to construct your paper?

21. As I see, you included in your report, diagrams, pictures, tables, and figures. Can you explain why?

22. Why do you think it's very important to include pictures and diagram in a report? Do you have any idea why?
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Did you consult dictionaries, website, classmate, family member, to check your report?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Did you cite other work, for example, use reference, citations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Do you think your writing skill is improved comparing to the first assignment? If yes in what ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Can you tell me about this assignment? What is it about? What do you have to do to write this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Did you know how much about the assignment topic when you received it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Where does your knowledge come from for this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How did you get ideas for the assignments? Did you do research on your topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Do you have target readers for this assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What are your goals for writing this assignments? Do you think you have achieve them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Did you talk about the topic with anyone before writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What did you actually do to get ideas for the assignment? Examples like self-talk, asking a friend, or expert advice, seeking writing center to help you, or maybe Internet? If yes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Can you explain how seeking someone help improve your writing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Have your ideas about the assignment's topic changed gradually since you started writing the paper?

11. Do you think you have written this assignment different from the other two previous assignment? If yes, in what way?

12. Why did you structure your paper in this format?

13. Did you communicate with your teacher during this

14. What were the difficulties you faced to write this paper? Can you mention what kind of difficulties you faced to write this assignment?

15. Did your Arabic language help you somewhat in writing this paper? If yes, can you explain how and when you use Arabic in your writing?

16. Do you think your writing this one is a result of two language?

17. In your opinion, what would be other factors that could influence your writing?

18. What will you do to improve your academic papers in the future

19. Did you translate from Arabic to English or English to Arabic? Can you explain more?

20. When do you use translation or switching between Arabic & English? To:

21. Focus on discourse plan (make an outline, to organize the content for constructing my general writing goals)

- translating words or phrases
• Generate idea-, monitoring, lexical/ vocabulary searching,
• metacommenting, self-evaluation,
• controlling the writing process and revising the text

22. What do you think of your writing skill now?
IRB Documentation

Institutional Review Board

Office of Sponsored Programs

University of Memphis

315 Admin Bldg

Memphis, TN 38152-3370

Jan 27, 2017

PI Name: Badreyya Alkhanbooli

Co-Investigators:

Advisor and/or Co-PI: Emily Thrush

Submission Type: Initial

Title: Investigating L2 Writers’ Investment Toward Constructing a Successful Writer Identity: Case Studies of Four Arab Students from Saudi Arabia Studying in U.S.

IRB ID: #PRO-FY2017-210

Expedited Approval: Jan 27, 2017

Expiration: Jan 27, 2018

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:
1. This IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.

2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be submitted.

3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval.

Thank you,

James P. Whelan, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Chair

The University of Memphis.