

Emerging Self-Identities and Emotions: An Exploratory Study of Ten Saudi Students'
English Writing Experiences

A Thesis Presented to
Department of Language and Linguistics
University of Essex

In Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2019

ABSTRACT

While there is a growing body of empirical research on identity development and the role of emotions in the emergence of L2 possible selves, very little is known about these issues when it comes to Saudi students. This thesis aims to understand the processes of identity construction among Saudi Arabian students by exploring their past, present and future learning/writing experiences and their effect on L2 possible self and identity. The study pays particular attention to the role of experience and emotion and the way they influence and shape Saudi students' perception of themselves as English writers over time and in various contexts. The study also takes a closer look at the writings of Saudi learners by analysing metadiscoursal features used in their writing samples.

This empirical work is exploratory in nature collecting various types of data including a pre- interview questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, diaries, think aloud protocols, and writing samples. Four types of analyses were conducted including content, thematic, narrative and metadiscourse analyses.

Findings indicate that participants shared a similar learning trajectory in Saudi Arabia that was generally negative. They associated emotionally negative states with their English learning experiences occurred in Saudi, partly due to its teaching style. These emotions seemed to be responsible for students' lack of personal investment, motivation, and effective learning, to the point where they felt they had learnt nothing during those years. In college, there were two types of experiences: those who pursued English studies and saw their L2 possible selves strengthens alongside their skills, and those who pursued non-English related studies and continued to manifest undeveloped L2 self and poor language skills. In the UK, all participants had a positive learning experience and their language skills improved

significantly. Their L2 learning experiences played a huge role in the construction of possible selves and in reactivating and creating the desire to become better and more successful writers for most participants.

The analysis showed that participants' views of themselves kept on shifting and changing due to their academic circumstances and emotional states. Findings reinforced the idea that academic writing was, at the beginning, principally an emotional experience. The initial period within the master's programme were recalled as involving a great amount of negative emotions. The novelty of the environment apparently boosted the frequency or intensity of these states. The emotional intensity apparently decreased with time due to increased familiarity, experienced ease and positivity. Positive emotions were more often associated with motivational and self-confident states, triggering participants' willingness to continue to succeed.

The results revealed various aspects regarding Saudi students' academic writing. Being in the UK was a factor that participants thought to have a significant impact on improving their writing skills. Some participants also experienced improvement while studying in Saudi Arabia. This suggests that sometimes it was not the country but the people within the pedagogic system (students with initiative or teachers) that can make the difference. As for the metadiscourse analysis, there were no important differences between the participants. It was found that participants in soft sciences slightly employed more metadiscourse in their writing, which is expected due the need in being more explicit in explaining, discussing and arguing their claims.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Working on this thesis was an enriching and eye-opening experience from the beginning to the end. I owe the completion of this research project to many wonderful people. First, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Christina Gkonou for her invaluable guidance and support throughout this research project. Second, I am very grateful to the members of the ELT research group for their help and constant feedback. Third, this thesis told the learning story of ten amazing students from Saudi Arabia. Thank you so much for being part of this research project. Thank you for sharing your experiences and perspectives so openly with me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Enquiry

Identity is a complex concept that means many things to different people. One of these, according to Bauman (2011), is a yardstick that individuals look for when they fight alienation trying to belong or become part of something. Individuals engage in a continual identification process marking themselves as well as other people based on look, behaviour, social status, culture and language. For example, by communicating with others, the language individuals speak is a parameter for their identity. Weedon (1996) explains the importance of language by having two main roles: a pointer of someone's identity and a medium to identity formation. With the use of the first language (L1), individuals can easily express who they are and who they belong to. Accomplishing the same using a second language (L2), however, can be a burden and a challenge for most people. It is for this reason that much attention has been paid in language learning research because learning a second language requires the adoption and the creation of a new identity (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

In the last two decades, there has been a wide range of studies discussing the relationship between identity and language learning based on various theoretical perspectives. One way of looking into identity is based on the work of Lave and Wenger's communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Their theory's main argument is that learning is a social practice that extends beyond the individual to include social processes and shared experiences which help individuals form a sense of self and meaning. Their influential work reframed the role of identity to be a prerequisite of

participation in different communities with individuals having several identities that are embodied by individuals based on the different situations. With many sociocultural and contextual factors at play, it is expected that learners will experience difficulties in becoming part of the social environment. This foregrounds the fluid, situated and dynamic nature of identity.

Another important theory is Poststructuralism. Poststructuralists have been keen on comprehending the concept of identity and marking out its boundaries and relationship to the process of language learning. Miller (2003) equates language use to be a manner of self-representation which is tied to individuals' social identities and values. This indicates the complexity of identity which is a place of struggle where individuals are subjected to structures and power arrangements forcing them to embody various and conflicting subject positions (Norton, 1995; 2000). Once again, this view implies a fluid, conflicting, diverse and changing nature of identity in which learners engage in a series of negotiations to formulate their subjectivities and present who they are as learners of English (i.e. Duff, 2002; McKay and Wong, 1996; Miller, 2003; Norton, 1995: 2000; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Pavlenko, 2002).

Norton (1995; 2000) emphasises the idea of investment to be an important factor in conceiving one's identity. Investment represents learners' motivation and their willingness, desires and needs in acquiring the target language (McKay & Wong, 1996). This view of identity posits that when learners communicate in the target language in oral and written forms, their mission entails more than just giving information; they will have the chance to figure out their sense of self and to connect with social environment. In the process, these learners will form imagined communities that they aspire to be members of in the future. These imagined communities influence the present learning of students and channel their

investment in the learning process based on their desired affiliation with these communities in the future (Norton, 2001).

Poststructuralism indicates that identities' negotiation is a challenging and emotionally exhausting process. According to Pavlenko (2012), identities are an emotional and discursive place of conflict, in which learners form their own narratives to present a clear sense of their lives. Learners, in the case of unanticipated events and inability to control such events, become emotionally instable (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). Thus, research showed the significant role that emotions play in language learning (Arnold, 1999; Imai, 2010; Macintyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2012). They determine the success or the failure of the learning process suggesting language classrooms to be places of emotional turbulence (Gkonou, Daubney, & Dewaele, 2017; Oxford, 1999). Indeed, the notion of identity becomes even more prominent as people switch between languages without understanding of how they feel (e.g. do they feel more Saudi? Or more British?). This has caused a surge in the number of studies devoted to emotions in SLA, particularly in multilingualism research (Dewaele, 2004a; 2004b; Kramsch 2009a; Pavlenko, 2005; 2006),

Guided by such understanding of language learning, identity and emotions, this thesis aims to examine emerging self-identities and emotions among Saudi students in the UK. It seeks to understand Saudi learners' past and present English language writing experiences and their effects on the development of L2 possible selves with the use of several methods such as interviews, think aloud protocols, diaries and writing samples. It also examines their orientation and self-perception of English writing along with their emotional and behavioural states and their role in influencing L2 possible self. Moreover, it explores Saudi students' views of themselves as writers over time and in various contexts. Finally, it investigates academic writing focusing on participants' experiences, difficulties and their use of

metadiscoursal features in their writing samples. It is hoped that this investigation will show Saudi participants' journey in becoming members of the new English learning communities in the UK and any experienced changes to their L2 possible selves.

1.2 Situating the Context of the Research

This section will discuss English language education in Saudi Arabia in order to contextualise the learning experiences of the participants in the study. It will explain English language development and its conceptualisation at the policy level. In doing so, it will be possible to understand the influence of such policies on Saudi participants' perception of English language and of themselves as users and writers of English. Lastly, a brief overview of English writing education in Saudi Arabia will be presented.

1.2.1 English education in Saudi Arabia

The only foreign language taught in Saudi Arabia is English, signifying the important role that it plays in diverse areas of the country. With the discovery of oil in the 1930s, the government adopted English mainly for use in business settings (Al-Johani, 2009), but the government did not officially introduce English into the education system until the 1950s (Al-Shammary, 1984). At first, English was taught only in the intermediate and secondary schools because the government had concerns that it might lead to students having difficulty learning their first language (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Nevertheless, with the increasing global importance of English, the government extended it to the primary school curriculum in 2010 (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Currently, English is taught in all levels except for

primary grades 1, 2 and 3, but it is only a matter of time before it is extended to these early stages.

The curriculum itself has evolved and changed many times over the last 65 years. One of the earliest English textbooks, called *Living English for the Arab world*, was utilised in the syllabus between the 1960s and 1980s (Al-Seghayer, 2005). In the late 1980s, the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with Macmillan publishing house, launched a new textbook called *Saudi Arabian School English* (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). A few years later, this textbook was replaced by *English for Saudi Arabia* (Al-Seghayer, 2005). All textbooks used in the Saudi education system are regulated and monitored by the Ministry of Education to ensure that the materials are based on the customs, beliefs, values and traditions of the Saudi society (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Regarding classroom practices, English teaching materials consist of a student textbook, student workbook and teacher's manual (Al-Otaibi, 2004) supplied for free by the Ministry of Education, along with objective manuals that teachers follow within the class time (Almutairi, 2007). All English classes run for 45 minutes with two weekly sessions for primary school students, and four weekly sessions for students in intermediate (12 to 15 years of age) and secondary schools. Within this short time, an integration of all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking) is taught. Teachers also incorporate grammar and vocabulary teaching into the 45-minute session. However, all these practices seem to be ineffective in helping students achieve a good proficiency level in English. Most students view English as a subject that they need to pass exams within a system that places very little emphasis on mastering the language (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

At the same time, it is important to realise that students in Saudi Arabia often lack any environments outside of the classroom in which to practice their skills, which slows down their learning process and, by extension, negatively affects their English language mastery in the classroom. In addition, Alharbi (2015) explains that another factor hindering students from enhancing their English language skills is the lack of practice in classrooms as well as the use of students' mother tongue (Arabic) when clarifying any concepts. She states that "teachers cover most of the important points in the students' L1. This practice decreases students' motivation to speak English in the classroom, even with their classmates, as it is not a compulsory procedure" (p. 107).

Alharbi (2015) also shows that many teachers prefer to use Arabic with 69% of them utilising Arabic in English classrooms. It was also found that 60% of the teachers believe that using Arabic saves the class time. The net effect of these practices is that many Saudi students join universities abroad with a low level of English skills; given that the courses in these universities are obviously conducted in the English language, the gap between the institutions' expectations and the students' linguistic competency can be quite huge. Elyas (2008) explained that the Saudi education system is to blame for the low linguistics skills of the students especially their writing skills. It is unclear what might happen when these students decide to study in a native English language environment. This study presupposes that these students might struggle due to their poor linguistic skills which might negatively affect their own perception of themselves, their L2 possible self and their own identities while struggling to match the competencies of native speakers.

The Ministry of Education has clearly identified nine objectives for teaching English in Saudi Arabia. The first objective is the acquisition of basic English language skills. The second objective is achieving the linguistic competence needed in various life situations. The

third one focusses on achieving the needed linguistic competence in different professions. The fourth one is the development of positive attitudes among Saudi students. The fifth objective is making students understand the value of English as an international language. The sixth objective is raising the awareness of the students in regard to various issues that concern religion, economy, culture and society, and make them active members in dealing and finding solutions for such issues. The seventh objective is increasing the proficiency level of English which will help students spread the religion of Islam. The eighth objective is strengthening the idea of mutual cooperation and respect, and understanding of other cultures. The last objective is bringing new technological and scientific breakthrough to the country.

These objectives show the expectations for English language teaching in Saudi Arabia and indicate that the use of English in the country is not neutral, but embedded with religious, political, social and economic agendas (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The English used in Saudi Arabia is localised to suit the country's beliefs and practices (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). As a result, Saudi students are likely to project identities that reflect the local culture and religion while using English. Their background and past learning experiences might be an obstacle for Saudi students when pursuing education in a new environment. They might encounter many difficulties in their endeavour to adapt their English language skills to the norms and conventions practised in the United Kingdom.

1.2.2 English writing education in Saudi Arabia

Only a short time is devoted to teaching English writing in the weekly schedule in Saudi Arabia, as normally, each section in the syllabus has just a small part dedicated to teaching

writing. At best, a total of 20 minutes (half a session weekly) will be used. In Saudi Arabia, teaching English writing focuses on enabling students to accurately write one or two sentences in grades 4, 5 and 6, also introducing simple writing activities such as unscrambling words and puzzles. In intermediate schools, students are expected to write short paragraphs of three or four sentences, and writing exercises such as placing sentences in the right order. In secondary schools, students should be able to write longer paragraphs, and are also presented with other forms of composition, such as writing a letter or an email. At all these levels, however, pre-writing activities such as brainstorming, and editing and proofreading are neglected.

Current practices show that the skill of writing is taught with a mere focus on the writing task as a final product in parallel with a focus on the linguistic features and sentence level (Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012). Al-Seghayer (2015, p. 94) explains that “Saudi teachers emphasise linguistic accuracy, which is at the forefront of their instruction, as well as proper grammar, accurate spelling, meaningful punctuation, and range in vocabulary and sentence structures.” This indicates that the current practices used in teaching writing are outdated and based on traditional teaching styles. Another feature of these practices is that writing is portrayed as a linear process where students should attend to certain steps – such as to pre-write, write, and re-write – to produce a written text, but students are not taught how to edit or revise their texts (Al-Seghayer, 2015).

In Saudi higher education, English is used as the language of instruction in courses such as engineering and medicine in most Saudi Arabian universities (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Nevertheless, in other courses where English is not utilised as the language of instruction, students still have to study two English units (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). These units, referred to as “English for academic purposes”, are aimed at increasing students’

competence; however, they appear to be ineffective due to the limited writing practice in the content of these units as well as restricting the teachers' main role to identifying grammatical errors. This approach is still widely used, even though it affects the outcome of teaching writing negatively (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). Regardless of the context, whether school or university, the outcome of teaching writing is the same in all cases where students focus on memorising vocabularies and sentences, and simply retrieve them to pass examinations (Al Dawood, 2007).

In addition, Al-Seghayer (2015) shows that all the teaching methods are anchored around stringently established pedagogical frameworks and therefore, English teachers have a restrictive operational space insofar as facilitating a proper mastery of the written language is concerned:

“The system of teaching English in Saudi Arabia is such that teachers are reluctant to propose their own instructional activities, fearing that they might distract students' attention from the established lessons and cause them to fail the final exam. In other words, teaching centres on the development of grammatical competency, with only marginal attention given to communicative competency and discourse or sociolinguistic and strategic competencies” (p. 90).

Since one's mastery of English will subconsciously cultivate an identity based on the level of competency, Saudi students will probably struggle in a native English environment where they are expected to have a high level of proficiency. Moreover, the whole learning process in Saudi Arabia might have a hindering effect on learners due to this process being quite restricted and controlled by the Ministry of Education. When Saudi learners are introduced to a new context, such as higher education in the UK, they probably will bring

with them their learning background, beliefs, values and the literacy practices enforced in the education system. This might complicate their current learning experience in the new environment and delay their development of their L2 possible self as users and writers of English.

1.3 The Rationale for the Present Thesis

The rationale for this thesis centres around two corners. The first one concerns the construction of self and identity and the role of emotional and behavioural states. There appears to be an extensive body of research on identity construction of university students. Some researchers, by taking a sociolinguistic theoretical perspective, focussed on the writing of undergraduate and graduate students (e.g. Casanave, 2002; Carroll, 2002; Ivanič, 1998; Leki, 2007; Lillis, 2001). Other researchers, on the other hand, employed the theory of social learning (Wenger, 1998) to investigate both ESL and EFL students (e.g. Flowerdew, 1999, 2000; Morita, 2004). Moreover, emotions have been investigated with many researchers revealing their important role in the language learning experience (Arnold, 1999; Bown & White, 2010; Dewaele, 2005, 2008; Garrett & Young, 2009; Gregersen, Macintyre & Meza, 2014; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2016; Mercer, 2006).

With such growing empirical research, there seems to be little consensus regarding how self and emotions should be conceptualised among social scientists. In the context of Saudi Arabia, very little is known regarding Saudi learners. I was only able to find five studies that explored some aspects of self and identity development of Saudi students in the USA (Barnawi, 2009 & Giroir, 2013), New Zealand (Howell, 2008) and in Saudi Arabia (Alhawsawi, 2015; Elyas, 2014). These studies mainly focused on the new community of

students without enquiring into their past learning, its influence on present learning, and the emerging of their L2 possible self and identity.

As for the study of emotions regarding Saudi students, most studies framed emotions to be either positive or negative without exploring its interaction with the learning process. These studies (e.g. Alrabai, 2014; Al-Saraj, 2011; Al-Saraj, 2014; Asif, 2017; Rafada & Madini, 2017) focused only on anxiety without exploring other emotional states; they also did not show the effect of such emotional states and what they do actually do and how they influence the learning process and learners' L2 possible self.

The second corner is concerned with the skill of academic writing. English as a lingua franca has necessitated English as a Second Language (ESL) students to improve their written and oral communication skills in higher education institutions. According to Turner (2011), the rise of English as a lingua franca has “naturally” expedited the number of ESL students crossing borders to gain an English-based education. Statistics show that Saudi Arabia is in the 7th place of the top sending countries of students in the UK (HESA, 2017). These figures, however, do not provide insights into the experiences of these students in the UK such as adaptation, social relationships, academic and cultural hurdles. Turner (2011) states that international students usually occupy a space of liminality, existing between cultures and languages, thus representing a challenge in living between international borders. It is unclear how Saudi students negotiate the requirements of studying overseas, adapting to new education systems, learning new languages and academic practices, and how their past learning experiences affect their current learning and, in the process, how they construct their visions for the future.

L2 learners experience extra difficulty due to a variety of reasons. One of these centres on becoming part of the new L2 community. In the case of Saudi learners, they will probably transcend the community practices of their L1 and imagine themselves ensconced within the imagined community of the L2, which leads them to creating new images of the world and of themselves, and shaping their self to suit the default requirements of L2 native academic community. Saudi students will have to work harder in western classrooms and catch up through additional work on their part. This study will gain insight into this position from various standpoints – culturally, socially, academically - and will culminate in a discussion on factors that contribute to the struggles in integrating into the new learning environment, influences of past and present learning on L2 possible self, and academic writing difficulties of Saudi students in the UK.

Overall, there is a lack of research on Saudi learners' development of self especially when they are introduced to the English language. It is unknown what happens to Saudi students' perception of themselves as English writers when they join English language programmes or when they study in a native English environment. This exploration seeks to bring to the fore many questions related to Saudi learners' journey in their L2 self as English writers in SA and the UK. The study will help to see the extent to which emotional and behavioural states are implicated in the development of L2 possible self.

1.4 The Focus and the Research Questions of the Thesis

A qualitative study that explored English learning experiences of ten Saudi students in the United Kingdom (UK) is reported in this thesis. The study sought to examine in detail the students' English writing experiences and identify situations that triggered personal sense-

making episodes, including the development of L2 possible self. The students reported their English language experiences, their perception of themselves as English writers, their experienced emotional and behavioural states in Saudi Arabia and in the UK through the use of pre-interview questionnaires, two interviews, diaries, think aloud protocols, and writing samples. In doing so, the study collected a rich description of Saudi participants' past and present learning experiences and their influence in the development of L2 possible self.

Due to the interpretive stance adopted, the nature of the research questions, and the lack of previous research into Saudi students' self and emotions, an exploratory study was utilised in this thesis with the aim of answering the following four broad areas of enquiry:

1. Saudi students' past and present English writing experiences

- a. What kind of writing experiences did participants come across in Saudi Arabia and in the UK?
- b. How did these writing experiences affect participants' development of their L2 possible selves?

2. Saudi students' views of themselves as English writers

- a. What do participants think of themselves as English writers over time and in different contexts?
- b. How do participants view their identity?

3. Saudi students' relationship with English writing and their emotional and behavioural states

- a. What do participants think of English writing? What are their opinions of English writing?

- b. What kinds of emotional and behavioural states do participants ascribe to English writing?

4- Saudi students' academic writing

- a. What factors affect participants' writing?
- b. Do Saudi students prefer to write in Arabic or English? And Why?
- c. What kind of difficulties do participants experience while writing in English? What strategies do they utilise to cope with such problems?

5- Saudi students' representation of themselves in their writing samples

- a. What metadiscourse features do participants employ in their writing, and what do these features reveal about their writing?
- b. Do participants express their voice in writing? And how?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis has eight chapters. The first chapter defined the focus of this thesis. It presented an overview of the study followed by an introduction of the Saudi Arabian context focussing on English language education and the teaching of English writing in Saudi classrooms. The chapter examined the thesis's rationale as well as its significance. Lastly, four broad areas of investigation were discussed. The second chapter (literature review) will map out the theoretical foundations informing the current research. It will start by the contextualisation of identity/self and language learning based on poststructuralism. The chapter will move to discuss identity development and explore discourse, discourse community, community of practice, imagined communities, writer identity, ESL students' academic writing and identity, and metadiscourse. Empirical research will follow concentrating on the identities of

ESL and Saudi students. Finally, emotions in language learning and the self in SLA will be examined.

The third chapter (methodology) will outline the research design of the study. It will describe the research context, including the research setting, the participants, and the role of the researcher. The chapter will then present the data collection process followed by the analysis of the data. Finally, research trustworthiness will be discussed.

The next three chapters (chapter 4, 5, & 6) will discuss the research findings. Chapter 4 will present the most salient findings emerging from the narrative and thematic analyses conducted on the first interview. It will explore themes related to the unique learning experiences that participants went through in the past while studying in Saudi Arabia, and current learning experiences in the United Kingdom and the role these experiences play in the development of self. As for chapter 5, it will introduce themes in relation to the way participants felt about themselves as writers and their conceptualisation of English writing. It will also display their emotional and behavioural states and their role in constructing and strengthening the participants' visions of their L2 self. Chapter 6 will explore the factors that influence the writing quality of the participants and the difficulties participants experienced while writing in English. Finally, the chapter will unveil participants' utilisation of metadiscourse markers in their English writing samples and will examine difficulties and conflicts experienced by participants when trying to become a member of the new academic community in the UK.

Chapter 7 (discussion chapter) will discuss the main results reported in the findings chapters. The discussion will be steered based on the main broad questions of the study. The first part will explain the participants' past and present learning experiences, their influence

on L2 possible self, and their views of themselves as writers. The second part will explore participants' relationship with English writing and how emotions and the concepts of self-esteem and self-confidence are implicated in the emerging of L2 possible selves. Lastly, the chapter will evaluate participants' academic writing, their use of metadiscourse in their writing samples, and challenges that hindered their development of self.

Chapter 8 (conclusion chapter) will present a summary of the main findings of the study. It will also discuss the implications of the results in regard to the teaching of English in the context of Saudi Arabia. Finally, limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research will be presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis aims to understand emerging self-identities and emotions among Saudi Arabian students in the UK. In particular, it explores participants' past and present English writing experiences and their effect on the development of L2 possible self. It also investigates Saudi students' orientation to English language writing and their self-perception of themselves as English writers along with their ascribed emotional and behavioural states, and their role in influencing Saudi students' L2 possible self. Finally, it examines Saudi students' representation of themselves in their own writing samples by conducting a metadiscourse analysis.

The present chapter describes in detail the theoretical foundations that grounded the overall study. It has six sections. The first is entitled *Contextualising Identity*. It seeks to evaluate identity, self and language learning from a poststructuralist perspective.

The second is entitled *Reshaping and Reconstructing Identities*. It examines the relationship between discourse, writing and identity within the context of academia. It further explores concepts such as discourse community, community of practice, imagined communities, writer identity, ESL students' academic writing and identity, and metadiscourse.

The third, named *Identity Development and Academic Writing among ESL Students*, draws on previous empirical research on the topic and discusses how ESL writers, in forming their identity as writers, are influenced by their social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It

also focuses on Saudi students' construction of identity in research and then examines the challenges experienced by Arabic students in general and Saudi students in particular.

The fourth section, entitled *Emotions in Language Learning*, explores the effects of emotions on individuals' language learning experiences. It also examines the relationship between emotions and motivation.

The fifth, entitled *Ideal L2 Selves*, explores the self in SLA. It also sheds light on the foreign language learner's self by exploring Dörnyei's (2005, 2009a) L2 Motivational Self System and its main supporters.

Finally, the sixth section offers a reflection on existing research gaps and then a summary of the literature review.

2.1 Contextualising Identity

2.1.1 The concept of identity

In a sense, everyone, consciously or subconsciously, deals with the issue of identity, and defines the self in terms of existing relationships with the social world (Ochs, 1993). Under this relational perspective, identity is said to be shaped in light of the active contributions of both the individual and the social world (Potowski, 2007; Roberts, 2001). Unlike personality, which consists of rather stable general qualities of the self, such as being cheerful or deceitful, identity finds its footing where it expounds the nature, elements, and negotiated features between the self and the social world (Joseph, 2004; Morita, 2004). That is, its impact reverberates across the entire dome hosting the individual on one side and the social environment on the other side, with the interactive and subtle codes of interaction at the

centre (Hollander, 2005). According to Wenger (1998, p.149), identity can be defined as a:

- (a) membership in a community in which people define who they are by the familiar and the unfamiliar, (b) a learning trajectory in which they define themselves by past experiences and envisioned futures, (c) a nexus of multi-membership in which people reconcile their various forms of membership into one coherent sense of self, and (d) a relation between local and global ways of belonging.

Under this perspective, identity is thus a complex social phenomenon (Norton, 2000). Unsurprisingly, multiple theories seeking to interpret identity through diverse socio-cultural lens have been put forward. These theories include poststructuralist theory of language (Bourdieu, 1977; Weedon, 1996), discourse theory (Gee, 1990), social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), and linguistics theory (Halliday, 1994). Across these theories, identity includes different combinations of identity types that are drawn from varying social contexts. For example, Block's (2006) identity types include ethnic, racial, national, gendered, social class, and language. All these types of identity integrally influence the human experience and always shape the individuals' experience and perception of themselves, their world, and their relationships with it.

At the very centre of this experience is language (Duff, 2002; Kramersch, 1998; Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Language is so deeply ingrained into the fabric of human experience that it is almost inconceivable to contemplate human experience devoid of language (Pinker, 2000). Perceptions of the self and of the social world, along with linguistic competencies, shape the meaning and consequences of sometimes conspicuous or subtle linguistic insinuations (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Every interaction

within a social system is expressed through a language. Individuals learn how to behave in different contexts, and thereby form new or additional identities, through language.

Since language, with its strong ties to social and cultural structures, is regarded as central to identity, research has dramatically shifted from psycholinguistic endeavours to more socially and culturally centred endeavours (Duff, 2008; Le ha, 2009). Currently, research on identity and language largely revolves around the socio-cultural and historical variables that inform the linguistic environment of an individual and how the individual uses language to relate with the social world and develop an identity (Block, 2007; Gu, 2010). In this sense, identity becomes an end product of the interaction between two factors, namely language and socio-cultural contexts (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). It is viewed to be as “the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 588). This rhymes with this study’s stance in which identity is viewed within its social and cultural frameworks and projected as an element greatly influenced by the socio-cultural world and thus prone to change with social and cultural realignments.

2.1.2 Identity from a poststructuralist account

Initially, identity was viewed as a rigid and stable phenomenon (Hall, 2000; Warriner, 2007). However, closer inspection showed that identity was likely not a stable but a complex, flexible, and dynamic phenomenon, with multiple layers of attributes that are integrally linked to social structures (Block, 2006, 2007; Pavlenko, 2002). That is, the self should be considered vis-à-vis the outside world, particularly how the former perceives and interprets the latter (Freese & Burke, 1994; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). This is because it is

inconceivable to conceptualise the self as an independent or a 'stand-alone' phenomenon that objectively interprets the outside world (Hogg, 2000; Woolfolk, 2001; Worchel, 1998). In this sense, identity refers to "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 5).

This complexity is regarded by poststructuralists as a place of struggle (Norton, 2002; Weedon, 1987, 1996). Norton (2002, p. 14) claimed that, "poststructuralists take the position that the signifying practices of societies are sites of struggle, and that linguistic communities are heterogeneous arenas characterized by conflicting claims to truth and power". Norton's work (2000), from which such understanding derived, was very influential. Her insights were partly drawn from a study of the English language experiences of five immigrant women in Canada. She observed how these women struggled to construct and negotiate their own identities. She concluded that identity construction was a strenuous activity greatly affected by language, relations of power, gender, class, and motivation.

A similar conclusion was reached by McKay and Wong (1996), at the end of a longitudinal study on immigrant Chinese students in the United States. For them, a language user, especially a learner, often experiences social negotiations that commonly culminate in the conscious development of a suitable identity. The adopted identity is thus a product of social process and social negotiations. When learners are within social systems that are new to them, they often see certain identities imposed upon them and are subjected to the structures and power arrangements that characterize the social and linguistic interactions taking place in such new environments. To adapt, they must strive and redefine their social interactions, their modes of self-expression, and their own self-image. That is, their

negotiated identities are dynamic constructs, affected by a multiplicity of factors, and manifest themselves even in writing.

With identity being portrayed as something flexible that changes over time, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) analysed the concept of identity by examining first-person narratives. They explored individuals' life history and the struggle they had gone through to (re)construct their identities. According to the authors, the cognitive and emotional instability caused by unexpected events was minimised when individuals amended their narratives. They also presented four main stages in which individuals could (re)construct identity in second language learning: appropriation of others' voices; emergence of one's own new voice; translation therapy: reconstruction of one's past; and continuous growth into new positions and subjectivities. Individuals start by the appropriation of other members' voices during social interaction. After that, they construct their own voice by actively engaging and participating in communities. Then, they reconstruct their past experiences using the new language. By going through these stages, individuals try to find their own space in the new environment and build their own self over time. Finally, individuals became second language speakers only during the last stage, that is, when adopting a new identity.

2.1.3 Identity and ESL learners

This study adopts a poststructuralist stance, which indicates that language users are necessarily tied to a social world (Norton, 1995). Their identities are enacted and shaped by such social world. That is, identity is an integrative part of a necessarily social self; "it [i.e. the self], after all, belongs to a person's whole social being; it is a part of one's identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 115).

Concomitantly, this social world is also formed in light of language use and people's identities. Language users must take "up a position in a social field in which all positions are moving and defined relative to one another" (Hanks, 1996, p. 201). For example, they can only cultivate language use and related identities relationally, when embedded in the social world, and from within their own social and cultural history (Coupland, 2002). That is, language users situate themselves via language use, and language use situates its users.

These standpoints stress the strong social nature of language, that some argue to be best analysed when the socio-cultural ecosystem of the language used is properly demarcated, analysed, and put into proper perspective (Bailey, 2002). For example, Kroskrity (2001) observed that the social group wherein language users found themselves determined decisively how language was used in relation to the linguistic structures and norms manifested in that social group. People use language to convey their social identities or, as Weedon (1987, p. 21) portrays it, language becomes the locale on which the "sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed". Empirical evidence supports this standpoint at least partly. Researchers such as Hornberger (2007), Kroskrity (2000), and Pavlenko and Norton (2007) showed that socially constructed knowledge, grounded on the cultural histories and beliefs of any social group, shape the linguistic architectures, attitudes, and behaviours manifested by group members and the overall group.

This indicates that ESL students and their use of L2 to cultivate an identity are said to be highly affected by the environment where the language is learnt, as well as the socio-cultural origins of the students themselves (Ortega, 2009). The environment has a great effect on language users, by determining the extent of their interaction with the language, may it be under written or oral forms (Huang, 2011). This shows the complexity of forming an identity because "every time language learners interact in the target language, whether in the oral or

written mode, they are engaged in identity construction, development, and negotiation. However, factors such as attitudes, conditions, and social contexts are not entirely determined” (Huang, 2011, p. 1).

The influence of socio-linguistic conditions on the development of ESL learners’ identities is particularly interesting for the present study. Nero (2005, p.195) investigated the demarcation trends manifested within ESL environments and identified yardsticks such as ‘native/non-native’, ‘second language’ amongst others. These have informed a wide body of research dealing with second language use and identity creation. He also observed that the decision of sustaining an acquired language group identity was based upon a cost-benefit assessment:

Although individual socialisation to particular groups can be largely defined by a common language, the motivation to maintain affiliation with our ascribed language group(s) is contingent upon the benefits derived therefrom, both internally and externally.

That is, socialization within a language group is contingent upon language use. Nevertheless, there are costs to the maintenance of such affiliation that may detract people from fully acquiring the language. One of the examples of external costs provided by Nero involved the sometimes disturbing assumptions made about second language users from certain cultural backgrounds. When these amount to negative social judgements, people may simply become unwilling to sustain their affiliation to such group.

Nero (2005, p. 194) was convinced that users of a language ordinarily engage in “acts of identity” when constructing language identities and showed that language users often desired to be identified with a particular dominant group. This may mean that ESL Saudi

students will likely strive, in their academic writing, to project an image that relates to the norms and expectations of academic writing in the English language, such as those manifested in scholarly works written by native writers (Nero, 2005).

Nero (2005) proceeded to show that there were several conditions that influenced individuals to engage in acts of identity. These include: being able to identify the group; being able to access the group; having enough motivation; and being able to modify behaviour. These observations are crucial because they offer an overview of what would inspire ESL students to seek a particular identity. Although cultural and social factors occupy a central position as far as language and identity construction are concerned (Miller, 2007), individuals' psychological desires and attitudes towards the dominant group and its traits (e.g., academic writing expectations) will be the main concern of this study.

In summary, and in line with poststructuralist thoughts, the present study assumes that Saudi students' identities shift over time, are often multiple and, at times, even contradictory.

2.2 Reshaping and Reconstructing Identities

During social activities, people make sense of who they are by the negotiation of their standpoints and self-images (Hemmi, 2014). People's identities, according to Block (2003), are reshaped and reconstructed in discourses (Gee, 1996), discourse communities (Swales, 1990), and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Understanding these theoretical frameworks will help in guiding this research and in the contextualisation of other important concepts in this study including writer identity, academic writing and metadiscourse.

2.2.1 Discourses and identity

From the discourse perspective, it has been argued that language users do not utilise language in a vacuum (Johnstone, 2002). Instead, language is utilised in a social context and is limited by it; certain social norms define how and what can be said in that environment. The main understanding of language as a social practice is that of discourse taking into consideration Fairclough's (2001, p. 17) definition of language as a product of social differentiation -language varies according to the social identities of people in interactions, their socially defined purposes, social setting and so on".

Thus, the term discourse implies the existence of distinct social groups (Eckert, 2000). Gee (1996, p. 131) defines discourse as a "socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network".

This indicates that discourses enact certain (thus discursive) identities and are defined, along with identities, by their particular contextual environment and occurring symbolic interactions (Gee, 1999). Hence, language cannot bear a universal meaning (Johnstone, 2002). As Gee (1999) showed, it bears a meaning that is context specific. In other words, the meaning of language in a particular discourse is tied integrally to the perceptions and inclinations of the users of that language and other context-defining socio-cultural aspects. When an individual seeks to engage in a discursive construction of identity, the process assumes a joint, collaborative character, with identities being bounded to the specific discourse (Bourne, 2001) and subjected to negotiations or even impositions (Gee, 1999). After all, identities are limited by the social norms that regulate a social group, its

members' interactions, and context-specific language use. Under this perspective, language can be regarded as a medium of interaction.

Ultimately, the process of discursive construction of identity becomes a social practice (Bourne, 2001) whereof new members get emerged into it and learn the social constructs and obviously the linguistic conventions in a particular social group (Miller, 2000). Nevertheless, there are some key requirements that a new member must fulfil to be conversant with a new discourse (Gee, 2001). These include: being ready to adopt the views of the members of a particular discourse; being exposed to experienced members of a discourse; being provided with guidance regarding the discourse; and being given an opportunity to practice and deploy the language synonymous with the discourse in question. In short, Gee (1990, p. 146-147) shows that it is through proper absorption into the social processes of a group that discourses can be mastered:

Discourses are mastered through acquisition, not learning. That is, Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation ('apprenticeship') into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse.

Regarding the discursal construction of identity, Gee (2004) showed that these students normally strive to adopt social and linguistic norms prevalent in a native English language environment. Their aims are to both belong (and, consequently, develop a suitable group-specific identity), and to realign their linguistic skills with the skills of native speakers. According to Bourne (2001), the overall interactive environment, inclusive of both learning and non-learning contexts, plays an important role in shaping the linguistic identities of ESL students. Students benefit from having constant textual interactions with works produced by

native speakers and even competent ESL speakers. That is, constant practice, especially through interactions such as reading, helps the integration of students within, and the assimilation of the discursal practices of the dominant (academic) group (Johnstone, 2002).

The cultivation of a discursal identity amongst ESL students is not as straightforward as it may seem (Eckert, 2000). This is precisely because ESL students might be forced to learn different and possibly conflicting discourses, and, as a result, attempt to or actually develop multiple and possibly conflicting identities. However, it is possible to deal with such complexity via a thorough process of apprenticeship and social exposure which could resolve whatever antagonism and allow ESL students to fit into several discourses and cultivate their identities through expressing themselves orally or textually (Wetherell, 2010).

2.2.2 Discourse communities

A discourse community is defined as consisting of a group of people who share a common interest in their discourse practices, either through shared assumptions, discussions or claims (Porter, 1986). A discourse community sets and maintains common goals and provides participatory mechanisms, such as genres and lexis for intercommunication, information, and feedback exchange (Swales, 1990). There are several discourse communities which can be formed by groups of family members, school peers, and/or workplace peers. Each of these communities has its own language patterns (Pogner, 2005).

Those of concern for the present thesis are academic writing-related discourse communities. The academic discourse community has a prevalent standard and set of beliefs that help writers shape their identity (Bartholomae, 1986). It also helps people conceive the different writing productions made by students, academics and other members (Swales,

1990; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Members of this community (e.g. students, teachers, academics and scholars) show that they are members of this community when producing written materials (Winsor, 1996). Bizzell (1994) explains that academic community is generally and traditionally viewed as objective, impersonal and above all, logical. For instance, most academic writing, especially in the hard science disciplines (e.g. engineering, computer and medical sciences), is written in the third person to linguistically avoid evidence of personal bias. These practices and attitudes act as a foundation for academic and scholarly discourse.

There are, however, other schools of thought that posit that academic discourse is not as simple. Zamel (1993, p. 140) argues that no discourse can be totally impartial and objective. In his own words, no academic discourse can be “static” or “monolithic”. As remarked by Elbow (1991, p.151), one must be “crazy to talk about academic discourse as one thing”. This comment highlights the multiplicity of academic discourses. Canagarajah (2002, p. 162) remarked that academic discourses can “provide identity and group solidarity to their members, while socializing them into community-based values and norms”. That is, each academic discourse community is, for him, an “identity-shaping” and “knowledge-making community” that uses linguistic tools to shape and construct identities that fit it seamlessly. The multiplicity and identity shaping qualities of discourse communities can possibly increase the difficulties experienced by, namely, Saudi students in becoming members of the academic community.

Overall, ESL academic writers can find themselves in one or many possibly conflicting academic discourse communities where they are required to adopt certain styles and practices in order to suit the new context, thus forcing them to re-negotiate their sense of self.

2.2.3 Community of practice

The concept of Community of Practice is attributed to Lave and Wenger's (1991) ground-breaking book on situated learning. Over time, the concept has evolved from a descriptive one (Lave, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991) to a more prescriptive one (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). It is defined as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p.4).

Thus, CoPs involve the existence of a community, focus on practice, and are restricted to particular fields of expertise. These are the three defining characteristics of CoPs, namely: Domain, Community, and Practice. Since the 1990s, many institutions have actively incorporated CoPs into their educational systems (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Their aim is to enable students to access knowledge from their peers and their supervisors in classroom settings.

Lave and Wenger's research regarding identity in situated learning challenged the predominant belief that learning is a change in either the cognitive state or behavioural disposition of individuals. They suggested an "acquisition" view of learning wherein learning was said to be anchored to social and situated places like classrooms (Fuller, 2007; Hughes, 2007). Their theory foregrounds the study for the impact of social groups like CoP on identity. The focus of their work, however, indicates that participation is central to learning. That is, the extent of their individual social participation within that community is thought to determine the extent of their learning (Wenger, 1998).

Kapucu (2012) provided an effective summary of how identity is affected during CoP-related learning processes. Namely, participants are said to be involved in a community

(belonging) to engage in certain activities (doing), thus establishing their identity (becoming) to interpret the world around themselves (experience). Using Kapucu's words as a template, ESL writers are possibly involved in the academic discourse community to engage in the process of academic writing in their L2, thus establishing their identity through their experience with the discourse community.

Thus, the identity of each ESL writer is actively moulded through learning in a CoP, wherein the concept of learning is defined not as a process of acquiring skills and knowledge but as the process of becoming a person. That is, learning is defined as a process that involves the realignment of identity to suit a specific academic context. Moreover, identity development within a CoP is associated with the need to belong to it, and therefore the need to be associated with its "regime of competence" (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). In order to obtain a position of knowledgeability (or lack thereof) in a CoP, one must modulate one's identity. This is because it is possible that the learning process results in an ESL writer identifying largely with the discourse of that academic CoP. However, it is also possible that it results in dis-identification, such as when a writer's knowledge contribution is not accepted by other CoP members.

2.2.4 Writer identity

Writing is a form of interaction (Ivanič, 1998). Like in other interactive spaces, a writer, creates an identity in a particular text. This identity results mostly from the a) writer's relative consciousness and sense of the 'self', but also from the b) wider prevailing social environment (and demands) that frame the writer's work (Hyland, 2010). When it comes to the sense of self or identity, influences on written artefacts are not only tied to the conventions posited by the members and the discourse community to which one seeks to

belong. Rather, they are tied to past experiences, cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, age, linguistic proficiency, and alike demographic aspects. Importantly, the effects of these factors are not necessarily conscious or intentional. Writers can consciously strive to portray a certain identity, but fail to control the subconscious manifestation of particular identities (Lea & Street, 1999; Swales & Feak, 2004).

More ingrained factors such as age and gender are more prone to affect the writing output in an involuntary manner than factors which are consciously learnt and manipulated so as to convey, even if subtly, the linguistic identity desired by the writer. For this reason, Wortham (2011) advises researchers to streamline the inquiry and delve into diverse dynamics such as gender, ethnic origins, and L1/L2 statuses in order to engage in a meaningful inquiry. Regarding the effects of relevant sociocultural contexts and groups to whom the author intends to address the written text:

Identities are constructed out of the rhetorical options our communities make available, so that we gain credibility as members and approval for our performances by aligning our language choices with those of our social group (Hyland, 2011, p.11).

Writers, as Hyland (2011) explained, create identities to achieve certain social expectations. So, even within the writing process, a poststructuralist interpretation of identities cannot be overlooked. In accordance with this view, writers create as many identities as existing different social contexts (Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, at least within poststructuralism, an author will convey different meanings to different readers. The reason why this point is repeated is to stress the fluid nature of creating identities; these identities cannot be viewed as static manifestations because they are constantly getting formed, evolving, and even conflicting with each other. They further are multiple and diverse, from

both the author's and the reader's viewpoints. An author, ultimately, can create a particular identity due to the impositions of a particular social scenario and then proceed to project another different identity when social circumstances demand so.

An implication of the acceptance of poststructuralist views is that the construction of a writer's identity is a joint effort (Haneda, 2005) or a reactionary process anchored around outer demands. It is an author's struggle with placement of the self within the socially generated definitions and dominant discourses; a matter of linguistic choices and their realignment with the prevailing discourses (Keane, 2011). In Hyland's (2011, p. 11) words, it is "a means of seeing how language can represent people in particular ways and, at the same time, how it can be used to negotiate new positions".

That is, the self while writing and thereby expressing an identity is trying to negotiate and create a coherent identity relative to the readers' context, and achieve a certain level of credibility (Hyland, 2011; Keane, 2011; Pittam et al., 2009). This desired congruence is between the values, beliefs and linguistic conventions of the target group and those expressed by the self in the written text (Schnell et al., 2010). This strife is essentially what guides authors when trying to cultivate a desirable representation of themselves (Keane, 2011). According to Hyland (2002, p. 1091), this should be done in pragmatic tones:

a central element of pragmatic competence is the ability of writers to construct a credible representation of themselves and their work, aligning themselves with the socially shaped identities of their communities.

In summary, both psychological or individual and social or group aspects can bear an influence upon the process of expressing (multiple, dynamic, mutable, voluntary or involuntary, and sensitive to a wide array of factors) identities in writing.

2.2.5 ESL students' academic writing and identity

Traditionally, writing has always been considered a solo activity, with the image of an individual confined to a quiet place. However, as highlighted by Canagarajah (2002), the process of writing, academic writing included, is socially and historically situated. For example, the decision of what constitutes “good” writing is usually decided by professionals within a discursal community. In a specific academic environment, these evaluation rules are often objective and standardised. Universities expect all students to have a voice, compliant with existing standards, while writing for academic purposes (Swales & Feak, 2004).

Moreover, as with any other kind of writing, academic writing is also a means of purveying a particular identity (Fujieda, 2010; Yang, 2006) that is influenced by social and individual aspects. Although many students assume that academic writing is impersonal and objective, and concerned with the simple expression of ideas, researchers such as Haneda (2005) have ably shown that academic writing often displays the writer's identity and, consequently, it is not impersonal. Rather, it is actually a ripe ground for interrogating and realizing identity expression.

Once it comes to ESL students, the issue of identity becomes more complex (Jenkins, 2011). First, there is a general institutional attitude that tends to view ESL students as inferior academic writers and this has a great impact on the attitudes of ESL students towards academic writing (Haneda, 2005). Especially, students have to struggle with an imposed negative self-image, and negotiating the imposed positions is an important issue. As Fernsten (2008, p. 45) explained:

For students struggling with aspects of negative writer identity (e.g., "fearful of

writing," "can't write"), hearing more clearly the voices of their history and negotiating the ideological boundaries that have both enclosed and excluded them can be critical.

Morita (2004) showed that apart from the linguistic difficulties in expressing their opinions, ESL students also struggle in finding their voice through academic writing. Precisely, their experiences and normally different cultural and social backgrounds grant them a particular voice once it comes to academic writing. However, this voice is normally in conflict with the expected conventional voices of that new and linguistically different academic environment (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). As a result, many ESL students tend to suppress their voices and, consequently, their academic writing often lacks authority. Naturally, this leads to the issue of institutional practices and how they can help ESL students in not only mastering the art of proper academic writing but also in enabling the ESL students' voices to be allowed and become an important aspect of their identity (Jenkins, 2011). These are some of the issues that this study seeks to explore.

As discussed above, there is a strong connection between writing and identity. In the words of Ivanič (1998, p.32):

Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socioculturally shaped subject possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody.

What Ivanič implies is that the process of writing is a conscious one, where an individual is aware of how they present their work to cater for the target audience. In this case, writing becomes a method of self-representation. This can only be properly achieved if

the writer is fully aware of overall identities and how their linguistic expression impacts readers. This highlights the complexity of this skill and how it alters according to various contexts. Writers can find themselves in a new context such as the context of higher education, where they are required to adopt certain styles and practices to suit the new context (Casanave, 2002). To achieve their aims, they must become masters of social expectations, linguistic skills, self-aware of their identity, and draw upon all these aspects to produce a successful text.

Learning and acquiring a new language creates a process of re-negotiation of self and identity. Courtivron (2003) argues that despite the level of fluency an ESL writer might gain, there will remain a core issue of identity negotiation when the writer is subjected to a new L2. Lantolf (2000, p. 5) stated that “learning of a second language, under certain circumstances can lead to the reformation of one’s mental system, including one’s concept of self”.

Several researchers (e.g., Adger, 1998; Toohey, 2000) investigated the impact of language, writing, and the construction of identity in academia. Some have empirically demonstrated that ESL writing is interlinked with the individual’s sense of self (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1995), and used the foundational assumptions that ESL learning is considered a change in the predominant social context. Thus, when a student acquires an L2 like English, they simultaneously acquire cultural knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and ethics related to their L2 (McKay & Wong, 1996). This could co-exist or take over the inherent languaculture (a phrase that connotes the intertwined nature of language and culture, coined by Agar in 1994) the individual inherits from their L1, thus modifying their identity.

Kanno (2003, p. 3) proposed a more troubling issue in the relationship between writing and identity. For her, an individual's identity is affected by the advent of bilingualism: "bilingual individuals position themselves between two languages and two (or more) cultures, and how they incorporate these languages and cultures into their sense of who they are" (3). This connotes a sense of ambiguity or disorientation regarding a sense of self brought forth by the acquisition of another language.

Even though Shen's (1989) research on writers and their identities revealed that many ESL students derive their identities or at the very least become conscious of their identities through their L2 writing experiences, learning a second language can be a difficult experience that involves strenuous processes of renegotiation. It is a complex process which involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills concerned with new sociocultural aspects that challenges the sense of self, of academic writers included.

2.2.6 A metadiscoursal perspective

Metadiscourse is an important tool used in writing. It is defined as:

an umbrella term to include a heterogeneous array of features which help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, organise, and interpret material in a way preferred by the writer and with regard to the understandings and values of a particular discourse community' (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 134).

Metadiscourse aids in conveying rather implicitly expressed contextualizing ideas and reasoning (Hyland, 2004). It references the writer and his intentions about the subject matter. In writing, the writer actively engages the reader through revealing his stances. According to Hyland (2005), academic writers do not only present readers with facts in their

writings but they also try to make their readers involved as they reveal their points of view. In other words, metadiscourse helps in constructing the writer's existence (Sliver, 2003) and the linguistic manifestation (Hyland, 1999) of a writer in a text. With metadiscourse, the writer makes an effort to not only communicate but also to influence the meaning of his communication.

Through metadiscourse, a reproductive relationship is established between the writer and the reader (Thompson, 2001); this relationship is guided by the knowledge and the conventions that are prevalent in particular academic communities. Metadiscourse thus aids in establishing viable communication processes between the writer and the audience, especially once it comes to interpretations. In essence, with the use of metadiscourse, the process of communication can be facilitated. Authors reinforce their point of views and construct a better rapport with the readers (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). The importance of metadiscourse lies in its great role in analysing a context and proposing a way of communication that determines and sustains a social group (Hyland, 2004).

The work of Hyland presented new insights into the relationship between academic writing and identity. Hyland (2002) explained that the process of creating a new identity in writing is very complicated particularly for second language students due to the many demanding and conflicting expectations of both teachers and academic disciplines. According to Hyland (2002, p.352),

Academic writing is not a single undifferentiated mass, but a variety of subject-specific literacies. Through these literacies members of disciplines communicate with their peers and students with their professors. The words they choose must present their ideas in ways that make most sense to their readers, and part of this involves adopting an appropriate identity.

In metadiscourse research, there lack consensual frameworks and conceptual foundations for identifying the architecture of metadiscourse in written texts (Kopple, 2002). That is, different metadiscourse frameworks compete for supremacy and offer different approaches to the analysis of texts. To contextualise metadiscoursal elements, scholars have developed different models which aim at classifying different metadiscoursal features according to diverse criteria such as the features, forms, and functions. One classification approach distinguished textual metadiscourse (text connectives, code glosses, illocution markers and narrators) from interpersonal metadiscourse (validity markers, attitude markers and commentaries). The latter classification system was criticized by Hyland (2005) for its vagueness.

In later classifications, there was an effort to differentiate between interactional and interactive categories (Hyland, 2005, p.7). The interactive features would be:

preoccupied with the writer's recognition of his reader, and his attempts to accommodate the readers' interests and needs, and to make the argument acceptable and reasonable for him. On the other hand, the interactional part is concerned with the writer's efforts to make his ideas transparent and to involve the reader by expecting his problems and responses to the text.

Thus, for Hyland (2005), the interactive aspect is focused on the management of information flow while the interactional aspect deals with the evaluation of the text. Therefore, this model is integrally linked to the social and cultural contexts with the use of the metadiscourse features being tied to the writers' intentions. This framework is utilized to analyse three writing samples from each participant in this study because it offers the chance of understanding the academic persona writers embody and their reflective awareness of self

in their writings (Hyland, 2004). By using this model as a tool for analysis, it will be possible to understand how participants in this study construct their discursal identities through the use of textual and rhetorical features in their writing samples.

2.3 Identity Development and Academic Writing among ESL Students

2.3.1 Identity development

The construction of ESL students' identities in L2 is an area that has attracted considerable academic inquiry (Gibbons, 2006; Kinginger, 2004; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), informed by distinct conceptual backgrounds (Wang, 2010). Currently, there is a solid and diversified empirical body of research addressing the many facets of identity and identity development in ESL students. Each is linked to varying constraints, discursal expectations, and institutional practices that students have to face, and plays a vital role in determining the nature of identities that the students project (Block, 2007).

Generally, students, both L1 and L2 speakers of English, need to negotiate their academic identities and their literacies for the sake of making their writings compatible with academic discourses in university contexts (Chamcharatsri, 2009; Duff, 2010). That is, identity construction is an issue of negotiation; it is not a straightforward process (Gibbons, 2006). This, in part, is due to the different academic demands imposed in different academic discourses and in different learning institutions (Chamcharatsri, 2009). Several authors portray such negotiation as a struggle, and thus a process that involves some suffering. For example, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) claimed that ESL students engage in a struggle to fit into the discursal structures in place and manage to cultivate an identity that reflects the expectations of the academic community. Yet, this is not the only struggle.

In a study based on five international students in the USA, Chamcharatsri (2009) found that L2 students have to deal with the influence of their native language in constructing their identities as they lack experience when being exposed to new discourses environments. It was found that second language learners experience added difficulty because they have to work out the various resources regarding the differences in rhetorical features and devices between their L1 and L2. Additionally, L2 learners have to construct their assignments and university projects according to specific criteria determined by the academic discourse which they might not be familiar with. Although there is a current trend in distancing academic writing assignments from students' L1 for the sake of inducting L2 learners in the academic discourse community, Chamcharatsri argues that L1 resources should be kept and put to use by emphasising students' culture and identity.

Based on a sociocultural perspective, Chang and Sperling (2014) investigated the discursive practices of six ESL students, from Malaysia, Taiwan and Salvador, in a community college classroom and online forums. They found that, notwithstanding that schools have the authority in circulation and cultivation of particular sociocultural values and identities via linguistic practices, L2 students do not always adhere to such practices. Moreover, ESL classrooms gave priority to academic knowledge and learners' identity while eliminating knowledge and identities related to students' interactions among themselves and within their society. The study also discovered that students employed a mix of social languages in order to construct their different identities regardless of their teacher's emphasis on only using academic English. In doing so, the students included another side of their identity by foregrounding involvement and mutual experiences with their classmates, families and communities.

Kinginger (2004), in a longitudinal case study of a female English speaker's journey of learning French, noted that L2 students were often faced with many challenges which compromised their confidence as far as the reconstruction of their identity was concerned. The participant experienced continual restructuring of her motives while developing L2 competence. She also manifested persistence throughout the learning process, focusing on her sense of self which was greatly affected by her personal experiences and interactions with people and L2 culture. The study concluded by discussing the struggles that ESL students go through which influence their learning process and relationship with L2 as well as the imagined communities ESL learners could become part of when learning the L2 causing them to succeed or fail in the classrooms.

Another challenge that ESL students face is with linguistic proficiency and how it can be a hindrance to developing their identities (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Block, 2007; Pavlenko, 2002). These scholars explain that many ESL students are not conversant with the English language and its main conventions and, as a result, are not capable of developing an identity. In addition, the cultural background and preceding experiences and identities of ESL students have a considerable influence on their present learning (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). This leads them to shy away from developing identities due to strong attachment to their backgrounds; that is, as previously mentioned, they preclude their L1 identities.

Another issue is concerned with institutional practices, which, in certain cases, act detrimentally through discouraging students to be proactive in cultivating their identities, principally due to the negative 'ESL' label associated with the ESL students. This negativity, according to Kanno and Applebaum (1995), is shown in the analyses conducted on the stories of three high school Japanese students as ESL learners in Canada. The analyses indicated that the learning environment became:

a site of domination because relegating students to ESL programs perpetuates their status as second-rate citizens of the school and diminishes their motivation to advance their English beyond the level required in the ESL environment' (Kanno & Applebaum 1995, p.47).

Despite such struggles, students' participation and engagement in classrooms and society can inspire confidence and thereby facilitate their L2 identities' construction (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Wang, 2010). These interactions occur, according to Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012), in the various contexts where learners go through, such as university context, fellow students' community, teachers' community, and other L2 users. Through active participation in these different groups, ESL students engage in a process of negotiation. The resultant identity evolves through a gradual process of learning, practice, and motivation. ESL students, therefore, develop an identity through a process of continuous and persistent transformation that can be understood as a result of L2 learners' interaction with other individuals and the environment (Huhtala & Lehti-Eklund, 2012).

Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012, p.15) analysed the use of written narratives in expressing identities of L2 students. The study compared narratives of Finish students studying the Swedish language with data being collected during students' first and third years of their studies. Findings indicated that identity was an evolving and multifaceted concept, with learning heralding its construction. As time went on, the students' identities became more concrete and more deeply entrenched in the practices and learning procedures that they had been involved in. In their own words, "our interpretation is that for most L2 students the years they spend in university context entail a process of becoming a more integral part of their community of practice." In their study, one student (Tania) commented that:

I want to point out that the most important moments as far as the development of my Swedish is concerned, is my stay in Sweden. I have become more courageous and I am no longer so afraid of making mistakes. I hope I will be able to talk Swedish more correctly in the future (Huhtala & Lehti-Eklund, 2012, p. 14).

The attitude displayed by Tania exemplifies how deeper involvement of L2 learners with their L2 social groups can act as a catalyst in enhancing their confidence and, ultimately, their identity as writers. In concurrence, Pellegrino Aveni (2005) demonstrated that with more integration, practice and participation, L2 students became more confident of their linguistic competencies which, in turn, led to stronger evolution of a particular identity.

In academic writing, the role of the self is important in generating an identity (Wang, 2010). Representation of the self helps in creating a powerful identity and demonstrates writers' confidence in their work (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005). A main way of representing writers' identity is through the use of the pronoun 'I'. Through the use of this pronoun, writers are able to create a powerful rhetorical approach that demonstrates their active participation and also their writer authority and ownership. The use of this pronoun is what Ivanič (1998, p. 110) has called the authorial self, which is "a significant means of promoting a competent scholarly identity and gaining acceptance for one's ideas, and while these students were sensitive to its rhetorical effects."

In her work, Ivanič (1998, p. 109) built a picture of the role of identity in academic writing by examining eight mature students' essays. The study focused on discourse choices made by participants, the rationale behind those choices, and the obstacles that students came across when writing essays. The researcher concluded that "writing is an act of identity",

through which writers situate themselves and their discourse choices along with their beliefs, values, power relations and practices.

Tang and John (1999) examined the various writer identities projected in the academic essays of 27 first-year undergraduate students at the National University of Singapore. The focus was on their use of personal pronouns. The study identified six identities that can be used in academic writing, namely: 'representative', 'guide', 'architect', 'the recounter of the research process', 'the opinion holder', and 'the originator'. Every identity type had its own purpose and function when used in a text. For example, the 'I as representative' did not have a strong presence in a text as it is normally changed into 'we'. This is a technique employed by writers to fortify their membership of the academic discourse community. As for the use of 'opinion holder and originator', students tended to avoid them, which may show that they lack confidence in expressing their opinions and affiliating themselves with certain ideas or scholars.

Hyland (2002, p.1108) also examined the use of personal pronouns in 64 undergraduate theses and then carried out a comparative analysis with a larger corpus of research materials. Further, the author conducted interviews with the students and with their supervisors. Findings indicated far less usage of personal pronouns amongst the L2 students. The author stated that through less usage of personal pronouns, the students tended to detach themselves from their work, leading to poorly constructed writer identity. One student from the study says that "this is a correct use, I think. I have seen it in books. I want to say what I did but I am not so confident to use 'I' all the time. 'We' is not so strong, isn't it?" This suggests that at least some students hold the belief that personal pronouns are to be avoided in academic texts.

Hyland (2002, p. 1110) further showed that lack of authorial identity by L2 students apparently stemmed from their lack of confidence and sense of authorial authority; this can be seen as a result of weak linguistic skills and the cultural and social contexts of academic discourses which, in most cases, do not reflect the cultural and social experiences and histories of the L2 students. Ultimately, construction of writer identities becomes a problem to L2 students: “most crucially, however, rhetorical identity is influenced by the writer’s background and this becomes more intricate for students familiar with intellectual traditions which may be very different from those practised in English academic contexts”.

Since identity in academic writing is a socially generated phenomenon and linguistic proficiencies play a vital role in the determination of identities, this particular work (Hyland, 2002) is important to the current study as it sheds light on how lack of linguistic confidence and conflicting contexts that define academic discourses drive L2 learners to detach themselves from their work and, consequently, fail to properly develop their academic identities. The work and its theoretical concepts can be used to help this study unravel how the social and cultural backgrounds of Saudi students and their linguistic proficiencies influence the nature of their authorial self in their academic writings and how this influences the realisation of their academic identity.

In a similar vein, Kim, Baba, and Cumming (2006) analysed the writing samples of three students, two Korean and one Japanese, in a Canadian university. The analyses looked at lexical, syntactic and rhetorical choices that students made in their writings. The findings showed that both beliefs and values critically determine the way students communicate themselves in writing. It was also found that academic departments seemed to prevent students from expressing their standpoints with the use of personal pronouns. This may

explain the belief held by some students regarding the need of avoiding personal pronouns in academic texts.

Burke's (2009) qualitative case study with five Korean students in the USA explored the construction of academic writer identities and the way metadiscourse features were used to construct authoritative voices when writing in the English language. The findings indicated that Korean students deployed various approaches to form their writer identities, which shifted, were contradictory and in constant development. The analyses also showed that the students tended more towards the use of textual metadiscourse features over interpersonal features. This is suggestive that students did not mark their authoritative voice strongly in their writing. In terms of the influence of L1 on L2 writing, the study found that undergraduate students relied more on the discourse of their first language, whereas graduate students leaned towards traditional academic discourse.

Overall, these findings show that, given the new linguistic and cultural academic environments that ESL students suddenly find themselves in and the conflicting discursive structures exposed to them in foreign institutions, they naturally try to adopt some strategies in order to construct their identities. Implicitly, this suggests that identity is "flexible, hybrid and multifaceted" (Huhtala & Lehti-Eklund, 2012, p. 7). It develops in contact with different academic and social environments. The underlying theme cutting across diverse strands of literature is that the development of ESL identity is fraught with challenges, principally due to conflicts between the ESL students' cultural and social backgrounds and the social and cultural contexts that inform discourses in the English language.

On the other hand, there seems to be a lack of research that examines how Saudi students construct their identities in the English language as well as the ways and techniques

Saudi students utilise in presenting the self in their academic writing. Throughout the current research project, I was only able to find some studies that touched upon few aspects of identity in regard to Saudi students and the skill of writing (Alhawsawi, 2015; Barnawi, 2009; Giroir, 2013; Howell, 2008). Most of these studies share one thing that is learning the skill of writing and mastering it is a long process associated with difficulties particularly for students in Saudi Arabia.

Howell (2008) examined the ways in which students perceived social identity, and how being part of a community of practice can be of help for students who experience difficulties when writing in EAP. The study aimed at developing the skill of writing by comparing students who experience problems with writing and students who are more successful. The findings show that there is a considerable difference between struggling students and more successful ones regarding their learning histories and identities as learners and writers. Moreover, the study indicated that struggling students, who portrayed themselves as incompetent writers, experienced a lack of investment in classrooms. At the start of the project, these students were not involved enough in the learning community which could be seen as a result of labelling them as incompetents. However, these struggling students experienced improvement as they became more aware of the writing trajectory and how to pursue their learning path.

Barnawi (2009), in a study that examined Saudi students in the United States, argued that the L2 classroom is a place for international students generally and Saudi students especially to form their identities; these identities are situated on social, cultural, political and historical perspectives. The study explored the way in which two Saudi students doing their master's degree in TESOL formed and negotiated identities in their new academic community. The study stated that Saudi students face issues and problems in regard to

mediating and working out identities, competence and power relations which cause them to be unsuccessful in participating and becoming accredited and qualified participants in their academic class community. The study concluded by suggesting that being part of an academic community takes time, and newcomers will experience issues of struggle in which they have to work out, construct and deconstruct various identities for the sake of being accepted as a member of the new community.

Giroir (2013) explored the way in which two Saudi students mediated their positionality in regard to a host community in USA. The study looked at how these two students partake in various discourses to become accepted and qualified members of this new community. The analyses showed that Saudi students took part in different discursive practices to attain participation in the world of L2. The study concluded by discussing a few implications in regard to identity and agency in post-9/11 contexts by asserting the need to conduct further research to understand the different positions that language learners take in their quest for a fuller participation in social life (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Alhawsawi (2015) explored identity and English language learning in a study conducted in the Saudi Medical University (SMU). The study examined the influence that identity has on students' learning experiences in an EFL program in Saudi Arabia. The findings showed two types of identity which impacted the language learning process. The first one was identity related to socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and was presented by the kinds of schools that students went to, whether private or public. The second identity was associated with being a student at a medical discipline affecting students' views of themselves and hence their learning experience. The study concluded by asserting the need to understand EFL students' identities and how they affect various learning aspects such as motivation, learning aptitude, and participation.

It can be noted from the studies reviewed above that more research on identity needs to be conducted. In particular, it is crucial to carry out empirical research that examines the ways in which Saudi students construct their identities when learning English, the obstacles and struggles they experience in L2 classrooms, and how they manage to overcome such problems in order to develop an identity that fits the academic community.

2.3.2 Saudi students' academic writing: challenges and difficulties

Writing is a complex skill that requires a long time for individuals to master. Many researchers (Smith, 1988; White, 1987; Widdowson, 1983) portray writing not as a simple brain production but as a very complex cognitive task that entails careful thinking, discipline and a clear focus (Grami, 2010). Moreover, any writing production, on deep analysis, represents an individual's beliefs, culture, environment, values, economic changes and religion (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). This means that the personal beliefs and values of the writer tend to influence the manner of presentation as well as the content. On the other hand, there is the role of institutions which is described as a place of discourse and power regulating all kinds of academic practices taking place (Lea, 1994; Street, 1995; Ivanic, 1998). This shows how difficult this skill is placing learners under pressure trying to adhere to the new linguistic repertoires which might challenge learners' personal identities (Lea, 1994; Ivanic, 1998).

In the context of the Arab world, research shows that learners in higher education experience major difficulties and challenges when they write in English, which makes their journey as students a burden (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997; Rababah, 2003; Tahaine, 2010). In Saudi Arabia, English teaching is based on rote learning and the passiveness of students.

Teachers, assuming the role of the knowledge holder, merely instruct students, who memorise texts in a highly controlled process of education (Smith & Swan, 2001). This control negatively affects students' writing, making them dependent and uncreative (Shukri, 2014). Consequently, learners experience difficulty regarding the transition to university contexts, and produce texts that do not conform to the demands of higher education (Richardson, 2004). Ultimately, when studying in a foreign context, Saudi students face problems in adapting their writing skills to the norms and conventions practiced in the new environment.

Further challenges that Arab students face in general, and Saudi students in particular, is related to the methods of English teaching as well as to the environment in which the students live (Al-Khsawneh, 2010). In most English classes, Arabic is used to illustrate and explain vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, Arabic language becomes dominant in the English classroom which was shown to negatively affect learning (Adas & Bakir, 2013). In this situation, students rarely practice English in class but use their mother tongue instead (Rababah, 2003). Arabic learners also experience other challenges such as lack of student and teacher motivation, low proficiency of English teachers and inadequate writing practice (Al-Khasawneh, 2010). All these serve to undermine Saudi students' English skills, especially their writing skills, and become obstacles in the students' journey when they study abroad in contexts where English is the only language used in communication and instruction.

There is a collectivist tendency where the majority of Arab people prefer to identify themselves with social units such as the family (Al-Balawi, 2005). This indicates a commitment to "one's extended family and larger in-group takes precedence over individual needs or goals" (Feghali, 1997, p. 352). Consequently, many Arab students, when writing in

the English language, use plural pronouns such as ‘we’ in order to express their opinions. Such an approach to academic writing obviously influences not only how they form their writer identities (Feghali, 1997) but also conflicts with the more dominant “I” found in English academic writing.

Al-Yacoub (2012) explained the difficulties facing Arabic students in western academic contexts due to Arabic culture’s general disinclination towards reading and writing. This feature of the culture alongside the Saudi education system, which seems to give more attention to listening and speaking skills, do not allow students to concentrate on the skill of writing. This causes students to have a weak reading and writing background (Feghali, 1997) which compromises their English writing heavily. Such lack of necessary skills to adequately produce academic writing of suitable quality in higher education (Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015) results in incoherent academic writing and, in some cases, poorly constructed academic identities.

2.4 Emotions and Second Language Acquisition

2.4.1 Defining Emotion

The study of emotion did not receive much attention for so long in the field of education (Garret & Young, 2009). It has been ignored in comparison to cognition, learning, motivation, physiology and personality. However, recent research has been focusing more on emotion treating it as an essential part of human experience alongside other important elements such as cognition and motivation (Aki, 2006; Dörnyei, 2005; Garret & Young, 2009 and MacIntyre, 2002). Emotion is not an easy concept to define. Generally, there is a consensus as to which emotions are portrayed as feelings or states experienced by

individuals. According to Reeve (2009, p. 301) “emotions are short-lived, feeling arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events”. They can also be understood as responses that people ascribe to various behavioural, physiological and experiential activities (Keltner & Ekman, 2000).

The term “emotion” prompts the close link that exists between individuals’ inner states and outer contexts which is a position held by most psychology researchers (e.g. Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Recent research has shifted to which emotions are being examined as personal experiences that are socially and culturally formulated (Matsumoto & Luang, 2008). Indeed, emotions are an inseparable part of people’s personality as well as their self and behaviour. They are closely interconnected with sociocultural contexts leading to the development of the psychological concepts of possible and ideal selves (Higgins, 1987; Markus, 1977; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

2.4.2 Emotions from a poststructuralist perspective

In discussing emotions here, I rely mainly on poststructuralism as a theory for interpretation. As discussed above, there is a constant negotiation of identities when individuals engage in a new context using a second language. This process is quite challenging as it causes individuals to be exhausted emotionally and in urgent need of gaining control over these emotions. With many theories trying to grasp the concept of emotion, the work of Pavlenko (2012) is the most relevant. Pavlenko (2012) portrays identities as an emotional and discursive place of conflict, in which individuals form their own narratives to present a clear sense of their lives. However, the occurrence of unanticipated events and the failure of

dealing with such events can cause individuals to experience emotional instability (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

With Pavlenko's views in mind, another important concept emerges; that is the concept of emotional investment. This concept is based on Norton's (1995) influential work and her notion of language investment. The main role of this notion is representing the complicated social and historical formulated relationship between language learners and the second language as well as their ambivalent aspiration to be a user of the language. Norton (1995) explains that language learners' investment in a second language functions as a liaison between learners' willingness to speak the L2 and their motivation to navigate the lengthy and complex process of learning this additional language. This concept argues that learners can obtain tremendous resources, both symbolic and material, if they invest in another language, which will lead to expanding their cultural capital (Norton, 1995).

When learners invest in a new language, they experience great difficulty in becoming members of second language communities and in refraining from possible alienation from these communities (Norton, 2000). Such struggle is rooted in the construction of new identities as accepted members of target language communities. This view is fundamental to the poststructuralist account of identity in which it is portrayed in a subjective manner for the sake of understanding the world (Weedon, 1996). Another crucial point is individuals' desire in becoming members of target language communities of practice, both real or imagined. This suggests a great ordeal in which these members experience both negative and positive emotions when they (re)construct their own identities. For instance, learners feel happy when they are able to improve their language skills and feel unhappy and lose confidence in themselves when they receive negative feedback.

Whatever the kinds of emotions experienced, these emotions are closely linked to individuals' investments in desired identities. Such awareness of these emotions and their triggering mechanisms will help individuals assess their plans and make necessary changes before taking actions (Pavlenko, 2012). It is essential to mention that the communities that individuals want to be member of are not real sometimes (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They are imagined communities perpetuated by an idyllic image of the second language with individuals trying their best in making such image a reality (Kinginger, 2004). However, this indicates a struggle that individuals need to go through to achieve their objectives in social contexts (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

2.4.3 Emotions and language learning

Although emotions have a central role in language learning, research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) did not pay much attention to emotions focusing mainly on cognition in language learning and teaching (Arnold, 1999; Imai, 2010; Macintyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2005). While there is a tight relationship between emotions and motivation (MacIntyre, MacKinnon and Clément, 2009), there is surprisingly minimal research taking place into language learner emotions. Most studies that have been conducted on emotions in SLA were quantitative in nature using surveys to examine affective factors such as anxiety, motivation and learning outcomes (e.g. Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986; Pae, 2013; Zeidner, 1998). Such an approach is quite limited as it only demonstrates a cause and effect relationship without deeply inquiring into language learning classroom dynamics (Imai, 2010; van Lier, 2004).

Oxford (1990, P. 140) suggests that “the affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure”. This shows the need

in conducting more research on emotions due to its great effect on the learning process. Dörnyei (2009b) explained such neglect of emotions:

Everybody knows that classrooms are venues for a great deal of emotional turmoil, yet affect has been an almost completely neglected topic in educational psychology. Everybody knows that the study of a second language can be an emotionally rather taxing experience, yet affect has been an almost completely neglected topic in applied linguistics. (p. 219)

As a result of the complicated process of learning, language learners go through various emotional states. These emotions will result in different affective reactions, either positive or negative based on the learning process and learning tasks. For example, complex tasks, according to Fridja (1988), are associated with negative reactions such as loss, harm and damage by learners. In this sense, emotions influence how these tasks are perceived by learners and how they are approached in the future. With emotions regulating such changes, this will lead to either positive or negative outcomes depending on learners' capacity in systemizing these changes into constructive psychosocial identity (Erickson, 1968). Garret and Young (2009) explain that "it is through experiencing the world and conducting an affective appraisal of these experiences that individuals develop their own unique preferences and aversions" (p. 210).

With a vast range of emotions that can be experienced by learners, the emotion of learner anxiety is the most researched emotional state in literature (Zeidner, 1998). It is defined as a distress and a negative emotional response that learners experience in foreign language classrooms (MacIntyre, 1999). Many scholars have explored anxiety and its influence on the learning process since 1970s (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). With only few

studies showing a positive correlation between anxiety and language achievement (e.g., Liu, 2006; Oxford, 1999), most of these studies indicated a negative correlation between anxiety and learners' level of achievement (MacIntyre, 1999; Horwitz, 2001).

According to Dörnyei (2005), foreign language anxiety is sorted using various classifications; one of these is trait-state (Spielberger, 1983) which indicates a stable nature of trait anxiety over time and can be thought of as a personality trait, whereas state anxiety is a temporary feeling that is constantly changing. Another important classification of learner anxiety is facilitating-debilitating which was suggested by Scovel (1978). This view states that a minimal level of anxiety does not inevitably hinder the process of learning but it might enhance learners' performance and affect language leaning positively.

With more research being conducted on emotions in the last two decades, two perspectives emerged. The first one is the shift towards taking a qualitative research approach in SLA (Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). Taking a qualitative approach is the best way in the exploration of emotions. Garrett and Young (2009) have called for more qualitative enquiry using interviews as a method of data collection.

The second one concerns the role of social context which was allocated significant attention. The fact that language functions as a social tool has emphasised the role of the social context among many scholars (Block, 2003; Gass & Mackey, 2006). Dörnyei's (2005, 2009b) is one of the most prominent work emerging from the social context. The importance of such work lies in its focus on the relationship between emotions, motivation and identities. The work showed the significant role that emotions play in conceiving possible selves and its motivational properties. In their own words, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009, p. 352) explained that emotions are

critical to understand the motivation properties of the possible self. Emotions are fundamentally important motivators. Without a strong tie to the learner's emotional system, possible selves exist as cold cognition, and therefore lack motivational potency.

Dörnyei's work (2005, 2009) is important in understanding identity, emotions and the development of L2 self in this study. It will be possible to understand the role of past and present learning experiences on the development of L2 possible self and what motivates Saudi participants to become members of the new learning environment in the UK. The work can also be of great help in showing how emotions are implicated in the development of L2 possible selves.

Empirically, research focussed on various aspects concerning emotions. One of which is classifying emotions in either positive or negative terms. Pekrun et al. (2002) claim that students can eliminate negative emotions and promote positive ones if they understand their own feelings regarding their emotional experiences. It is important to mention that agreeing on the number of emotions is quite difficult with many researchers trying to identify few basic emotions using various approaches. Other work has focussed on classifying emotions as either core or simple before understanding what they actually do. However, doing so can be a complex process due to the possibility of core emotions being similar on a lexical level but different in their shades of interpretation (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). As a result, many researchers tried to distinguish between simple or basic emotions and complex ones.

Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz and Perry (2007) introduced a new classification of emotions in academic settings. In their classification, three dimensions were recognized: object focus (activity or outcome), valence (positive or negative), and activation (activating or

deactivating). For instance, feeling joy is described as a positive emotion that triggers learners and hence makes them motivated, whereas the feeling of boredom is described as a negative emotion that deactivates learners. These emotional experiences influence the process of learning; they help learners decide what foreign language to study and what activity to work on. Such understanding of these emotions allows language educators to notice negative emotions and work towards reducing them, which will result in motivating their students.

In contrast to basic emotions, Posner, Russel, and Peterson's (2005) presented a model called circumplex model of affect. This model offers that emotions can be distinguished from one another in accordance with their physiological arousal levels (high or low) and psychological valence (positive or negative). For example, anxiety states are regarded as a high arousal negative emotional state and happiness states are regarded as high arousal positive states.

Research has also been conducted on learners' emotions in foreign language classrooms. Mercer (2006) explored the emotional experiences that learners undergo in a foreign language classroom. Findings showed some instances of learners' attitudes, beliefs and motivations. These instances were contradictory and changing among learners over time which indicates a dynamic nature of such elements. There were also differences in the way participants valued each learning task they had to do. Some found these tasks useful and others did not due to learners' preference of a participant learning style over the other. As for experienced affective factors, anxiety was the most frequent one in tandem with making errors and exams. The second most frequent factor was self-confidence and then followed by self-efficacy beliefs. Expectedly, motivation was frequently referenced with its positive and negative impact. It was found that feedback was linked to motivation, both positive and

negative, based on the outcome of feedback. Motivation was also associated with fear; some learners were motivated so they would not fail their upcoming exam.

Garrett and Young (2009), in a study that examined learners' affective reactions to foreign language learning classroom, explained learning experiences to each other in 2 weekly meetings in an 8-week beginner course for learning Portuguese. Garrett's emotional reactions to her learning experience were classified into four categories: (1) her awareness of her own knowledge of Portuguese, (2) her own professional teacher's voice, (3) her responses to the Brazilian culture to which she was exposed, and (4) social relations with other students and teacher (2009, 212-213). Findings show that emotion is dynamic and multi-faceted and should not only be looked at as a product of motivated action. Emotion should be understood as a continuous interaction among three variables: appraisal, emotion and motivation (Dörnyei, 2009).

In the field of second language acquisition, Izard (2011) presented his own contentions on emotions taking a differential emotions perspective. He viewed basic emotion as “a set of neural, bodily/ expressive, and feeling/motivational components generated rapidly, automatically, and nonconsciously when ongoing affective–cognitive processes interact with the sensing or perception of an ecologically valid stimulus to activate evolutionarily adapted neurobiological and mental processes” (pp. 261-262). By identifying emotions as either first-order or emotion schemas, he argued that basic positive emotions usually happen to ease the process of learning and enquiry and fondness behaviour. First-order negative emotions are mostly ascribed to apprehensive infants and young children and to older people when they come across difficult circumstances. Moreover, the researcher named first-order emotions as interest, enjoyment/ happiness/contentment, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and possibly contempt.

Bown and White (2010) examined the emotional experiences that students encounter in classrooms with the aim of better understanding affect in SLA via a self-regulatory framework. It was found that past and present language learning experiences and the objectives learners set for themselves to achieve had a tremendous influence on learners' motivational behaviour. The study also indicated a crucial role of regulating affect on learners' learning experiences and their choices. In a similar vein, Imai (2010) explored the way emotions manifested in learners while preparing for oral presentation in groups. It was found that, while preparing for the task, learners' mental processes were arranged based on verbalisation of their emotions which initially turned to a common feeling among all learners in the group. The study also suggested that negative emotions can be a valuable tool in second language learners.

These emotions, negative or positive, are crucial elements in motivating learners (MacIntyre, MacKinnon & Clément, 2009). Without taking these emotions into consideration, it will be difficult to understand the differences between motivated and unmotivated students (MacIntyre, 2002). Indeed, "a better understanding of emotion has the capacity to explain cases where students endorse orientations but might not be energized to take action, and also cases where action is prevented by emotional arousal, either present or anticipated" (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 63). To engage learners and motivate them to deal with the linguistic challenges they encounter in foreign language classrooms, it is necessary to create a learning environment that is emotionally positive (Dörnyei & Murphy 2003).

2.5 The Ideal L2 Selves

This section addresses the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009a) which is an important theoretical framework used to guide this study. This framework is developed based on concepts related to the self from the fields of motivational and educational psychology. The section will explain the concept of self in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and then present the model and some empirical evidence.

2.5.1 The self in SLA

Self can be thought of as “a warm sense or a warm feeling that something is "about me" or "about us” (Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012, p. 71). It is a mental picture of the way people view themselves (i.e. self-image). Even though some scholars use both identity and self synonymously (Swann & Bosson, 2010), they actually differ with self being more internal or personal and identity being more socially generated. Self as a concept became more prominent in SLA with Dörnyei’s work and his model - the L2 motivational self system, showing its important role in increasing learners’ motivation.

The term possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) has been used in the literature to refer to what individuals might become in the future. It is defined as certain manifestations of an individual’s own self in future states including senses, thoughts and images (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In their own words, Markus and Nurius (1986) clarified:

The possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag-lady self. (p. 954)

Possible selves function as a map guiding the way individuals behave according to Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987). The incompatibility between an individual's current self-concept and imagined future self can lead to various emotional reactions (Higgins, 1987). Empirically, it was found that a person's present self-concept and an ideal self can lead to negative responses such as sadness and anxiety when there are discrepancies between present self-concept and an ought-to self- concept (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). An example of this in the educational context is the feeling of disappointment when learners imagine themselves not being able to watch a film in a foreign language without subtitles, or feeling stressed and anxious when they experience difficulties expressing themselves in a conversation. Consequently, learners will refrain from such negative situations in the future.

Possible selves are powerful motivators for an individual giving “form, meaning, structure, and direction to one's hopes and threats, thereby inciting and directing purposeful behaviour” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 100). Having a clear possible self will greatly help individuals achieve what they aspire to be in the future. Such work on this concept has led to the development of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System.

2.5.2 Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system

L2 motivation has been explored differently by researchers based on their theoretical perspectives. Initially, Gardner and Lambert's (1959) theory of integrative motivation was the most dominant theory until some criticisms came to light regarding its generalisability to current English learning contexts. Consequently, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) constructed a new model called the L2 motivational Self System based on the theory of psychological possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This model, while taking into consideration future

representations of self, aims to conceptualise L2 motivation from a self perspective (Ushioda, 2014). It can be used to understand how “possible selves represent people’s ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become or what they are afraid of becoming” (Ushioda, 2014, p. 133).

The model presents interesting connection between language learning and identity in which learning a new language is seen more than just acquisition of knowledge but a reformation of learners’ identities. In his own words, Dörnyei (2009, p. 9) explained that

Foreign language is more than a mere communication code that can be learnt similar to other academic subjects, [researchers] have typically adopted paradigms that linked the L2 to the individual’s personal core, forming an important part of one’s identity.

With more research being conducted to understand identity and L2 motivation, new views emerged such as Lamb’s (2004, 2009) work in regard to having global, bicultural or multicultural identities, and Kanno and Norton (2003) ideas on individuals’ pursuit of social or professional identities in imagined L2 communities. These views reframed the relationship between identity and L2 motivation in which learners construct new identities and express who they are as people linking themselves to the new environment (Van Lier, 2007). This foregrounds the importance of Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) model in understanding learners’ identity goals and future desires. Ushioda (2011, p. 203) stated:

Identity perspectives on L2 motivation thus bring into sharp relief the significance of current L2 learning experiences and interactions as well as evolving identity goals and future aspirations. In other words, identity perspectives may help to explain how long-term personal motivational

trajectories (channelled by possible future selves) are shaped by current situated motivational processes and experiences (the L2 learning experience dimension of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System).

According to Csizér & Dörnyei (2005a), this model is composed of three components. The first one is the "ideal L2 self" which represents what someone aspires and desires to be in the future (future possible self) including attributes such as L2 proficiency in personal, social and educational domains (Dörnyei, 2005). For instance, if a learner, who is intrinsically motivated, has unclear ideal L2, it would be quite hard to sustain a high level of motivation. The students' motivation, in the context of this study, will be a driving force pushing students to achieve their ideal L2 self (e.g. L2 proficiency), which will be greatly incorporated within the self.

The second component of the model is the "ought-to L2 self". It refers to a future self-portrayal that is externally inflicted with a certain proficiency level in the L2. This kind of self-representation is directed and framed based on the expectations of others as well as the social demands practised in a society. The ought-to L2 self differs from the ideal self in being one's future image with the aim of avoiding failure. For instance, a Saudi university graduate might be motivated to learn English so he can pass the IELTS test and get the score needed to do his master's. In this case, the student's motivation is extrinsic and less internalised than the ideal L2 self.

The third component is the "learning experience", that is "situated, executive motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Dörnyei (2009a) listed few situation- specific motives that affect the learning experience such as teacher influence, the curriculum, peer group and teaching materials. All these

factors greatly affect motivated behaviour (Papi, 2010). With these three components, Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) model reframed motivation as "the desire to reduce the perceived discrepancies between the learner's actual and possible self" (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, p. 29).

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009) can be utilised in various linguistic and cultural settings (Al-Shehri, 2009; Csizer & Kormos, 2009), and at the same time, it can be used to explain current trends in regard to the conceptualisations of identity (Lamb, 2009; Yashima, 2009). The model has been gaining worldwide popularity with many empirical studies proving the essential role of the ideal L2 self by associating it with other L2 motivation theories.

In a large-scale survey of Hungarian public-school students, Csizer and Dörnyei (2005b) conducted a study to pinpoint types of motivation experienced by students. The survey explored students' attitudes towards various languages and cultures, and their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Findings show four groups of motivation depicted by two images: an image in which learners look "personally agreeable (associated with positive attitudes toward the L2 community and culture)", an image in which learners are "professionally successfully (associated with instrumental motives)" (p. 637). The first group of students did not appreciate the positive impact of learning an L2 for their professional careers and lacked interest in L2 community and culture. Group 2 was similar to group 1 in seeing English as insignificant for their careers, but they held more positive views of L2 community and its culture and also towards L2 speakers. Group 3 was the opposite of group 2; learners held positive attitudes towards learning English and its positive impact for their professional lives, but they undervalued L2 community and culture. The last group held only positive attitudes

towards L2 culture and community and had a strong appreciation of the potential usefulness of English for all aspects related to their ideal L2 self.

Kim (2009) discovered a link between Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 motivational self system. His findings indicate that for learners to sustain motivation and accomplish their learning goals, it is crucial to specify certain learning objectives along with encouraging L2 community. The study found most participants were learning English to advance their own future careers. One participant, however, had more tangible ideal L2 self with unchanged high motivation over time. This participant had the desire of working at a particular company so his ideal L2 self was a driving force in sustaining his motivation.

Al-Shehri (2009) explored visual style preference and motivation level of Saudi secondary and university EFL students. By suggesting that learners' motivation is impacted by their future images, he hypothesises that students who mainly learn using visual aids might be more motivated than students who use other learning styles. The study also found a strong correlation between the ideal L2 self and motivation. In another study that examined the relationship between English anxiety, learners' intended effort and the three concepts of the L2 motivational self system, Papi (2010) discovered that learners' ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience were quite helpful in reducing their English anxiety. Their ought-to L2 self, however, caused learners to be more anxious. The study showed a link between learners' anxiety and motivational regulations which can allow emotional state to be manifested.

Papi and Teimouri (2014) conducted an enquiry into types of motivation experienced by high-school English learners in Iran by collecting data regarding learners' ideal and

ought-to L2 self and their attitudes towards the L2 community and effect of family. Findings were categorised into five groups. The first group of learners showed a lack of interest of English for their future careers and had the lowest ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self while being anxious in failing their English class. Group two seemed to enjoy English without particularly having a role in their future; the group also had a weak ideal self and ought-to self. The third group appreciated English and saw its value for their future lives but had no interest in L2 culture or community. The group had an average ideal L2 self without holding any strong stance towards L2 culture or community. Their ought-to self was moderate with powerful instrumental prevention orientation. Group four had powerful ideal L2 selves and a weak ought-to self but with positive orientation towards L2 culture and community. The last group had a powerful ideal self with social and professional motivational features. The group had powerful ought-to selves suggesting that learners tried to refrain from any negative outcomes.

Miyahara (2015) explored the process of L2 identity construction and development among Japanese learners studying English as a foreign language. The study also shed light on the role of experience, emotions, social and environmental factors in affecting learners' attitudes towards English and their own self-perceptions as English learners. By employing a poststructuralist perspective and the notion of discursive space, the author was able to understand the L2 learning experiences via the narratives of her six participants. Findings showed how two participants had a clear understanding of their Ideal L2 self, seeing themselves as users of English. Their visions of themselves were supported by the many chances they had to practice and use English. Another two participants initially lacked any vision of their L2 possible selves. However, as time progressed, they were able to form an ideal L2 self via their English language experiences abroad. The last two participants lacked

any vision of seeing themselves as English users and appeared to be indifferent in constructing an identity as L2 users.

What is interesting about Miyahara's study is its focus on the role of the L2 learning experience, the third component of Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system. This component has been ignored in research in comparison to the ideal and ought-to L2 selves (Williams, Mercer, & Ryan 2015). The findings also highlight the three dimensions of learning experiences (i.e. past, present, and future) and how past experiences influence present ones to form a future L2 self (ideal or ought-to). Finally, the study presented some interesting results regarding positive and negative emotions and their role in the construction of future L2 selves.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

This thesis aims to bridge the gap that exists in current literature. The literature review showed a paucity of research in four main areas regarding Saudi students, which the present study will address. The first area is Saudi students' past and present English learning experiences, their effect on the development of L2 possible selves, emotions involved in the process of learning to write in English, experienced difficulties and factors affecting the quality of writing. The second area concerns the way Saudi students see themselves as users and writers of English in Saudi Arabia and in the United Kingdom. The review indicated a deficiency in understanding Saudi students' views of themselves as English writers in the past, present and future along with the role of emotions in shaping these views.

The third area concerns Saudi students' relationship and orientation to English writing with a focus on their attitudes, preferences and whether they like to write in English. The last area covers the type of metadiscourse features that Saudi students utilise, what these

features tell about their writing, and any conflict taking place between Saudi students and the new academic communities in the UK.

2.7 Summary

This review has sought to examine major scholarly works related to the current study. The concept of identity was explored first, and it was shown that identity is a relational construct in which individuals try to make sense of themselves with the social environment playing a role in deciding the identity obtained by individuals. The review also demonstrated that identity is mainly a socio-cultural phenomenon, and language is at the very centre of identity in any given social environment. Poststructuralism was used to demonstrate that the concept of oneself, that is, one's identity, cannot be divorced from social or cultural environments.

The review also looked at discourse, writing and identity with a focus on some theoretical underpinnings of discourse regarding identity. The review showed that identity is an "end product" of cultural and linguistic factors. It was also shown that the formation of a particular discursive identity is not an easy task and leaves students with no option but to constantly engage in various practices to be part of this new discourse community. Additionally, concepts such as discourse community, academic discourse community and writer identity were discussed in order to understand identity and its creation. A special focus was given to academic writing and the way identity is constructed in academia. The review indicated that writing is a display of identity fully immersed with the writers' values, desires, and self-representation.

The review then empirically explored identity in research. It examined ESL students and how they construct their identities and the ways in which their different cultural

backgrounds, their first language and their interactions in new environments influence how they create their own identities, relative to environments where English is the language of communication. Alongside the environment, social, cultural, institutional and individual factors affect the way ESL students portray themselves in writing. It was denoted that understanding such factors could be of great help in anticipating how and why Saudi students present themselves the way they do in writing. The literature also touched upon empirical research that explored the identity of Saudi students. Some issues and challenges that Saudi students normally experience in writing were discussed.

In the last two sections, the role of emotion was discussed. The effects of emotions on individuals' language learning experiences and their motivation were examined. Finally, the self was explored in SLA by shedding insights on the foreign language learner's self by presenting Dörnyei's (2009a, 2005) L2 Motivational Self System and empirical studies that utilised it as their framework.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methods adopted for investigating the development of self among Saudi Arabian students in the United Kingdom along with their emotional and behavioural states and the way they influence their L2 possible selves. It has five main sections: research design, research procedures, data collection methods and tools, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

3.1 Research Design

Research designs establish the guidelines to follow while conducting specific types of studies (Creswell, 2014). They should be chosen in accordance with the objectives of the research.

For the present thesis, the aims were to explore:

- Participants' past and present English language experiences.
- Participants' views of themselves as English writers in the past, present and future.
- Participants' emotions and behavioural states while writing and their effects on participants' orientation and self-perception to English writing.
- Participants' academic writing and their use of metadiscoursal features in their writing samples.

A qualitative research design was utilised in this thesis. It is defined as “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). It seeks to achieve deep understanding of the social environment with a focus on participants' experiences, histories, and viewpoints (Sanpe & Spencer, 2003). It also can be of great value in providing a holistic picture of the

phenomenon under investigation, outlining its perspectives and implicated factors (Creswell & Brown, 1992).

Although qualitative research is quite demanding and perceived to have unreliable outcomes, unreflective of a wider population (Bell, 2005), it is often adopted as a first step toward the grounding and development of more quantitative research designs that test specific theoretical models and hypotheses (Fine & Elsbach, 2000). Even though this research does not intend to develop quantitative hypotheses, it is often utilized to extract quantitatively testable hypotheses.

As explained in the preceding chapters, there are great contentions, alternative models, and lack of consensus in the field of identity development particularly when it comes to ESL students. Moreover, the aims of this study involved inspecting specifically the past learning experiences of Saudi Arabian students in Saudi Arabia and present learning experiences within the British higher education system. Little is currently known about the identity development of this particular nationality in this particular learning environment. Since this study was specifically concerned with a particular group in particular circumstances about which little is known, and in a field lacking consensus, qualitative methods were deemed appropriate. An implication is that there is no need to gather very big samples of participants; generalizability is not its purpose.

The utilisation of qualitative research helps to gain insights into the topic from the perspective of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2007). That is, they help to “explore the meaning of social phenomena as experienced by the individuals themselves” (Malterud, 2001, p. 483). This is achieved by “listening to individual voices in their particular natural context” (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001, p. 285). That is, qualitative research should take into

account both particular features of the group under study, and their context. For this reason, this study inspected participants' linguistic and education history, strategies and techniques, their own beliefs and attitudes, and emotions towards academic writing. This thick description intended to produce information useful for researchers interested in replicating or testing the generalizability of the adopted methods and obtained findings.

Finally, a qualitative approach focuses on how things occur rather than on the end result (Maxwell, 2005). This would allow for the observation of how identity construction unfolded as a process in a particular group in a particular context, which was one of the main aims of the present research.

To carry out this research, I decided on an exploratory research design which was motivated by the interpretive stance adopted in the study, the nature of the research questions and the lack of information on identity, self and emotions in the Saudi Arabian context. It enabled the exploration of both common and unique experiences of each participant and provided deep insights into the many factors forming and influencing students' self, identity and emotions.

3.2 Research Procedures

3.2.1 Sampling procedures and characteristics

Sampling indicates the process of individuals' selection as well as the selection of units and settings in research (Patton, 1990). It is determined based on research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity). In qualitative research, there is no need to collect data from a very large sample. Rather, what matters is the selection of participants with relevant experience for the study of the research object. Researchers

begin their study by focusing on a specific group, type of individual or an event with the aim of understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the method of purposive sampling is typically utilised as an approach in qualitative research. Purposive sampling is defined as “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1997, p. 87). It aims at producing “insight and in-depth understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 230) of the intended topic of investigation. It is based on objective criteria that determine the inclusion and/or exclusion of participants, and thereby the selection of a specific group of people (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In the current study, a combination of purposeful sampling techniques (Patton, 2002) was utilised to achieve the research objectives. The first one was the method of convenience sampling, which consists of selecting sample members on the basis of their knowledge, relationships, and expertise regarding a research subject, as well as accessibility to the researcher. It is one of the most popular sampling techniques used in research. The second technique was snowball sampling. It is described as a chain referral sampling and considered to be a type of convenience sampling (Patton, 2002). Researchers, while conducting their study, ask their participants for help in referring more people to be part of the study. This provides researchers the chance to recruit participants who might otherwise be inaccessible and stick to the established inclusion/exclusion criteria that guarantee the relevance of participants for the topic under investigation.

The specific criteria adopted for screening potential participants and recruiting them to the study included:

- Location: UK

- Education level: Master's Degree
- Nationality: Saudi Arabian
- Academic background: Bachelor's Degree from Saudi Arabia or any Arabic country

All four criteria aimed at recruiting a homogenous group of participants, and hence increasing data consistency, at least as it applies to participants with similar demographic and linguistic experiences. Although there is not a right or wrong sample size in qualitative research (Patton 1990), it normally consists of a small number of participants (Miles & Huberman 1994). In the current study, ten participants were selected to be part of the study. Based on my personal network of contacts as a student at the University of Essex, I contacted eligible candidates via emails and calls. Some candidates agreed on taking part in the study and referred me to other candidates who were willing to be part of the study.

All ten participants were Saudi males who were born, raised and educated in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Their demographic traits are summarized in Table 3.1. They held a Bachelor (BA) degree in various disciplines from different educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, except one participant who gained it in the Kingdom of Jordan. All participants spoke Arabic as their first language. They had generally started to learn English at the age of 12, with two starting with 13 years-old and one either with 12 or 13. Their self-reported English proficiency level before arriving at the UK was, on a scale of 1 (“understand but cannot speak”) to 5 (“understand and speak fluently like a native speaker”), 2.85. That is, most had some difficulties speaking and/or writing in English. Their first IELTS overall score was, on average, 4.7, and their writing score was 4.45.

These participants came to the United Kingdom to pursue a master's degree. Before its onset, they all joined various English language courses and pre-sessional courses. They sought to improve their English language skills and score the needed IELTS test band. Although one participant had done only one IELTS, the remainder had a last IELTS overall score of, on average, 6.17, and a writing score of 5.67. That is, they had improved their English skills from the first to the last IELTS. Thus, they could write and speak English in both academic and social/informal settings. Their age ranged from 26 to 37 years old with a mean age of 31.5 years-old. They were all volunteers, and no compensation of any kind was offered in exchange of their participation.

Table 3.1 Demographics

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Age	Pursuing Degree (MA)	Months in the UK
Participant 1	Male	Saudi	32	Medical Science genetics	26
Participant 2	Male	Saudi	26	Linguistics studies	12
Participant 3	Male	Saudi	35	Business information system	30
Participant 4	Male	Saudi	31	TESOL	24
Participant 5	Male	Saudi	28	Civil engineering	24
Participant 6	Male	Saudi	29	Psycholinguistics	13
Participant 7	Male	Saudi	37	TESOL	17
Participant 8	Male	Saudi	29	Mechanical Engineering	24
Participant 9	Male	Saudi	37	Mechanical Engineering	24
Participant 10	Male	Saudi	31	Applied Linguistics	24

3.2.2 Ethical issues

Ethics are rules that researchers must work by to ensure the safety of participants while conducting research (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). These rules are specified by universities and research institutions stating certain guidelines for doing any research project. Most often, before the start of any study, principally when in the context of academia, studies must be submitted for approval to the university's ethics committee. I applied for my ethical approval to conduct this research on the 9th of May 2016, and it was approved on the 20th of May 2016. I then set up appointments with potential participants.

During the initial meetings, I introduced myself and talked about my background. I also gave participants detailed information on my research, including the project objectives and procedures. I then followed ethics procedures. Namely, I obtained their informed and voluntary consent (Appendix A). Participants read the informed consent form and I attended to any questions or concerns prior to their participation. Upon assuring that their participation was voluntary and that they knew they could withdraw from the research, at any point and for any reason without having to explain why, they signed the consent form. After that, I kept a record of all participants willing to be part of the project. I also made sure that any information about the participants was confidential, that their identity would not be revealed, and that the findings would be used only for academic purposes. For this reason, I used pseudonyms that aimed to protect participants' identity through assigning a number for each one of them (P1-P10). I also omitted the name of their current English universities.

After having assured that the study fulfilled ethical guidelines established by my university, I piloted the first interview with three master's students. These students were colleagues of mine who I met at the University of Essex. After conducting the interviews, I made few changes based on the received feedback from the interviewees. One of these

changes was shortening the duration of the interview which lasted over one hour. To do that, I moved 12 questions and included them in a survey. Data collection procedures and materials will be unpacked in the following sections.

3.2.3 My role as a researcher

It is prudent to identify the roles of researchers when conducting qualitative research for the sake of achieving credibility of the findings. In any research setting, a researcher undertakes one of two main roles, either as an insider or an outsider of the group under investigation (Adler & Adler, 1994). An insider researcher is someone who decides to investigate a group of people to which s/he belongs (Breen, 2007). Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) associated three main advantages of being an insider researcher, which include great familiarity with the studied culture, more natural social interactions between the participants and the researcher, and a developed intimacy that leads to information telling and judging of truth. Being an insider researcher myself, I believe it was helpful to carry out this research with Saudi Arabian students. Sharing the same linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds allowed me to evaluate my participants and establish a good relationship with them.

Another important aspect gained from being an insider researcher is that I shared a very similar experience with the participants in being a former master's student in a native English language environment. I hold a BA in English language teaching from Saudi Arabia, and an MA in Linguistics from the University of Sydney in Australia. Before starting my master program, I joined English language courses to improve my English language skills, which is the same case with my participants in this study. My personal experience as a graduate student and L2 writer helped me to experience academic English writing practices

in the UK which, in turn, made me understand many aspects of students' academic journeys. My teaching experience in Saudi Arabia was beneficial as it made me aware of how Saudi students approach English writing, their different writing styles, and some of the problems they come across in English writing classes.

Being a student myself familiarised me with the academic environment of my participants. This familiarity facilitated the research process especially in participants' recruitment and data collection. The use of Arabic language in collecting data facilitated the research process as I share the same linguistic backgrounds with the participants. While conducting the interviews, think aloud protocols and the diary study, participants were able to use Arabic and English interchangeably which helped them express themselves clearly. I believe this resulted in having a close relationship with the participants in which they were comfortable in answering questions and sharing their personal experience as L2 writers in Saudi Arabia and the UK. Each role I embodied in this research was beneficial in guiding the research. Sharing similar educational, language and culture background eased the research process especially by eliminating any communication breakdown between me and my participants.

On the other hand, I had to be careful while conducting this research. Due to my familiarity with some of the participants or as Mann (2016, P. 74) calls it 'acquaintance interviews/prior relationships', I made sure not to force my own experience on the interviewees and I did my best in leaving my preconceptions of Saudi writers aside to remove my influence on expressed opinions by the participants. Being an insider researcher can lead to a loss of objectivity. Great familiarity can lead researchers to make particular assumptions on the topic under investigation. These assumptions, which are built based on researchers' prior conception, are biases that researchers must avoid at any cost (Hewitt-

Taylor, 2002). I also made sure that my questions were clear, and my interpretation of the answers was not confined by my own preconceived assumptions and understanding. I also listened to my participants with great care making sure they were comfortable and uninfluenced by my opinions.

3.3 Data Collection Method and Tools

Research methods are utilised to collect and analyse data and hence answer research questions (Crotty, 1998). There are many instruments that can be used to collect data for case studies. This thesis utilised four main instruments which include: a pre-interview questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, diaries, and participants' writing samples, and one secondary resource which is a think aloud protocol (Table 3.2 & Table 3.3). Due to the importance of building time perspective into the analysis and arguments, these instruments will be discussed next in a chronological order.

3.3.1 Pre-interview questionnaires

A questionnaire is a tool that can be used to gather data from eligible participants in any research project. The questionnaire utilised for the present study was developed after having realized that the interview schedules culminated in very long interviews that lasted more than an hour. As a result, I decided to complement the interviews with standardized questionnaires (Appendix B). These aimed to save time and shorten the interview duration. This brief questionnaire contained 12 questions that targeted participants' personal information, English language learning history, and proficiency level. They helped to delineate the sampling characteristics previously described, and better get acquainted with

participants and their English command level. This questionnaire was completed by the participants between the 1st to the 5th of June 2016.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative interviews are a personal recollection of interviewee's emotions, feelings, and opinions concerning a particular research topic (Mack et al., 2005). Their strength centres on having a personal and a direct connection between interviewers and interviewees allowing for a wide exchange of information. May (1997) established three main types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. In qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are the most popular type (Dawson, 2002). They allow researchers to be focused but flexible while conducting the interview.

The focus derives from the outset development of a list of questions, or main themes that should be explored during the interview. This interview schedule should be carried along to the interview and provides a feeling of order from which researchers can draw questions from unintended encounters (David, & Sutton, 2004). They also give researchers the chance to explain and rephrase the questions in cases where interviewees can't understand what they are being asked (Kvale, 1996).

The flexibility derives from the freedom held by researchers to change the direction of the interview without having to stick to a detailed interview guide. They can swap or omit certain questions for justifiable reasons, such as having discussed such issues in connection with a previous question. Moreover, researchers can follow up on anything that has emerged during the interview that they find interesting or revealing, which might generate unexpected conclusions about the topic under investigation (Saunders et al., 2003). However, this great flexibility can be a drawback as it might drift researchers away from their research objectives

(Gill & Johnson, 2002). It is for this reason that questions are crafted in advance and should be taken to the interview by the researcher. Finally, researchers should be careful due to the emotional state of interviewees which might distort the collected data (Patton, 2002).

After deciding on using a semi-structured interview, I designed a preliminary list of questions that I wanted to ask my participants. I received feedback from my supervisor on the first draft of the interview guide. Based on the feedback, I revised and added more questions. After that I piloted the interview with three masters' students at the University of Essex from 22 to 24 of May 2016. This helped me see if there were any issues that I needed to address before starting the actual data collection process. After finishing with the piloting stage, I examined the interviews carefully to see if any necessary changes were required. One change was made which was including personal questions about the background of the participants as well as their linguistic history and proficiency to a pre-interview list of questions (questionnaire). In doing so, I shortened the number of questions asked during the interview and reduced the actual interview time.

From 9th to 29th of June, I conducted the first interview (Appendix C) with all ten participants. Three of these interviews were carried out face to face due to the participants being in close proximity to me. The rest of the interviews were all done via Skype. Generally, every participant was asked the same questions in the same way. Nevertheless, when appropriate, prompts were used to better clarify or explore provided answers. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder for face to face interviews, and Callnote software for Skype interviews. All interviews were conducted using Arabic and English which eliminated any ambiguity or confusion. I asked questions using both languages and participants chose to answer in Arabic 90% of the time. After that, I transcribed and translated all interviews from Arabic into English during July and August

2016. Subsequently I sent back all interviews to my participants to check their answers and the accurateness of the translation during September 2016.

During November 2016, I conducted a second interview with my participants, which was my last interaction with them (Appendix D). This interview was designed based on the answers of the participants in their first interview, diaries, think aloud protocols and writing samples. The second interview aimed at asking participants to elaborate on their explanations of some points that appeared to be important in the preliminary analysis of the data. This interview consisted of 13 questions that targeted areas such as participants' writing difficulties, their perception of themselves and construction of identity, and their emotions and attitudes while writing in English. These interviews were all conducted using Skype as all participants have already finished their masters' and left the UK. Finally, interviews were translated and transcribed in English.

3.3.3 Diaries

A diary is an instrument used to gather detailed information about people's behaviour, events and other aspects people experience in their daily lives (Corti, 1993). In this research field, it is basically "an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal" (Bailey, 1983, p. 189). One of its main features is being introspective, allowing diarists to describe emotions, attitudes, learning strategies and beliefs of learning experience which are usually out of reach to an outer spectator (Bailey, 1983). Diary studies are quite flexible providing researchers with useful information and revealing many aspects surrounding language teaching (Curtis & Bailey, 2009).

Diaries have been gaining popularity as an important tool in the collection of qualitative data (Alaszewski, 2006). Participants are given a diary that they need to complete within a period of time. Before asking participants to complete a diary, researchers should explain how it is kept, the frequency of entries, and the total duration of the diary study. Researchers can also choose to make diaries either open-formatted or highly-structured (Howell-Richardson & Parkinson, 1988). Open-formatted diaries give participants the chance to keep a record of everything they experience freely without sticking to a certain structure. Highly-structured diaries, however, give participants questions and categories that they need to follow.

The use of diary studies has been criticised due to the following reasons. One of these is that they generate retrospective data with the possibility of diarists forgetting information (Fry, 1988), and be based solely on learners' subjectivity of their own conscious experiences (Seliger, 1983), rather than be descriptive of actual facts. They also constitute a problem when it comes to data analysis such as minimising the amount of data, naming categories and coding and interpretation reliability (Bailey, 1991).

However, the use of diaries has numerous advantages. Faerch and Kasper (1987) believe that retrospective data gathered is of great value in second language acquisition research as it helps researchers have access to processes that are unreachable by direct observation. Another advantage is that they allow researchers to examine all variables surrounding the process of learning from the perspective of learners (Carson & Longhini, 2002). Moreover, diary studies can be used as an alternative method to interviews in which participants can include data that they have forgotten during the interview (Corti, 1993). They help both researchers and participants to avoid issues concerning the collection of sensitive data that might occur during personal interview (Corti, 1993).

In the current thesis, highly structured diaries (Appendix E) were utilised for the sake of gathering specific information regarding the topic under investigation. The use of this type of diary helped my participants comprehend what they were supposed to do and guided them in answering specified relevant questions. There were nine questions at the first diary protocol. After receiving feedback from supervisor and colleagues, questions were cut down to seven in total. These questions aimed at providing extra information on various aspects such as participants' beliefs about their own writing, difficulties experienced, their attitudes and emotions while working on their university assignments over a period of three months. The diaries also sought to give participants the chance to build on their answers in the interviews and include any information they might have forgotten during the interview.

After the end of each interview, I asked my participants if they were willing to keep a diary for a period of three months. Only five participants agreed to be part of the process. At the end of each interview, these five participants were given detailed information on the way diaries were supposed to be kept, number of times they needed to write, and how long it was for. Participants were allowed to ask any questions before they started working on the diary as well as during the whole process. They were also asked to keep diaries electronically using Microsoft Word. To prompt my participants, they were required to send their diaries once every month to me via email. All five participants kept a diary from the 9th of June till the 9th of September. A total of 29 entries were collected. 6 entries were collected from each of these participants (P2, P3, P4, and P6), and only 5 entries were collected from P1.

3.3.4 Documents (writing samples)

Document analysis has always been an integral part of social science research (Merriam, 1988). Documents can include any written records such as education plans, educational statistics, demographic trends, school records, teaching plans, students' writing samples and so on. These documents can be of great help in revealing meaning, expanding understanding, and finding insights in relation to the problem of research (Merriam, 1988). They are very valuable in case study research as they give additional research data with new and worthy insights to the base of knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Moreover, they provide researchers with valuable data which can open their eyes to new questions that need to be investigated.

This thesis, however, took into account one type of documents, which was participants' writing samples. These writing samples were assignments that the participants had to submit during their masters' degree. These assignments were essays and reports and they differed in length ranging from 500 words to 3000 words. The first assignment collected was submitted during the end of the first semester (December 2015), whereas the second one was submitted during February 2016. The last assignment was submitted May 2016. These samples are of great value to this research as they helped to analyse how participants actually presented themselves in their writing. With these documents, it was possible to track any changes and development that the participants experienced during their master's course. Each participant was asked to send three writing samples. These writing samples were received during July 2016 via email.

3.3.5 Think aloud protocol

Think aloud protocol is a verbalised description of someone's thought processes with the aim of exploring cognitive events as well as thought processes that happen while working on a

task or solving a problem (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). It is an important research tool in the field of cognitive psychology, allowing researchers to see the ways in which someone deals with and describes a problem or a task. It provides researchers with immense qualitative data that explain techniques, interpretations, and rationale behind a person acting in a particular way (Hannu & Pallab, 2002). This self-report is often described as a verbal protocol analysis with the conjecture that researchers can direct participants to utter their thoughts out loud without causing any changes to the sequences of these thoughts (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). It is currently being applied to different areas and plays an important role in various research fields such as cognitive and social sciences.

Think aloud protocols have many advantages, making it a valuable data collection tool. Besides providing rich qualitative data, think aloud protocol might show how a person tackles a task and what decisions they make to complete it (Olson et al., 1984). It also might help both researchers and their participants to see what strategies and techniques are best to complete a writing task successfully. Moreover, it should present the various ways of planning that participants go through in the completion of a writing task. With its great benefits, it has a few limitations which include the possibility of researchers affecting how participants complete their tasks, changing the way participants complete the task due to giving a verbal report, and participants' omission of some of their thoughts (Hannu & Pallab, 2002).

As a secondary data resource aimed at exploring the skill of writing, I chose a familiar writing task to conduct a think aloud protocol with all my participants. According to Ericsson and Simon (1993), tasks must be chosen with extreme care because complicated

tasks can raise the cognition load to its highest and thereby affect the process of verbalisation negatively.

Participants were asked to write a short essay (Appendix F). This task was appropriate for the level of the participants and they all have come across similar essay questions during their English courses before joining their intended programs at university. The question was also general, and it did not require particular expertise to answer, which was important as all participants were from different disciplines. Not being time-demanding was another reason behind choosing this writing task. I then conducted the think aloud protocol with two Saudi students as part of the piloting stage. Since this was my first time using this technique, this helped me practice the technique and see if there were any issues that I need to deal with before the actual study. After that, I contacted each participant via email on the 1st of July, and explained the technique, how it is carried out and its outcomes. I also sent them a file containing information on the technique and its importance to my research.

During the last two weeks of July, I was able to conduct the think aloud protocol with three participants in the University of Essex, and three more participants in London. During August 2016, I went back to Saudi Arabia, and was able to meet with the other four participants and carry out the think aloud protocol. Each participant was presented with the essay topic that they needed to write and given 40 minutes to complete the task. They were asked to describe out loud “what they were doing”. I was observing and audio-recording each participant while they worked through the task. After completing the task, I asked the participants a few questions in an informal way about the way they answered the task, the influence of their mother tongue or lack thereof, and any difficulties while answering the activity. Finally, I asked my participants if they had any questions or comments.

Table 3.2 Data collection tools in chronological order

	Data	When	How/Where	What/Why
1	Pre-interview Questionnaire	1st to 5th of June 2016	Email	Twelve questions that targeted participants' personal information, English language learning history and proficiency level. Participants received and returned the survey via email.
2	First Semi- Structured Interview	9th to 29th of June 2016	Face to Face + Skype	Semi-structured interviews with thirty questions about the life history of the participants' learning experiences, past and present learning experiences, their views of their identity and how they see themselves as writers.
3	Diaries	9th of June - 9th of September 2016	Email	Five participants volunteered to keep a diary for 3 months. They had to answer 7 questions once every two weeks. These questions aimed at tracking any writing projects that participants had to do during their masters' and recording their reactions towards these writing projects.
4	Three Writing Samples	July 2016	Email	Three writing samples (essays and reports) written for the purpose of their masters' that aimed at inspecting the way their academic identities were expressed in writing.
5	Think aloud protocol	16th of July – 28th August	Face to Face in the UK and Saudi Arabia	Short writing activity performed while describing one's own behaviour and being observed and recorded.
6	Second Interview	1st – 23 of November	Skype	Structured interview with thirteen questions about their learning experience in the UK with a focus on their writing, emotional and behavioural states, and their views of themselves as users and writers of English.

Table 3. 3 Data collection tools and the research questions

Main Areas of Investigation		First Semi-Structured Interview	Diaries	Three Writing Samples	Think aloud protocol	Second Interview
1	Saudi students' past and present English writing experiences	✓				
2	Saudi students' views of themselves as English writers	✓	✓		✓	✓
3	Saudi students' relationship with English writing and their emotional and behavioural states	✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Saudi students' academic writing	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Saudi students' representation of themselves in their writing samples			✓		

3.4 Data Analysis

In the current study, four different types of data analysis methods were employed: content analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and metadiscourse analysis. They will be explored in the following subsections in a chronological order.

3.4.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is a technique that is extensively used in qualitative research. It seeks to make replicable and well-grounded deduction from data to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2013) by systematically coding and categorising textual information and word relationships (Gbrich, 2007). Researchers value content analysis due to its flexibility in analysing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). It is a popular technique for analysing documents and questionnaires, enabling researchers to examine theoretical or well-defined issues via the application of pre-established categories. It also allows researchers to determine the features of texts under analysis such as actors involved and their actions (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

In this thesis, content analysis was deployed first to analyse a small part of simple straightforward data that did not require an elaborate type of analysis. Namely, it was utilized to analyse the answers to the twelfth-item questionnaire that was administered before conducting the first interview. The data was coded with the use of Microsoft Excel 2010 (table 3.3).

Table 3. 4 Content analysis

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Number	Name	Pseudonym	Age	Education	Majors		Studies location	Stay duration	Living abroad exper	Abroad no ye	Future plans
1	participant	P1	32	Masters	Medical Laboratory Science (BA) – Medical Science	2		26	No, it is my first tir		0 PhD
2	participant	P2	26	Masters	English language education (BA), Linguistics studies	1		12	Yes, I lived in the U		1 PHD
3	participant	P3	35	Masters	Business information system (IT)	2		30	No, it is my first tir		0 Going back to S
4	participant	P4	31	Masters	BA education / TESOL, master of education	1		24	No		0 Working as a te
5	participant	P5	28	Masters	structure engineering (BA), Civil engineering (MA)	2		24	No		0 Working in the
6	participant	P6	29	Masters	English language teaching (BA) – Psycholinguistics (1		13	No		0 PHD
7	participant	P7	37	Masters	English language education (BA), TESOL (MA)	1		17	Yes. I lived in New		1 Teaching Englis
8	participant	P8	29	Masters	Mechanical Engineering (BA), Mechanical Engineer	2		24	N/A	N/A	Working as an i
9	participant	P9	37	Masters	mechanical engineering (Jordan) (mechanical engi	2		24	No		0 Working in SA.
10	participant	P10	31	Masters	English language education (BA) TESOL (MA)	1		24	No		0 Going back to
Mean			32	Masters				21.8			
							1. English language			0. No	
							2. other			1. yes	

3.4.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is one of the most popular approaches to qualitative data analysis. Its popularity comes from being theoretically flexible and able to deal with various data sources (Boyatzis, 1998). It is not confined to any theoretical or epistemological perspective, allowing it to be utilised across various fields and for a multitude of purposes. TA is grounded on the concerns of inductiveness, relativism, and interpretivism; it requires relentless compassion and theoretical knowledge (Aronson 1994). Data (from words to entire paragraphs) is classified into themes; these themes are interpreted without the need to construct a theory to explain the findings (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). TA, with its theoretical freedom, is a very effective tool in analysing qualitative data and able to generate rich and detailed findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA can have three main functions. It can function as essentialist or realist method which outlines participants' meanings, experiences, and subjective reality. It also can be constructionist, exploring how realities, events, meanings, and experiences are the outcomes of various discourses in a society. The final function, which exists between the first two functions, is contextualism. It takes into account the many ways people construct meanings of their experience and the effects of society in dictating those meanings. All these three functions show that TA can contemplate reality and decode its surface.

There are many ways to conduct a thematic analysis. One way is choosing to do a rich description of the data set or a detailed account of one particular aspect (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Opting for the first choice requires researchers to make sure that all identified, coded and analysed themes truly represent the entire data content. This analysis approach can

lead to losing data depth and complexity while sustaining a rich description. On the other hand, a detailed account of one particular aspect suggests that researchers examine only one theme or a group of themes with a focus on one particular question or one area of interest in the data by taking either a semantic or a latent theme approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Identified themes in a data set can be classified into two main ways. The first one is in an inductive way which suggests that analysed and coded themes are strongly attached to the data (Patton, 1990). This form of analysis also indicates that coded themes may or may not have a connection to questions asked during the interview as they are not controlled by the theoretical interest of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is critical to note that it is quite impossible for researchers to deal with data without epistemological preconceptions. The second way of classifying themes is in a deductive way. This form of analysis is conducted based on the questions asked and the researcher's interest in the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Although it does not yield rich description as the first type, it provides a comprehensive analysis of a particular question of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the current thesis, a number of decisions were made regarding the use of thematic analysis. The first one was analysing each data collected individually, which meant starting with analysing the first interview before moving to diaries, think aloud protocol and last interview. This decision was motivated by the importance of building time perspective into the analysis and arguments, allowing me to see changes happening to my participants' development of L2 self, and emotional and behavioural states over time.

The second decision concerned the type of TA to be conducted. Both ways of conducting TA, a rich description of the data set and a detailed account of one particular aspect, were utilised for the sake of achieving the advantages of each way. A rich description

of the data was used in analysing the first interview with all participants. This helped in generating a detailed analysis of all data set and hence coming up with more questions to be asked in the second interview. As for the analysis of the second interview, participants' diaries, and think aloud protocols, a detailed account of particular aspects were utilised to shed more light on specific aspects related to the main questions of the study.

A similar procedure was adopted in terms of inductiveness and deductiveness or theoretically-informed coding. I opted for an inductive approach in the analysis of the first interview, which generated themes that strongly linked to the data with minimal theoretical preconceptions on my part. This allowed me to develop specific research questions to be asked to my participants. In the analysis of the second interview, think aloud protocols and diaries, I used a mixture between inductive and deductive reasoning.

The process followed included six steps of analysis. These steps were familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2013). They will be detailed in the following paragraphs with examples.

- Familiarisation:

This step involves submersing oneself into the data. This 'immersion' helps researchers to be familiar with the data depth and breadth and focus their attention on questions of relevance to their research (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.204). This process of immersion firstly started when I transcribed the data myself which familiarised me with the data. It gave a sense of the direction of the analysis and informed its early stages. After transcription, I read the materials three times to better acquaint myself with the data before starting the actual coding. I also

started to take notes for the coding process which assisted the start of the formal coding process.

- Initial coding:

After I familiarised myself with the data set, I began to generate initial codes. These codes constitute parts of data that I found to be interesting or revealing of the participants in the study. I made as many codes as I could as I focused on the entire data set. I coded the data per participant in an inductive and cumulative process, and generated mainly descriptive, explanatory, and interpretative codes. In this stage, coding can be done manually or with the use of software. In this thesis, ATLAS.ti was utilised as it is a powerful tool to sort and manage vast amounts of qualitative data.

For instance, reading the collected diaries showed many signs of emotions, both positive and negative that were experienced by participants while writing in English during their master's. To clarify the process, I will explain how I formed one theme, its subthemes, and its codes using the table below (3.5). The table explains how examples of codes were applied to segments of data. These codes are the beginning before naming themes which they tend to be broader at this level of analysis (next stage). By the use of ATLAS.ti software, I was able to tag and name various segments of each text with every data item.

Table 3. 5 Initial coding

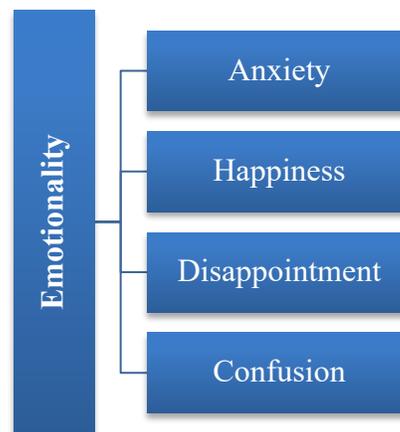
Data extract from four participants (Quotations)	Coded for emotions
I was abit <u>confused</u> cause I <u>did not understand</u> the idea but sometime writing was good is some point which is easy to understand while at the point where <u>I am not understand</u> the idea also there was some new vocabulary which was <u>difficult to understand</u> . (P1)	Misunderstandings and confusions comments
Yes, it was good [the feedback] <u>but disappointed to some extent</u> because I felt that I have covered all the aspects of that assignment. (P2)	References to the low arousal negative emotional states of disappointment and discontentment
I was <u>really happy</u> working on this article. I <u>enjoyed</u> reading and learning more about something I am <u>interested</u> in, smoothing that will help me be better in my job when I go back to SA. (P3)	References to high arousal positive emotions. Either caused by positive feedback or <u>by the interest or enthusiasm triggered by the project's topic</u> as the case in this example.
Being involved in an assessed project may <u>increase</u> your <u>anxiety level</u> and thus <u>cast doubt on your own ability</u> . I was <u>kind of worried</u> about my assignment writing as this was the first time to be involved in such a lengthy written work. (P6)	Explicit comments in relation to anxiety, self-confidence and feelings of insecurity.

- Theme formation:

After finishing coding all data, I started to put the codes into bigger categories. Their relationships and properties were explored, developed, and refined up until themes emerged. These themes are higher-order codes that include many codes. I organised the codes into three levels of analysis: themes (high-level categories, with abstract qualities that applied to, or were descriptive of every lower level subtheme and code); subthemes (lower-level codes, more evidence-based and linked to explicit content); and codes (low-level codes, explicitly linked to the quote and expressive of its descriptive, explanatory, and/or interpretative attributes).

For example, it can be noted from the above table that all codes share something in common which is describing an emotional state. All these codes can be grouped under one high level category (emotionality) at this stage.

Figure 3.1. Theme formatting



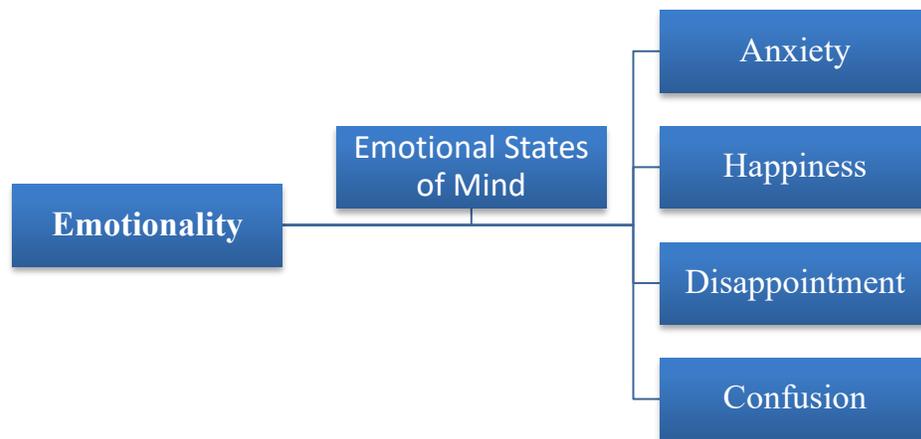
- Themes' revision:

This step helps in refining themes identified in the previous stage. I grouped some themes together and broke down other themes into more themes. Codes with less than three supporting quotations were discarded or re-organised into stronger subthemes. I also discarded some themes because there was not enough data to support them. For example, there were other emotional states that did not work well with other states identified in the thematic map above. These emotional states (e.g. feeling: “justly rewarded” (P3), “thankful” (P3), “angry” and “frustrated” (P4), “relaxed” (P6), and “resilient and hopeful” (P1 and P2) were grouped in a separate subtheme named other emotional states. These emotions were not quite common among participants so it seems reasonable to posit that the inclusion of less common emotions in the diaries might be expressive of participants' personality. For

example, the emotion anger is only mentioned by P4 and twice. However, the data is not sufficient to establish any strong conclusion.

As for the thematic map above, I identified all main themes in the data and made sure that they functioned together and were representative for the whole data set before moving to the next phase. The higher order theme stayed the same, but I added a new subtheme that is representative for all codes. (Figure 3.6)

Figure 3.2. Themes' revision



- Defining and naming themes

This stage required me to explain every theme that was identified in the previous stage. Before choosing a name for each theme and its subthemes and codes, themes were objectively defined and described. This was done through the construction of a table that sought to guarantee that they had been systematically applied (Appendix G, H, I and J). Moreover, I organised all themes and made sure they were consistent. The following table is used for illustration (Table 3.5).

Table 3. 6 Defining and naming themes

Theme 1: Emotionality (It includes every subtheme that is concerned to a greater extent with participants' emotions and other subjective states of mind).			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Emotional “states of mind”	It includes every reference to emotional states and other states of mind, such as being “confused” or “relaxed”. The most frequently mentioned represent a distinct category:	Anxiety and pressure (N=18)	Being involved in an assessed project may increase your anxiety level and thus cast doubt on your own ability. I was kind of worried about my assignment writing as this was the first time to be involved in such a lengthy written work. (P6)
		Happiness and joy (N=10)	I was really happy working on this article. I enjoyed reading and learning more about something I am interested in, something that will help me be better in my job when I go back to SA. (P3)
		Disappointment and low arousal discontentment (N=7)	Yes, it was good [the feedback] but disappointed to some extent because I felt that I have covered all the aspects of that assignment. (P2)
		Mental confusions, misunderstandings, and writers' blocks (N=7)	I was a bit confused cause I did not understand the idea but sometime writing was good is some point which is easy to understand while at the point where I am not understand the idea also there was some new vocabulary which was difficult to understand. (P1)

- Reporting:

At this stage, I collected the most prominent themes and sub-themes for reporting. This phase comes to tell what was found in such a way that a comprehensible story can be redacted and easily grasped by readers. This process also involves the provision of data extracts to support and capture the essence of each theme (Appendix G, H, I and J).

3.4.3 Narrative analysis

My research questions have compelled me to take a closer look at my participants' learning experiences, their stories, attitudes and opinions to comprehend identity construction and how emotions were implicated in the process. Narratives are crucial and valuable sources of data because they give a comprehensive meaning to sometimes disparate information. In the words of Casanave (2005, p. 18), "it is this power of narrative to ascribe meaning to parts, and to configure them into wholes, that define narrative as a meaning-making phenomenon". It is important to emphasise that narratives pay attention both to participants' personal experiences and to the context (social, cultural, and/or historical) that shapes and constructs these experiences (Miyahara, 2015). They can be further used to understand and enquire about experience through the "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Many scholars have given narrative a central role in research, with identity being located in what individuals narrate about themselves (Bruner, 2002; Eliot, 2005). Since identity is multiple, conflicting and fragmented, individuals rely on narrative to help them make sense of who they are. As Kanno (2003, p.11) explains:

Tapping into issues of identity - how one views oneself and relates to the world around one - requires an inquiry into people's experiences and meaning making, and an inquiry into those areas calls for the use of narrative.

Although there was a couple of studies that employed narrative to examine various emotional aspects of language learning (Dewaele, 2005; Garret & Young, 2009), seldom was narrative used for this purpose in social sciences (Kleres, 2010). According to Goldie (2000, p. 13), emotion is “structured in that it constitutes part of a narrative—roughly, an unfolding sequence of actions and events, thoughts and feelings—in which the emotion itself is embedded”. This indicates that the narrative feature of a story is a place where emotional experience is stored. For this reason, narrative seemed most adequate for the aim of better understanding identity construction and how emotions are implicated in the process. Most questions in the first interview aimed at making participants reflect on their learning experiences and tell their learning stories. This was also the data collection method that yielded the richest data. For these reasons, narratives were exclusively applied to this data source.

There are many ways in which narrative analysis can be conducted. One way is called narrative mode of analysis, and is based on Polkinghorne's (1995) work. This type of analysis aims to examine certain features of human action taking place in a particular context. As Polkinghorne himself (1995, p.15) stated, “narrative reasoning operates by noticing the differences and diversity of people' behaviour. It attends to the temporal context and complex interaction of the elements that make the situation remarkable”. While keeping the figurative richness of the story, narrative mode of analysis is “the configuration of the data into coherent whole” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11).

The thematic analysis conducted on the first interview yielded insights regarding participants' writing experiences and factors that affected the quality of writing along with the way identity manifested itself in participants' responses. However, there remained a core issue of constructing a complete story that could narrate what participants went through in Saudi Arabia and how their L2 possible selves differed from one to another. I found myself manually deconstructing the data by identifying themes across all the stories told and analysed and described them in two temporal sections: learning story in Saudi Arabia (school and college), and learning story in the UK (English/pre-sessional courses and master's) (Appendix K).

After that, I explored the data by looking for similarities and differences between narratives. In doing so, I was able to analyse my participants' actions, reactions and events and narrate them into a story which was temporally arranged into a thematic thread. It is hoped that this story would be appealing to the readers helping them comprehend how and why things occurred in the way they did. This process was facilitated with the use of the table below (Table 3.6). Only one participant (P1) is explained as an example.

Table 3. 7 Narrative analysis

Participant (P1)	Saudi Arabia		United Kingdom	
	School	College	English/pre-sessional courses	Master
Learning experience	Mostly negative – memorisation and translation were used to write – No feedback	No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Mostly positive - Significant improvement - Feedback	Significant improvement
Influence	No development of L2 possible self	Still no sign of L2 possible self	Signs of L2 possible self	Ideal L2 possible self (competent writer in his field)
Actions and reactions	-	More practice but not enough	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self- confidence –	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals

3.4.4 Metadiscourse analysis (Hyland's model, 2004/2005).

According to Hyland (2005a, p.37), metadiscourse is:

the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community.

With the utilization of metadiscourse, writers can use language effectively, especially in showing their authority in denying, supporting, and making certain points of view in their writing (Hyland, 2005). For the sake of meeting the expectations of the academic field,

writers are obliged to employ metadiscoursal devices, which are helpful in academic writing. These devices enable writers to negotiate knowledge and support the claims they make in their writings, which will eventually help them be accepted as members of the academic field (Hyland, 2004a).

Hyland's model (2005a) distinguishes between two main types of metadiscourse. The first type is interactive metadiscourse which includes all features utilized to arrange information in a text in a way that is persuasive and coherent to all readers. This type has five essential features:

1. **Code glosses** give extra information by rephrasing, illustrating or explaining. They present the assumptions made by the writer regarding the reader's cognitive environment. For instance, "called", "defined as", "e.g.", "in other words", "specifically".
2. **Endophoric markers** are used by writers to focus readers' attention on other parts of the text. They help make extra information available and provide supporting arguments in order to push the reader in accepting a particular interpretation. For example, "in this Chapter"; "see Section X, Figure X, page X", and "as noted earlier".
- 3- **Evidentials** are metalinguistic features utilized in order to present an idea or an argument from a different perspective. This type of interactive metadiscourse gives writers authorial command. For example, "(to) quote X", and "according to X"
- 4- **Frame markers** are sequence features that help in organizing the text. They have various functions in: sequencing (e.g., "Chapter X", "first", "next", "lastly", "I begin with", and "I end with"); labeling stages (e.g., "all in all", "at this point", "in conclusion", and "on the whole"); announcing goals (e.g., "my focus", "goal", "objective is to", and "I seek to"); and shifting topic (e.g., "back to", "in regard to", "return to", and "turn to")
- 5- **Transition markers** are basically conjunctions and conjunctives that help readers see

the logical relationships within a text. They come in various types: Additive (e.g., “moreover”, “for example”, “similarly”); Casual (e.g., “therefore”, “as a result”, and “it follows that”); Adversative (e.g., “however”, “that being said”, “nevertheless”); and Temporal (e.g., “first”, “second”, “next”, “then”, and “finally”).

The second type of metadiscoursal features is interactional features. They help in making readers part of the discourse and give them the chance to add and respond to the content presented. This type has five main features:

1. **Attitude markers** show opinions and assessments made by the writers. For instance, “I agree”, “I am amazed”, “appropriate”, and “hopefully”.
2. **Self-mention** indicates the writer’s presence in an explicit way. For example, “I”, “we”, and “the author”.
3. **Engagement markers** are utilized to attract readers’ attention and engage them in the discourse. For instance, “we”, “our” (inclusive), and “imperative mood”.
4. **Hedges** are used to acknowledge opinions other than the writers’. Examples: “apparently”, “assume”, “doubt”, “estimate”, “from my perspective”, “in most cases”, “in my opinion”, and “probably”.
5. **Boosters** are utilised to indicate certainty and highlight force of propositions. For example, “beyond doubt”, “clearly”, “definitely”, “we found”, “we proved”, and “it is an established fact”.

This study used Hyland’s model to examine the distribution of interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers in participants’ writing samples. Since the writing samples collected varied in length, I only analysed 3000 words for each participant across three samples in order to increase consistency and ensure the comparability of the results. To ease the process, I designed an excel sheet based on the model (Table 3.7). After that, I did a manual analysis examining the writing samples word by word with the aim of providing a

Credibility (vs. internal validity) pertains to the concept of internal consistency by ensuring meticulousness and rigor in the process of research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Credibility can be achieved by following particular measures. One of these is prolonged engagement which suggests spending enough time in the field, learning about the culture and the social context of the phenomenon under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This criterion has been taken into consideration when I spent adequate time getting to know my participants, developing rapport with them, and understanding social, cultural and academic variables affecting the research direction.

Another measure taken to establish credibility in this research was peer debriefing which “provides inquirers with the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions” (Guba, 1981, p. 85). From the start, I sought support and feedback from my supervisors and colleagues. I also presented my work in the ELT research group and in conferences which helped me receive valuable feedback that improved the quality of my research.

Moreover, when participants describe their experiences into words, it is hard to communicate precisely what one feels. In this ‘translation’ moment, some of the accuracy or faithfulness of words to experiences may get lost. Consequently, I used member check which is an important step in ensuring credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I sent back all translated interviews to the participants to see if they reflect their answers. I also sent back parts of the analyses to the participants to evaluate my interpretations of their answers and to suggest any wanted changes. Participants were happy with the translation and agreed with my interpretations.

Another essential measure is triangulation which was considered in this thesis. Triangulation is a strategy in which various types of data are collected and differently analysed (Crewswell, 1998). It is important to use triangulation because research findings are fortified using various kinds of data and methods (Patton, 2002). Another advantage is that the researcher's biases can be minimized greatly (Davies, 2007). In the current study, three types of triangulations were administered to ensure the credibility of research findings. The first one is data triangulation. I used multiple data resources which include interviews, diaries, writing samples, and think aloud protocols. I also carried out a theory triangulation in which I employed poststructuralism and linguistic theory as the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research. The last type of triangulation is a methodological one. I conducted four different analyses which include content analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and metadiscourse analysis.

The second criterion to establish credibility is transferability (vs. external validity). Transferability is "concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam, 2001, p. 39). There is one essential way to achieve transferability in qualitative research that is thick description. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), thick description means the provision of adequate details of the topic under investigation in way that reached conclusions can be transferable to other research settings. This thesis presented a detailed description of the whole research process and provided a thorough account of field experiences in which I explicitly explained patterns of cultural and social traits of the study context and study participants. Finally, the sample was rather homogeneous. All these aspects enhance the study's transferability.

Dependability (vs. reliability) is another criterion that was taken into account to achieve trustworthiness. It indicates that “the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques” (Gasson, 2004, p. 94). This thesis outlined the research process in detail and hence allows other researchers to replicate the work and compare obtained results. This comprehensiveness also helps readers to understand and contest the adopted research methods and their effectiveness in answering the questions of the study.

The last criterion of establishing trustworthiness is confirmability (vs. objectivity). Confirmability indicates that “findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher” (Gasson, 2004, p. 93). One way of achieving confirmability in this research was through the role of triangulation, which helped in the reduction of the researcher’s biases (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Moreover, describing my role as a researcher and acknowledging any predispositions as well as reasons behind opting for a particular research approach increased the objectivity of this qualitative research.

Trustworthiness was also enhanced via the use of Atlas.ti software. This software facilitates coding, consistency checks, and triangulation. Furthermore, I relied on the use of a certain approach with the intent of improving the trustworthiness of the findings. This approach focused on content that repeatedly emerged across questions and/or participants. That is, each category, subtheme, and theme was discussed in the findings strongly supported by at least three quotations produced in three different answers. Greater amounts of data are usually regarded as holding greater trustworthiness, partly due to an increased recurrence of similar ideas in the overall transcripts.

Additionally, via the application of the rule of only retaining codes discussed by at least three participants, commonalities (vs. idiosyncrasies) were put at the centre of findings. This was not because it was thought that aspects referred to by only one participant were irrelevant or were necessarily not experienced by non-participants. Rather, this helped in narrating a story (enhancing credibility). This particular story described the experiences of most participants; it highlighted more consensual findings. All these strategies aimed at helping to describe and explain the experiences of individuals who did not participate in the study but have similar demographic and linguistic experiences. That is, adopted procedures attempted at finding a few more universal or common experiences that might happen to Saudi students doing their masters in the United Kingdom. They might contribute to theory development, as well as the development of student support programs.

3.6 Summary

This chapter explained the methods used to explore emerging self-identities and emotions among Saudi Arabian students in the UK. The chapter started with the research design, which was qualitative in nature. It then detailed the research procedures followed in this thesis. After that, all tools used to collect data including pre-interview questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, diaries, think aloud protocols, and writing samples, were explained. Data analysis was discussed next. Content, thematic, narrative and metadiscourse analysis were all examined. Finally, quality and trustworthiness were explored in relation to the current thesis.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANTS' PAST AND PRESENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

This chapter introduces the most salient findings that emerged from the analyses conducted on the first interview. Identified themes helped in highlighting the unique experiences that participants went through in the past while studying in Saudi Arabia, and current learning experiences in the United Kingdom. These experiences are of importance in influencing participants' present and future learning (Dewey, 1933; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and possibly affecting their identity and self-image. This chapter seeks to answer the following two broad areas of investigation with their sub-questions:

1. Saudi students' past and present English writing experiences

- a. What kind of writing experiences did participants come across in Saudi Arabia and in the UK?
- b. How did these writing experiences affect participants' development of L2 possible selves?

2. Saudi students' views of themselves as English writers

- a. What do participants think of themselves as English writers over time and in different contexts?
- b. How do participants view their identity?

4.1 Participants' Learning Trajectory

To answer the first broad question and its sub-questions, this section, firstly, will approach participants' (mainly English language related) learning experiences from a longitudinal viewpoint by taking a narrative approach focusing only on the first interview. Since every participant started their English learning journey in Saudi Arabia (SA) and subsequently pursued it in the United Kingdom (UK), this involves examining the narratives of the participants' past Saudi Arabian learning experiences and their more recent or present British learning experiences. The following will discuss the narrative of each participant chronologically in order to construct a time perspective into the analysis and arguments, helping me track participants' development of their L2 selves and their views of themselves as English writers over time.

- *Participant 1*

Participant 1 (P1) was a 32-year-old male. He was educated in a Saudi Arabian public school. He never had any contact with the English language until the age of 12 at school. During intermediate and secondary school (age 12 to 18), he had four English language classes a week with almost no writing practice; he only had to write around twice a semester. As for Arabic, he had one weekly writing class called Arabic composition. In this class, he wrote about general and simple topics; no actual training in how to write or writing techniques was provided. He simply wrote about topics such as historical figures and description paragraphs.

P1 relied on both translation and memorisation as techniques helping him to write in English, especially during exams. He stated:

Before exams, teachers would tell us to write a short paragraph about a certain topic. We would then start to prepare for the exam by memorising some sentences. So probably we used to write once or twice during the term. (P1)

After high school, P1 joined college to do his BA in Laboratory Science. During college, P1 had more practice of English writing than during his school years. However, this was not enough for him to feel he had improved. The teaching style was quite theoretical. Teachers spent most of the time telling students how to write short essays without sufficient practice. P1 also described his learning in Saudi as a period of no rules when it came to writing. Everything was unclear; whether in Arabic or English he could write the way he liked. Assignments were mostly copy-paste and there was no penalty for plagiarism. Additionally, there was no chance of improvement due to the lack of feedback from teachers. The whole learning pedagogy seemed to be the reason for his lack of improvement. It also did not help P1 to form an ideal image of his English future self. P1's comment explains this point:

It is hard to improve yourself as a student in SA because no one tells your mistakes and what you need to do in order to improve. There is no motivation and no indicator that can show you which area you need to work on. (P1)

To pursue his masters, P1 decided to move to the UK. His proficiency level was low as he understood English and spoke it with great difficulty, scoring an overall of 4 in the IELTS test before arriving to the UK. Thus, he joined a general English language course for nine months that targeted all language skills. This course helped him improve his general English language skills and not his academic skills. By the end of the course, he was able to score 6 in the IELTS, thus showing great improvement. After that, P1 joined a pre-sessional

English language course for 15 weeks which aimed at enhancing academic writing skills and preparing him for his master degree. Before these English language courses, P1 lacked any vision of his L2 possible self. As time went on, he developed a desired L2 self through his positive learning experience. P1 started to see himself as a user of the English language and as a writer.

During his masters, P1 felt for the first time he was treated as a capable student who was supposed to understand and write assignments perfectly. Although this was appreciated, he was also shocked and under pressure due to the amount and extensiveness of writing required. He had to write 1500 to 2000 word-long reports and had additional 3000 word-long assignments for each course. This constant practice helped P1 to improve his writing skills. It also seemed to trigger a strong desire to become a proficient academic writer in the discipline of science.

Even though P1 knew that he needed to work hard on himself to improve, he had a clear vision of his future self as a great scientific writer. P1's clear vision of himself as a future writer in his imagined community (scientific community) transpired in the following remark:

Generally, I would like to improve all aspects of writing. My aim is to reach a level in which I can be a proficient academic writer who does not make any writing mistakes. (P1)

- *Participant 2*

Participant 2 (P2) was a 26-year-old who held a BA in English language education. He had never had any contact with the English language until the age of 12, at intermediate school.

He was educated in a SA public school and had much more practice in Arabic writing than in English writing. He used to write daily in Arabic. His writings consisted of a mix of general and academic Arabic. During those years, his English writing started with writing words, phrases and short sentences four days a week. Memorisation was a “big thing”, utilized to pass exams, and he relied heavily on his knowledge of Arabic to help him write in English. As he explained, “in English, I think in Arabic and think of an outline and then write my thoughts and then write them in English”.

In college, P2 used to write daily and his writing skills improved considerably. He felt such improvement was due to the encouragement of one of his teachers. The teacher suggested that he should keep an English diary, corrected P2’s writings and gave him feedback. However, P2’s academic writing skills still lacked focus. Writing courses concentrated on general, unstructured writing. There was no need to include any sources or references in writing or demonstrate scientific reasoning. P2 stated:

At the beginning, I used to write everything like memorises, dairies and things like that because my tutor encouraged me to write a lot to improve my writing. He used to take my writings every day and correct them and give me feedback.
(P2)

When discussing his role as a student in SA, P2 explained that he was quite inactive, a quality he brought along with him to the UK. He currently regarded this trait as negative or prejudicial. Yet, for him, this attitude could be understood as resulting from not having an open and a free learning environment. In SA, he felt that students could not say what they wanted. Otherwise, they would be penalised by professors. Passivity was his way of coping with this environment. He explained:

You have more space to speak your mind, to discuss, and to show what the professors saying is not, let's say accurate to some extent or it is not suitable for you, and there are some other opinions and theories that you would like to use so it is not all about what he is saying. But in SA, you should follow what the professors say, whatever he says, you should follow otherwise you will get no grade. It is completely different. This is what I have seen. But my role as a student is till negative, silent all time. I do not like to negotiate a lot and ask in SA and UK. I am used to this. If I discuss or ask in SA, I will not say anything so I continued like this. I know it is not good. (P2)

It can be noted from P2's narrative that his learning institution was not helpful in generating an ideal self-image of becoming a competent user of English. Moreover, P2's relationship with English was quite instrumental. His motivation arose from his desire of becoming an English language teacher. This indicates that P2 felt a strong obligation to learn English. For P2, mastering English was critical for achieving his desired profession. Then, despite the perhaps adverse SA learning environment, he did not lose his motivation.

As for his English language experience outside Saudi Arabia, P2 studied in the United States of America (USA) for 18 months to improve his English language skills. Having scored 5.5 at the IELTS test after a few months in the USA suggests that he was able to speak and understand English but still with some difficulty. He then joined a master's course in Linguistics studies in the UK. Upon his arrival to the UK and before the start of his master, he joined a pre-sessional English course. His English language skills improved, particularly his writing skills: he scored an overall 6.5 in the IELTS test and 7.5 in the

Writing module. Additionally, P2 started to see himself as a user of English due to constant contact with the language in both the USA and UK.

Academic writing was the most taught skill in this course, preparing him for his masters. It was intensive, as he had to write daily and at the weekends and produce pieces of writing with lengths ranging from 500 to 2000 words. The course taught him how to structure essays, improve his ideas, and deal with topics effectively. It improved his IELTS grades. Then, the UK pre-session course was quite beneficial.

During his masters, P2 submitted two kinds of assignments: essays and research papers. The quantity of writing was quite extensive, involving the production of 3000 word-long assignments in each course during one semester. To achieve these tasks, he made use of various kinds of resources, such as articles, books and online websites. He struggled with the amount of assignments as well as the amount of words required. It took very long for him to finish each assignment, and each submission involved feelings of insecurity and fear of not getting a good grade. However, this constant practice enhanced his writing skills and the positive feedback received on his writing raised his confidence. Although P2 still thought of himself as a beginner writer, he had a desire for his future self to become a much better writer. This would be achieved by enrolling in a PhD program and immersing himself in reading. He illustrated:

I see myself as a novice writer, just a beginner. I try to develop my skills. I think I can be better in the future. If I continue now studying a PhD, I will have a chance to read a lot and this is my plan. Most of the time, I will immerse myself into reading and I think my writing will be developed a lot. The most important

thing for us is to read to see different writings and to see how people write and this will make you more confident. (P2)

- *Participant 3*

Participant 3 (P3) was a 35-year-old who held a SA Bachelor degree in Information Technology (IT). In SA, his learning experiences were similar to those of preceding participants. Specifically, he went to a public school and started to learn English at intermediate school. There, he learned to write short paragraphs about himself, his family and other general topics in both English and Arabic. He had a weekly class in which he had to write in Arabic whereas he had much less practice in English; he had one class every three weeks. English writing was difficult for him, so he relied on his knowledge of Arabic. He used translation as well as memorisation to write in English and pass exams.

In college, his English writing skills stayed the same as he did not learn anything new. He had to write more in English but this did not help him to improve. He continued to use both translation and memorisation to write in English and pass his exams. As for his Arabic writing, there was an improvement due to the constant practice of writing assignments and reports in Arabic. He had to submit five to six Arabic assignments every semester. These assignments, however, constituted around 20 to 25 % of the total grade for each course and did not require rigorous research and resources. As with P2, P3 also felt that SA teachers were dominant of classroom practices; he stated that “Teachers have a different role as they are more dominant of classroom time in SA and less dominant in UK”.

Two and a half years before this study, P3 had decided to fulfil his dreams by pursuing a master’s course in the United Kingdom. Before arriving to the UK, his

proficiency level was quite low. He could understand and speak English with great difficulty. He joined a general English language course for 15 weeks to enhance his overall English language skills. This course pushed him to be an active student in the classroom and helped to improve mainly his speaking and listening skills. Teachers were also lenient and made the class fun and enjoyable. After that, he scored 4.5 in the IELTS test. This score gave him the chance to join a pre-sessional English course for 9 months. It focused mainly on improving both reading and writing skills, preparing students for university. He improved his language skills as he scored 5.5 in the IELTS test after the course.

During his masters, P3's English writing practice increased; he had to write two to three assignments for each course. These assignments were reports and essays with 1500 words each. P3 had difficulties coping because he felt that his success was solely based on his writing abilities. He spent a lot of time preparing for any assignment, trying to read as much literature and including as many resources as possible. Unlike his learning experience in SA, pedagogical practices and educational institutions were quite inviting and supportive. This experience seemed to help P3 in forming an ideal image that he aspired to get to. He started to see himself as a user of English. Although there seem to be inconsistencies in the way P3 saw himself as an English writer, he seemed confident that he would improve and become a better writer in one year. His comments below explain these points:

I see myself as a decent ESL writer who is working on himself to be better. I am much more confident since coming to the UK. I know how to write and how to present myself as a student and as a scientist. My own view of myself is constantly changing and it might be different in a year from now. (P3)

- *Participant 4*

Participant 4 (P4) was a 31-year-old who held a BA in English language education. Like the previous participants, he went to a public school and his first contact with the English language was at the age of 12 in intermediate school. He started to learn how to write at the third year of intermediate school. He had to write short paragraphs once a month in English. As for Arabic, he had one weekly class from the third year of Primary school, when he was a nine-year-old, till the first year of high school, when he was 16 to 17 years-old.

He described his experience of learning how to write in English as unhelpful and unsuccessful; he claimed not having learnt much if anything. His narrative indicates that the learning institutions did not help him form an ideal self at all. However, during high school, P4 joined a local English language institute for 11 months. It successfully taught him to write. He himself recognized so when identifying this period as the onset of some more visible or marked improvements and better quality outcomes in his English writings. He started to envision himself as a user of the language. His comments illustrate this point:

We only learned in school, we did not have any other resources. Even school was not that helpful. I started learning when I joined an English institute for 11 months when I was in high school. It was quite useful. Basically, I think in Arabic and then translate into English which was not the best strategy.

In college, P4 had more practice of English writing and acknowledged having improved to a certain extent. For example, he learned that English and Arabic had different writing structures and styles. However, in SA, P4 did not learn how to prepare for writing and brainstorm ideas before jumping into writing. He also did not use to draft his writings; he submitted his work without any revision and editing. Moreover, it was somehow hard for

him to improve himself due to lack of feedback and low proficiency level of teachers. Although he continued to see himself as user of English, this experience did not help him form an ideal L2 self. He illustrated:

I think the only way anyone would improve if there is feedback. We only received the grade we got in the assignment and based on that you would be trying to figure out what are the problems in your writing by yourself.

Two years before the study, P4 decided to pursue his education by coming to the UK. His proficiency level was good as he could understand and speak comfortably, with little difficulty. He scored a 4.5 in his first IELTS test. In the first year, he joined two English language programs to improve his language skills before starting his master degree. The first course was English for Academic Purposes and lasted ten weeks. This course was of great help in enhancing his academic English skills and resulted in a better IELTS test score, a 5.5 score. This score allowed him to join a pre-sessional course for 25 weeks. He had to write around 500 words daily. Although it was a challenging class, P4 enjoyed it.

During his master's course, P4 had to write more extensively, which helped him to improve. Most of the writings he did were academic essays and reports and involved the use of resources such as academic journals and books. Although P4 came to the UK without any clear vision of his L2 possible self, he was able to develop an ideal L2 self through his positive experiences during the English courses and his master's. L2 future selves are not shaped due to an internal or an external self-image that a learner possesses, but due to the learner's involvement and interaction with the learning process (Dörnyei, 2009). This was what happened with P4.

- *Participant 5*

Participant 5 (P5) was a 28-year-old who held a SA BA in Structure Engineering. Similar to the previous participants, he went to a public school and his first contact with English was at intermediate school. He had one Arabic writing class a week in which he wrote about general topics such as your holiday or country. However, he regarded himself as a weak writer that had failed Arabic composition during primary school. Regarding English, P5 did not learn anything about writing during school years. In the last two years of high school, P5 came across the writing of short paragraphs in final exams. He would memorise a text without any comprehension to pass exams. P5 explained his weak writing skills in the light of his bad experience in Arabic writing in primary school. As stated:

I am really weak in Arabic writing so when I write in Arabic, it takes me ages to finish writing a short text. I remember that I failed my Arabic composition class in primary school. As a result, I became afraid of writing and this reflected badly on my English writing skills.

In college, not much changed for P5: he felt his English writing skills stayed the same. He would write assignments without any preparation or following any steps. He also had issues with teachers as they did not have strong English language background and could not help him further his knowledge. Moreover, teachers were not strict and did not push students to practice the language in and outside the classroom. The whole class revolved around the teacher and inactive students that lacked motivation. Basically, his learning experience did not help him to envision L2 possible self. He stated:

In terms of students, we did not have the chance to ask teachers and be active in the class which affected our language skills badly. The class is basically revolving around the teacher and not the students.

Around three years before the study, P5 took the decision of coming to the UK to do his master's in civil engineering. However, his English language skills needed to be trained as he could only understand and speak with difficulty. So, he joined a general English language course for 20 weeks which greatly helped him with his listening and speaking skills. At the end of this course, P5 scored an overall of 5 in the IELTS test, and 5 in the writing module. After that, he joined a pre-sessional course for 36 weeks. His English language skills improved, apart from writing which stayed the same. Before the end of the course, he did another IELTS test that demonstrated the positive results of his learning; he obtained an overall score of 6 and unchanged score of 5 in the writing module. This period marked the beginning of P5 seeing himself as a user of the language. P5 had a strong obligation to improve in order to succeed, which suggests the presence of an ought-to L2 self rather than an ideal L2 self.

During his masters, his writing skills became better due to constant practice. He mainly wrote reports and essays with around 2000 to 4000 words for each course. The learning environment was quite motivating for him which reflected positively on his language skills. Teachers were of great help to him in giving him advice and feedback. This pushed him to work harder. Although the learning environment was quite positive and offered everything needed, P5 was not able to create an ideal L2 self at all. Although he said that he would like to improve, he was not doing anything about it. This probably indicates he did not have an actual desire to create an ideal L2 self. He remarked:

I like to listen and then speak. This is my strength. I don't like to write because I am not good at it. I know that writing is the most important skill and your success is based on it, and this is why I want to improve. I do not read in Arabic and English which negatively affects my writing skills. (...) I blame myself a lot; I

have been here for a long time but my writing skills are not that good. I am a really good speaker but not a good writer (P5).

- *Participant 6*

Participant 6 was a 29-year-old who held a SA BA in English language education. He also went to a public school and, at the age of 12, started to learn English in intermediate school. In English, he was introduced to the writing of short paragraphs once or twice per semester. He also relied on memorisation to pass exams. As for Arabic, he had one weekly class from the fourth grade in primary school till the first grade in high school, in which he wrote about general topics. The whole learning environment was not supportive in helping him form an L2 possible self. He stated:

I used to be a really bad writer. The last two courses at college (writing 3 and advanced writing) were really helpful and I learned how to write. We did not learn anything at school, we only memorised short paragraphs before exams. (P6)

In college, P6 had four English writing courses that were designed to help him improve his skills. The first two courses (writing 1&2) were not of great help as he did not learn anything new. For English writing purposes, he kept memorising texts and used translation. However, his writing skills greatly improved during the last two writing courses (writing 3 and advanced). These advances were regarded as consequent of the actions of his course teacher, who pushed P6 to write daily. Even so, P6 still did not consider himself a good writer, as most of the writings were general (not academic), drafts were submitted without revision or editing, research or referenced quotations were not part of the requirements. However, he started to envision himself as a user of English due to his strong obligation to improve. This is suggestive of an ought-to L2 self. He illustrated:

We did not do that. Basically, our first draft is the final one. We did not do any research so we did not include any references. It is not academic writing; it is general writing and the topics did not require adding references. (...) We did not read much, so there was no improvement. I did improve in the last two courses, as I said before. (P6)

Roughly one year before this study, P6 decided to pursue his education by doing a masters' in Psycholinguistics in the UK. Before arriving, his English language skills were good. He could speak and understand with little difficulty and scored a 5.5 in his first IELTS test. Even so, he joined a pre-sessional English language course for 15 weeks. This course was quite helpful for him as it improved his academic writing skills and taught him how to look for relevant sources and use them without incurring in plagiarism. The course made him more active inside the classroom and responsible or accountable for his own learning. P6 had to write a small writing text every week, and, by the end of each module, he had to submit a longer writing project ranging from 750 to 2500 words in length.

During his masters, and particularly during the first semester, things were quite difficult for him. He was shocked by how demanding the course was, with its many assignments, exams and reading requirements. For each course, P6 had to write between 3000 and 4000 words. As for references, he used both academic journals and books. Even though his master's course was a difficult experience, P5 enjoyed it greatly as he loved not being restricted to particular books or resources and being an autonomous learner with control over his own learning. His writing skills improved significantly and he described himself as a successful English writer with a great potential to improve. This suggests that P6

was able to form an ideal L2 self in which he would become a much better writer in the future. He explained:

I think I am much better writer in English. If I work hard on my writing, reread my work and do editing and proofreading, I believe I can produce a text of a really good quality and for this reason I think I am a successful writer in English. (...) I am not as good as I want to be. I need to work on myself. I improved a lot since I came here but I believe I can be much better. (P6)

- *Participant 7*

Participant 7 (P7) was a 37-year-old who held a BA in English language education. He shared a similar learning story to the previous participants, being educated in a public school and learning English at the age of 12 at intermediate school. He learned to write in Arabic at a weekly class called Arabic composition in third grade. He wrote about simple and general topics such as his weekend activities. In English, he had much less practice, around once every three weeks. He wrote short paragraphs in English about himself and other general topics. Due to his low level of English proficiency, he used translation as a technique to assist him in writing. He illustrated:

Well, translation was one way of writing in English. We only knew Arabic so we based our English on it by translating what we want to say from Arabic into English.

In college, his English writing skills improved as he had to write once a week. He wrote about general topics and did not learn anything about academic writing. His writings were based on his knowledge about the topic as he studied in a small college with no resources and internet. Teachers helped him by bringing some external resources in addition

to the course book. Moreover, he did not go through more than one draft; it was a first and a last draft for him. In some cases, he would discuss some ideas with the teacher before starting to write and then after finishing writing, he submitted his writing without any editing and proofreading. Since P7 was studying to become an English teacher, he had a strong obligation to learn and improve his English language skills which indicates possessing ought-to L2 self.

P7 had more contact with the language outside SA. Specifically, during a five-week long general English language course in New Zealand, and a six-week long course in Australia. Although P7 was not able to create an ideal L2 self in SA, it seems that he started to develop a desired L2 self through his learning experience in both Australia and New Zealand. The learning situation abroad created a future self that he wanted to become. P7's aim was to become like a native English user. This wish appeared frequently in his narrative. He stated:

My aim is to be able to write like a native speaker. Being able to express yourself clearly is one of the things that I aspire to achieve. I want to only think and write in English without using my first language. English is not my first language but I want to be able to write in a way that is simple, and can be understood by everyone. (P7)

When coming to the UK, P7 could understand and speak comfortably, with little difficulty. To further his language skills, he joined three English language courses. The first one was a two-month long general course, and the second one was a two-month long IELTS preparation course. Within this time, he sat for an IELTS test in which he scored an overall of 5 and 4.5 in the writing module. After that, he joined a pre-sessional course for 25 weeks.

This course focussed on writing and reading with the aim of preparing students for university. Although P7 was not happy about the course, describing it as boring, upon finishing he scored an overall of 6 in the IELTS test with 6 in the writing module, which showed a great improvement. He remarked:

It was quite boring and it was not as expected to be honest. I thought this course would be much better and prepare me very well for university but it was not as expected as I struggled a lot as well as other students when we joined our master course. Teachers and the teaching style were making sure that we score at least 65% in our overall exam so that we joined our master courses. (P7)

During masters, writing was quite intensive as he needed to submit two to three assignments for each course. These courses required around 4000 words each, and they were all essays. He used three resources to help finish these assignments including academic journals, books and the internet. He commented that his master's was the equivalent of four years of studying in SA. Additionally, P7 described his learning experience as the opposite of the one held in SA as he was active and motivated in the classroom. He also expressed the big difference between teachers in SA and the UK in terms of their qualifications, higher or better in the UK. Such positivity enforced his restless ideal L2 self of becoming like a native writer. He explained:

I think I am a good writer; somewhere in the middle. I know I need to work on myself and try to improve. I can write in a good and a clear way, but my aim is to sound like a native so I still have more work to do in order to improve.

- *Participant 8*

Participant 8 (P8) was 29-year-old. He held a SA BA in Mechanical Engineering. He went to a public school, and his first contact with the English language was at the age of 13. He had an Arabic weekly course that focussed on writing in which he wrote about general topics such as your city or country. In English, he was introduced to writing with no instructions at all. His writings were also general without any focus on a particular genre. He wrote about himself by translating from Arabic into English due to his weak English language skills. His experience in school did not help him at all to envision himself as a user of the language and did not contribute to forming L2 possible self. He explained:

We did not really learn how to write to be honest; it was like we would be asked to write and then we did. We did write about ourselves and other simple and general topics.

In college, he had to write more in both Arabic and English. He wrote all his assignments in Arabic which did not help him improve as a writer in English. He had four foreign language courses at the beginning of his bachelor degree. The first two were general multi-language courses that did not focus on writing skills. The other two courses included writing but not intensively; he was only required to write once every month. Even so, these courses taught him to write in English and to structure his writing. During these years, P8 was not interested in improving his writing skills. He thought he is an engineer and his main goal was to be a good English speaker. He saw no use for English writing skills. So, it appears that he had a stronger ought-to L2 self than an ideal self, as he felt obliged to improve his speaking skills because of his future job. As he expressed, “I was not really working on improving my writing skills in SA. We did not need to. My focus was on speaking”.

Three years before the present study, P8 came to the UK with the goal of doing a master in Mechanical Engineering. His proficiency level was quite low as he could only understand and speak with great difficulty. Upon his arrival, he only scored an overall of 3.5 in the IELTS test with 3 in the writing module. So, he joined a general English language program for 12 months. This program helped him a lot as he was able to improve his speaking and listening skills greatly. The course also enhanced his grammar and vocabulary which reflected positively on his writing skills. By the end of the course, he scored an overall of 5.5 in the IELTS test with 5.5 in the writing module. After that, he joined a pre-sessional course for 25 weeks. This course focused on writing as he wrote two essays a week which prepared him for his master's degree.

During masters, P8 started to learn more and improve considerably due to constant reading and writing. It was quite intensive for him as he had to submit two to three assignments for each course with 3000 to 5000 words. These assignments were mostly reports and sometimes essays, and he used academic journals and books as resources. His work on his thesis was another experience that enhanced his writing skills. However, P8 did not have the desire to improve his writing skills. His relationship with writing was instrumental as he only felt obliged to improve in order to write his university assignments. He stated:

I am not really working towards improving my writing skills at the moment. I am only focusing on improving my speaking skills. I am an engineer and I need speaking more.

- *Participant 9*

Participant 9 was a 37-year-old who held a BA in Mechanical Engineering from the Kingdom of Jordan. He had a similar experience to the rest of the participants as he went to public school and came in contact with the English language at the age of 12. As for writing, he had one Arabic writing class starting from 4th grade till the first year in high school. English writing, however, was introduced to P9 at the third year in intermediate school. He wrote short paragraphs and then longer ones during high school once every three weeks. He used to memorise texts to pass exams. He did not learn anything as no one taught him how to write and he did not receive feedback. His experience in school did not help him at all to envision himself as a user of the language and did not contribute to forming L2 possible self. He explained that “we did not know any better. We did not receive any feedback from teachers, and no one told us how write and what to include in the introduction.”

In college, P9 did more writing. In the first two years of his degree, there was not much focus on English writing. He would jump into writing without any preparation and without receiving any feedback. The last two years, however, were helpful as he had to write laboratory reports in English. This helped him improve to a certain extent. Similar to P8, P9 was not interested in enhancing writing skills as he felt he did not need it. He saw himself as an engineer and his main concern was improving his speaking skills. Once again, this suggests a stronger ought-to L2 self than an ideal self; he felt obliged to improve his speaking skills because of the job he wants to hold in the future. Nevertheless, his writing skills improved accidentally due to his constant reading in his field. His comments explain this point:

I was not really interested in improving my writing skills. There was no need to. But I used to read a lot about engineering in both Arabic and English. This helped me to write my reports at college. (P9)

Two years before this study, P9 moved to the UK with the aim of doing his master degree in Mechanical Engineering. His proficiency level was low as he only could understand and speak with great difficulty. To improve his language skills, he joined three English language programs. The first one was a two-week long general English course. He then joined an IELTS preparation course for ten weeks. This course was of great help as it introduced him to the test about which he did not know anything. Before starting the course, he did a test and scored an overall of 4.5 and 4 in the writing. At the end of the course, he scored an overall of 5.5 and 5.5 in the writing module. After that, he joined a pre-sessional course for 20 weeks which prepared him well for university. He used to write daily and he had to write long essays as homework at the weekends.

At his university, he used to write every day to keep up with the intensity of the assignments. Each course required doing two to three writing projects (reports) and they were mostly technical, answering precise engineering-related questions. These courses bettered his writing skills. He used books, online journals and scientific reports as resources. These aided him to finish his assignments. Even after spending two years in the UK, P9's view of writing did not change as he looked at it in an instrumental way. Writing was something that he needed to work on in order to pass and finish his assignments successfully. He did not have a great desire to improve which indicates that he only possessed ought-to L2 self. His comments illustrate this point:

I do not practice writing constantly, and I only do write when I am working on an assignment. It is not a hobby; it is not something I like to do. I only write when I have to. It takes time and effort to make my writing good. I only see myself as a good writer because I know what is right and what is wrong in terms of writing. I know how to write and finish a writing task but I am not interested in writing so my writing skills have not been improving greatly in the last 2 years. My discipline does not require me to be a great writer; it is not linguistics or TESOL; so, there is no need to do much writing. If it has not been for my thesis, I wouldn't have improved and I would still be a beginner writer.

- *Participant 10*

Participant 10 was a 31-year-old who held a SA BA in English language education. He shared a similar learning experience to the other participants as he was educated in a public school and started to learn English at the age of 12. As for writing, he was introduced to general writing only during school in both Arabic and English. He did not write paragraphs or essays in Arabic; it was only short sentences. English writing was also similar during intermediate school as he only wrote sentences. In high school, he was introduced to writing short paragraphs once every three weeks. Unlike other participants, he did not use memorisation to help him write but he used translation from Arabic into English.

In college, writing was much more intense, especially English writing because he was majoring in the English language. This created a strong obligation to learn and improve as he was trained to be a future English teacher. He was introduced to academic writing and its conventions and used to write paragraphs only during the first semester. In the second semester, he started to write short essays and then longer essays during the second and third

year. Writing was taught around twice a week which helped him improve his writing skills. Nevertheless, he did not do any kind of research when writing an essay and did not do editing or proofreading; he had never been advised to do so. Moreover, P10 criticised the learning environment in SA as it was not motivating to him, teachers were neither sufficiently qualified to teach English nor approachable. It was a suffered learning experience.

Two years before this study, P10 came to the UK to do his masters in Applied Linguistics. His proficiency level was good as he could understand and speak but with some difficulty. To improve his language skills, he joined three English courses. The first one was a six-week long general English language course. After that, he joined an IELTS preparation course for 8 weeks. Both classes helped him to improve and forced him to be active inside the classroom. At that time, he sat for an IELTS test and scored an overall of 5 and 4.5 in writing. Later, he joined a pre-sessional course for 36 weeks, which prepared him for studying at university. This course enhanced his academic skills, especially his writing skills, as he scored a better score in the IELTS test with an overall of 6 and 5.5 in writing. He remarked:

In SA, there was no motivation and students are keen on finishing the assignments without caring of the quality. In the UK, there is a great desire to learn, work hard, and finish assignments in the best way possible.

During his masters, the workload was quite intense for him and he had to write constantly. Most of the courses required the submission of assignments that constituted 100% of the total grade. He wrote different kinds of genres such as discussion, argument, report, and research proposals. He employed various resources to help him finish writing

tasks, most commonly academic journals and books. Regardless of all his difficulties, he enjoyed his experience as he learned a lot from it; he was motivated and active inside the classroom and improved considerably. However, his narrative did not indicate any formation of an ideal L2 self like the other participants who were English teachers. Even though he stated the possibility of future improvement, he was not determined and working towards it. This is probably because he was not thinking of pursuing a PhD degree like most of the other participants. As he expressed, “I think I am a good writer who has been improving in the last few years. If I keep working on myself, I can improve further.”

4.2 Participants’ Views of themselves as English Writers in the Past, Present and Future

This section explains participants’ development of their L2 possible selves based on the previous discussion of their individual learning trajectories. It also examines the way participants viewed themselves as English writers over time and in the contexts of Saudi Arabia and in the United Kingdom by enquiring into their L2 possible selves through the thematic analysis conducted on the first interview. It also examines participants’ views of their identity in their current educational institutions and of their future use of English writing. Present and future learning is affected by the way learners visualise themselves as L2 writers (Miyahara, 2015). This means that whatever learners aspire to achieve in the future will be a main factor in influencing their current learning.

4.2.1 Participants’ development of L2 possible selves

All the participants in this study shared a similar learning experience in SA. During school years, they were introduced to English as a school subject devoid of any communication

purposes. They described their learning experience as useless and they explained that they did not learn anything particularly when it came to the skill of writing. The learning institutions did not motivate them to form any kind of L2 possible selves. They did not see themselves as users of English because they had no chances to practice the language in and outside the classroom. P4 is the exception. He joined an English language institute for 11 months which helped him envision himself as a beginner user of the language. Overall, it appears that all participants lacked any visions of their L2 possible selves due to the negative effect of the learning institution.

In college, participants had two different learning stories that affected their L2 possible selves differently. P1, P3, P5, P8 and P9 continued to lack any vision of themselves as users of English. They all did various degrees in engineering, medical and computer science. English was only taught in the first three semesters of their bachelor's degrees which indicates that they had more practice than in school. However, there was no focus on writing as English was taught exactly the same way as in school. Three of these participants (P5, P8, and P9) did not have the desire to improve their writing skills as they were engineers and their focus was improving their speaking skills. The narratives of P1 and P3 show that even though they had the desire to improve their speaking skills, they did not do anything that could have enhanced their English language skills.

P2, P4, P6, P7 and P10, on the other hand, had a different learning situation that helped form L2 possible selves. These participants did their bachelor's degrees in English language education. The fact they were trained to be teachers created a strong obligation to learn English. They all were keen in improving their overall English language skills. After a few semesters, they started to consider themselves as users of English. Their writing skills

also improved a lot especially during the third and fourth semesters. However, they all faced negative experiences due to the low proficiency of teachers, lack of feedback and lack of practice. These negative experiences seem to be the reason behind the lack of an ideal L2 self and seeing themselves as successful English language writers in the future.

In the UK, all participants joined various English language courses in order to improve their English skills and hence being able to do their masters. They all started with a general English course before joining a pre-sessional course that allows them to join their masters directly without getting the needed score in the IELTS test. All the participants did more than one test in order to get the required score to join the pre-sessional. They were all keen on improving their skills. Participants, who initially lacked any vision of their L2 possible selves, were able to see themselves as users of the language. It appears that they all had a strong obligation to study and improve particularly their writing skills. The latter was the weakest skill for all of them suggesting a much stronger ought-to L2 self than ideal L2 self. The learning institutions played a significant role in making them active participants in classrooms which helped them construct a vision of themselves as English language users.

Participants, who were able to envision themselves as users of English in Saudi Arabia, continued to improve and they were all keen on enhancing their writing skills. Their learning experience was more straightforward than that of the other participants due to having better proficiency level and clear L2 possible selves. The fact they were former English teachers who need to improve so they could pass their pre-sessional course had strengthened and authenticated their ought-to L2 self. Simultaneously, they started to form an ideal self in which they would become successful writers just like native users of English. The formation of an ideal L2 self was possible because of the positive learning experiences

the participants encountered, and the many chances and resources they were given to customise the desired self (Dörnyei, 2005).

During their masters, all participants worked hard on themselves and they had to write constantly to keep up with their study load. P1, who initially lacked an ideal L2 self, expressed their great desire to improve and become competent writers. Although they were obliged to improve so they pass their courses, they were committed to improve further in the future. In particular, P1 was determined to be a professional writer in his field which marked the formation of a desired L2 self. As for P3, P5, P8, and P9, they continued to lack any vision of an ideal self. They lacked the desire to improve as they were all engineers, and their main focus was enhancing their speaking skills. The rest of participants continued to authenticate their ideal L2 self as they all expressed great desire to improve in the future. The fact that most of these participants were thinking of pursuing a PhD degree can be seen as a factor behind strengthening their desired selves.

Overall, it can be noted that the learning experience in the UK played a significant role in helping participants form L2 possible selves. The learning institutions in the UK motivated them to be better English writers and reinforced their L2 possible selves. It made them active and autonomous learners which positively impacted participants' future possible selves.

4.2.2 Participants' views of themselves as English writers and their identity

The thematic analysis of the first interview revealed various aspects of participants' self-identity and how they saw themselves as writers in the present and how they imagined themselves in the future. The analysis revealed one higher-order theme named *Writer's*

identity and self-image. Its 5 subcategories were: Culture-bound writer; Work-in-progress; Want-to-be better writer; Under a social role; and Self-efficacy beliefs. These are illustrated in Figure 4.1, below, and unpacked in the following subsections.

Figure 4.3. Writer's identity and self-image



The term identity was not defined to participants, and thus when asked about their identities they were free to interpret the term in their own way. Even so, attributes of “identity” were both described in these interviews by participants themselves and transpired

in remarks about how they felt about themselves when writing. Across these remarks, it seemed that all of them were *culture-bound writers*. Such trait could be observed in simple statements denotative of how they assumed a specific nation-related identity. For example, P3 stated that “it reflects who I am as a student, ESL student, a Saudi Arabian student”. He assumed an Arabian writer identity though he failed to describe how this identity manifested itself via particular aspects in writing.

Nevertheless, some participants were more illustrative by claiming that their identity, and sometime culture-related identity, expressed itself through writing, and differently, based on the language they adopted. This can be observed in P10’s remark:

I always try to project an English identity similar to a native speaker. When writing in English, I try to not show I am an Arabic speaker who speaks English as a second language. This is something that you can’t always control. Your writing tells something about you, and it is hard for me to only project an identity similar to a native English speaker because I have not reached this level of English yet. The best way to go, in this case, is trying to be as clear as possible. If you allow your identity to be part of who you are when writing in English, things might be unclear for your readers. (P10)

Many of those who described differences in the way they expressed themselves (and possibly their identity) in Arabic, against English (as P10), referred to different language structures, such as the way details and vagueness were valued in each language. That is, the impact of some writing characteristics, and the identity that possibly transpired by the application of those characteristics seemed to be culture-bound.

Perhaps because their notion of identity differed, some participants (P3, P4, P6, P8, and P9) argued that their identity did not change according to the adopted language or they had difficulties pinpointed culture-bound differences (e.g., P3: “I am still the person. The presentation of this identity might differ. It might be clearer in Arabic because it is my first language.”). Note that these very same participants nevertheless made culture-bound remarks in association with their writing. That is, from the perspective that they acknowledged themselves as writers that belonged to a certain culture and were writing in a second language, they still manifested this culture-bound identity (P3: “I feel confident when writing in Arabic for sure. With English, I won’t say I am confident but kind of comfortable in writing.”)

Indeed, most participants acknowledged such culture-bound identity by describing their different levels of expertise in different languages, one which could be related with different ways of presenting themselves and their interests and (at least) manifesting their identities. Some simply argued that they held different expertise or knowledge levels in each language, and thus, had different culture-related ‘identities’. In this type of commentary, some claimed they were better Arabic writers (P8 and P9) often because this was their mother tongue, or better English writers (P4, P6, and P10), often because they had more recent practice. Most, however, thought they were better English academic writers and better Arabic general writers (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10), and often because they had more practice and knew better the English jargon and structure relevant for writing within a specific academic discipline.

Note that their value judgements about whether they were better in one or another language were not consistent; some participants contradicted themselves (P8 and P9). The

very same inconsistency can be found in regards to other value judgements, such as how good or bad they felt they were (categories to be explored as follows). It can be that such inconsistency was consequent of a perspective shift. For example, when considering the factor of recent experience, that is, the language which they more recently had been utilizing for academic and/or professional purposes, they might feel they were better in English. But when they considered their experience with different writing styles, such as academic and general, they might feel they were better in Arabic. Thus, many identity-related categories and codes must be interpreted with care. Provided statements were often contradictory or ambiguous.

Another factor that might contribute to such inconsistency was here systematized as the category *work-in-progress*. This category illustrated how participants' writing skills, and possibly the way their identity expressed itself through writing, were in constant change. Particularly their English skills were often acknowledged as a work in progress, as something which they permanently practiced, utilized, and, as such, observed an evolution, change, and/or improvement. This was the opinion of the majority, one which involved the utilization of the present tense to describe changes in their language writing expertise (e.g., P7: "I am still learning and improving").

There was only one participant (P6) who did not use the present tense to describe his English skills. He only utilized the past tense (the skills had improved) and the future tense (he had the goal to improve them further). That is, even in this participant's interview there was some sense of direction, of wanting to become a better writer - and one which, albeit not explicitly pinpointed, possibly consubstantiated itself in the present tense while he pursued his academic goals. There was also one participant (P9) who, unlike the rest, remarked that

his Arabic writing was “improving”, but his English writing was not: “however, because I do not practice a lot, I am not improving” (P9). That is, though generally this attribute was associated with English writing skills, it could also apply to their Arabic writing skills.

The category *want-to-be-better writer* was precisely about their need or desire to be better writers and improve their writing skills. It was expressed by every participant. For some (P1, P3, P7, and P10), the goal was excelling, being perfect, and/or sounding like a “native” (e.g., P7: “As for the way I project myself, I see myself a student, no-native student who aspires to be able to write like a native speaker of English.”)

For others (P8 and P9), the aim was the acquisition of ‘sufficient’ skills for academic, but not for professional reasons. These were also participants who confessed not being greatly interested about improving their writing skills, and certainly not to the point of excelling. P8’s remark, below, it can be observed that he only acknowledged the need to improve his critical analysis writing skills when prompted by the interviewer. He further felt the need to clarify to the interviewer that he did not feel the need to excel and be a great writer for professional reasons:

I can’t think of anything in particular. Well, may be critiquing something and examining various arguments in writing is something I want to improve. However, I am not really working towards improving my writing skills at the moment. I am only focusing on improving my speaking skills. I am an engineer and I need speaking more. (P8)

Regardless, having the desire to improve was always present even among participants who did not particularly feel the need to. The academic circumstances of these participants pushed towards enhancing some aspects of their writing. Most participants expressed their

great desire to pursue their education and enrol in PhD programs after completing their masters'. This might explain their desire to improve to be instrumental in the sense that they see their L2 self to be part of an imagined community presented by the academic community. Becoming a part of such academic community might be the first step in closing the gap existing between participants' past, present and future selves.

All participants assumed a social role while writing; they were *under a social role*. Most commonly, they described themselves as students, ESL students, students of a particular discipline, scientists, and/or engineers. There was one participant (P9) acknowledging his "husband, father, and friend" identity, another (P4) his "teacher" identity, a few mentioning culture-bound or "international" aspects of their identity (P2, P3, P4, P6, and P7). Indeed, the latter was the only aspect emphasised by P10, and two participants (P5 and P9) only identified their "engineer" social role. Nominating a single role might mean that aspect is the strongest and most salient side of their personality and one which might superimpose itself above their other roles (such as being a student).

When referring to this aspect, most participants did not elaborate extensively on the consequences or reasons for adopting a social role. One participant commented upon the flexibility of such social identity; he swapped how he presented himself in accordance with the purpose of the task. This was the reason behind the choice of different social identities. There was also only one participant (P1) explaining why defining a social identity in writing mattered:

Another thing that makes your writing unclear is how you present yourself or who you are when you are writing the assignment; are you a student? Are you ESL student? Are you a scientist? You need to choose the right identity and the

right representation of yourself when you are writing. Your choice of identity depends on what writing you are going to do. If it is related to science, then you adopt the scientist persona and write the task. (P1)

For P1, it seemed that identity issues were strongly linked to three aspects: social identity, purpose of the writing task, and clarity in output. The appropriate social role should be chosen in accordance with the aim of the writing task and possibly with the targeted audience. The result would be enhanced clarity and comprehensibility. Even though placing learners in a particular social identity (e.g. ESL identity) can have a negative impact in portraying them as bad or inferior writers (Burke, 2009), learners can use this to their advantage which, in turn, will influence their identity positively. For example, it can motivate them to better themselves.

The category of *self-efficacy beliefs* (N=10) translated into how participants always managed to judge their own work and their own writing skills. They had clear opinions about how well they could perform certain writing tasks; they had self-efficacy beliefs. This was so even if initially some claimed having judging difficulties. These were solved by electing an assessment criterion, normally their grades (e.g., P9: “In English, it is hard to say but based on my grades (...).”) They also sometimes contradicted themselves. For example, P4 was discussing how “*fine*” of an Arabic writer he was. When subsequently asked about his favourite writing language, he suddenly argued that he had lack of Arabic writing practice and “probably” had forgotten how to write in Arabic:

I think I am good. All-important aspects about Arabic writing are known to me. I don't think I have a problem in writing. (...) I think I prefer English because I reached a place where writing in English is quite clear and I am conformable in

writing. If you ask me to write an article in Arabic, I probably would struggle because I forgot how to write and the steps I need to follow to write in Arabic. I have not written anything in Arabic in the last three years. (P4)

Furthermore, participants were also ambivalent in regards to how good they were regarding their actual writing skills' level. With the exception of P5 who, from the beginning to the end of the interview, felt like a bad writer, being good seemed to be a matter of perspective. It varied in accordance with the language they were considering, with the level of expertise (e.g., past vs. desired), with the type of topic being elaborated upon, and so forth. That is, their self-efficacy was a matter of perspective.

Among these factors, the most expressive, that is, most often apparent in their comments, was the considered level of mastery (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, and P10). Their visions of their L2 possible selves were mainly influenced by their strong aspirations in becoming better writers. As these findings suggest, most participants wanted to improve their skills, they wanted to achieve higher levels of mastery. Yet, they had also improved, principally since arriving to England. When comparing themselves with the desired level of expertise, some participants would provide statements as P4's, below:

I am still a second language learner and I do not think I will never be as good as a native speaker of English. Although I think my writing skills are fine, I find hard sometimes to put everything perfectly together. (P4)

In this remark, P4 told that his writing skills were good or "*fine*", but not as good as those of native speakers. That is, from the perspective of an international student, and only from such perspective, his mastery was satisfactory but not great. In another interview moment, the same participant remarked that:

I have passed many stages to get to where I am now. I improved greatly in writing essays and reports since I came to the United Kingdom. Since I started my masters in October, I have been doing fine. (P4)

Here, he compared his level with his part or initial level, one which was worse than the present one. This comparison gave him the confidence to claim that he was a “fine” writer. This shows how their self-efficacy beliefs were a matter of perspective. Overall, from the perspective of outstanding skills, such as those sometimes encountered while reading the works of others, most participants concluded or judged their skills as “middle” level, median, and often continued to justify their opinions by stating they sought to be better. This was a more common occurrence than comparisons with past expertise levels.

At the same time, P4, as well as others, believed that improving their writing skills was something realistic and achievable if they keep working on themselves by practicing and reading. This also shows a sense of self-efficacy. It also shows how their possible selves were deemed feasible which motivated them to achieve it.

All participants criticised themselves throughout all interviews. Some were quite harsh on themselves more than others. They particularly talked about a specific aspect of their writing that they were not happy about or they wanted to improve. However, this self-criticism was allocated sometimes to other factors that were out of participants’ control. Some participants criticised themselves first and then put blame on external factors. P1 demonstrated this idea:

It is hard to improve yourself as a student in SA because no one tells your mistakes and what is needed to do in order to improve. Even during exams in SA, most tests that I seated for were multiple choices style and no writing is needed.

There is no motivation and no indicator that can show which area I need to improve and work on. (P1)

4.3 Summary

Participants showed a similar learning trajectory in Saudi Arabia during school years. After joining college, their learning experience differed which affected their L2 possible selves differently. Some participants were not able to see themselves as users of English, whereas the others were successful in seeing themselves as English users and writers in later stages of their Bachelor degree. In the UK, the analyses showed the significant role played by the learning experience helping them become motivated, active and autonomous learners which reinforced their L2 possible selves.

The thematic analysis showed how participants saw themselves as writers in the past and the present and how they imagined themselves in the future. Even though participants found it difficult to explain how identity manifested itself in writing, they made many cultural remarks that could be taken as manifestations of their identity. For example, they explained that their own perception of themselves differs based on the language adopted (Arabic or English). They also declared themselves as writers belonging to a particular culture and ESL writers with various levels of expertise or knowledge. Lastly, participants expressed value judgments on their writing abilities and whether they felt as good or bad writers.

CHAPTER 5

PARTICIPANTS' CONCEPTUALISATION OF ENGLISH WRITING AND THEIR ASCRIBED EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL STATES

This chapter presents the most salient themes that emerged from the narrative and thematic analyses in relation to participants' conceptualisation and opinions of English writing and their emotional and behavioural states. The chapter is arranged chronologically starting with the analysis of the first interview and then participants' diaries and finally their last interview. In doing so, it will be possible to build a time perspective into the analysis and arguments, allowing me to see differences between participants' emotions, self-esteem and self-confidence at the beginning and at the end of the study.

The way participants felt about themselves as writers with a focus on their conceptualisation of English writing, is explored based on the analysis of the first interview. The chapter then examines emotions expressed during the first interview and presents a detailed thematic analysis of these emotions based on participants' diaries and last interview. Finally, participants' behavioural states and their role in constructing and strengthening the participants' visions of their L2 self are investigated. The aim is answering the third broad research question of the investigation with its sub-questions:

3. Saudi students' conceptualisation, orientation and relationship with English writing

- a. What do participants think of English writing? What are their opinions of English writing?
- b. What kinds of emotional and behavioural states do participants ascribe to English writing?

5.1 Participants' Conceptualisation of their Writing Skills

This section illustrates the role and the function of English according to the participants in their first interview. It further explores participants' opinions on writing and whether they like to write in English and the reasons for their choice based on the analysis of the first interview.

5.1.1 The role and the function of the English language

Most participants felt that they actually had not learned English at all during the six years of school. During these years, they never saw themselves as users of the language. They considered English as a foreign language with no communicative use except for passing exams. They looked at English as a subject at school that they needed to pass to get their school diplomas without any functional purposes. There were no chances to practice the language inside and outside the class, and there was no motivation to improve at all as users of English in Saudi Arabia. P1 explains this point:

In Arabic, we had a dictation class that was helpful. We also had the same for English but it was not focussed. We would normally write two to three sentences and the text will be full of spelling mistakes. There was no motivation and enough time to practice. I believe the more you write and make mistakes, you will learn from these mistakes and then improve you writing skills. Things are easier when you write in Arabic as it is my first language. But with English, things are extremely hard and most of the things that helped me improve my writing I learned here in the UK. (P1)

All participants grew up in an environment with no exposure to English language. They did not have any contact with foreigners and they never travelled outside Saudi during their school years. This indicates that English was not seen as a means of communication but as a cultural artefact associated with a foreign culture. As a result, participants did not particularly see themselves as English users, suggesting an extremely vague and undeveloped L2 possible self.

In college, there was a shift in regard to the attitudes participants held for the English language. Half of the participants (P2, P4, P6, P7, and P10) had a different learning experience in comparison to the rest of the participants. They all did a BA in English language education. The fact that these participants were studying to be English teachers created a solid sense of obligation to learn and improve their language skills. Increased practice and appreciation for the language were possibly partly responsible for the mentioned improvement of their English language skills inside the classroom. However, English still did not seem to have a big role outside the classroom; they made no reference to having the chance to communicate with foreigners during these years. After a few semesters into their BAs, they apparently started to envision themselves as English users and writers with quite positive attitudes to the language. As P6 stated:

I used to be a really bad writer. The last two courses at college (writing 3 and advanced writing) were really helpful and I learned how to write. We did not learn anything at school, we only memorised short paragraphs before exams. At college, the first two writing courses were not helpful, and I did not improve. In writing 3 and advanced writing, we had a great teacher who helped us learn and improve a lot. We had to write about something every day which helped a lot.

(P6)

For this participant, his improvements were partly the result of intensive practice, but also of the constructive intervention of a specific teacher. The other participants within this group had similar experiences. On the other hand, the rest of the participants (P1, P3, P5, P8 and P9) were introduced to few English courses as part of their BA degrees in engineering, laboratory, and computer science. Although they started to see the importance of English for their future careers, there was no noticeable development for their L2 self. They did not have enough practice inside and outside the classroom and their English language skills experienced very minimal improvement. For example, P3 indicated that he did not learn anything new; he felt that his language skills stayed the same as in school. P8 remarked that:

I was not really working on improving my writing skills in SA. We did not need to. My focus was speaking and if I want to write something, I would write like if I am speaking. I write what I say. My writing was really terrible. (P8)

5.1.2 Participants' point of views on English writing

None of the participants had actual training in how to write in English; they found themselves being asked to write without any clear instructions. Practice was almost inexistent during school years; they commonly only had two to three classes dedicated to English per term. They relied heavily on memorisation to pass exams. They came across two writing genres; paragraphs and short essays. Writing was mostly an end product in the sense that no revision or editing was performed. Moreover, most would simply write what they knew about the topic without feeling the need to do research or expand their knowledge. They also did not follow any writing guidelines; they generally relied on their knowledge of Arabic and adopted the same structure while writing in English. This state of affairs changed little in subsequent years, principally for those who were not pursuing English studies. P1

illustrated:

We did not do that normally, I mean writing. We did not have to submit assignments as we only needed to attend exams. But basically, you would write everything you know on paper and that's it. It is a first and a final draft as well. We did not do any research in English. You only write what you know about a topic in the exam following an Arabic structure. (P1)

During the first interview, participants were asked directly if they currently enjoyed writing. With the exception of participant 4, none liked the activity. They explained that writing was quite demanding and required a lot of work. To produce a decent piece of writing, they needed to spend a long time preparing and looking for resources. Some of them illustrated that writing was a difficult skill that required constant practice, which is something they lacked during their time as students in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, P1 mentioned something interesting which was getting used to writing. During his master's, he started to get used to writing extensively, which helped him deal with the difficulty of this skill. His comments clarify this point:

The quantity of writing makes it really hard and puts you under pressure. It is also time consuming and requires huge effort. But I actually started to get used to it. It became normal and easier for me with time. (P1)

On the other hand, participant 4 explicitly confessed he liked writing. However, he did not explicitly explore the feeling. He further presented a reason why writing was so important; it was the basis of success. He also indicated that he did not like descriptive writing because he was weak in this type of genre. He demonstrated:

Because it is the essence of everything you learn. Everything you learn and all other skills can be reflected in your writing. It measures how good you are and

how successful you are. Your success as a second language learner is based on how good you are as a writer. It is the most important skill. (P4)

5.2. Participants' Emotional and Behavioural States

This section explores the emotional and behavioural states experienced by participants during their learning path in both Saudi Arabia and in the UK. It also examines the role of these states in influencing participants' language learning experiences, motivation, and L2 possible self. The section will start with the analysis of participants' first interview and then a more detailed analysis of their diaries and last interview.

5.2.1 Participants' emotional states

From the first interview and throughout the steps of this research, participants provided materials depicting how their past experiences of English language learning, particularly English writing, were generally emotionally negative. In many instances, participants showed their dissatisfaction and unhappiness with their learning experience in Saudi Arabia. For example, they expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional style of learning English with its focus on memorisation and theory. As P5 explained:

We did not have an English writing class to be honest. I did not learn how to write in English during school. I remember we had to do some writing (a short paragraph) in final exams during the last two years of secondary school. Teachers would tell us that we need to write about a particular topic in the exam, so I used to memorise a text without understanding anything and then write it on the exam day. (P5)

They had to learn English, so they passed exams. Understanding the language was irrelevant. The whole learning pedagogy was somehow instrumental, in that it concentrated on preparing students for exams, which is something common in the Saudi education system. This style seemed to prevent them from practicing the language, an aspect which was sometimes offered to justify their lack of improvement as English users when in Saudi.

Some participants also showed their unhappiness of the low linguistic skills or teaching style of teachers in Saudi Arabia, describing them to be unqualified and unable to teach in some occasions: “Teachers here are more qualified because they speak English as a first language. Most English teachers in SA are not qualified and some lack the skills to be even teachers in the first place” (P7). Their evaluation of learners’ skills was also not driven by high, excellent standards. P1 illustrates this experience:

In Saudi Arabia, teachers are not strict when it comes to marking your writing because English is not our first language. They ignore spelling and grammatical mistakes and give you a good grade regardless of the quality of your work. (P1)

Teachers also failed to guide the students’ learning path. As explained by P9, I remember that teachers would ask us to write about general topics; topics with social outlook such as going on a picnic, pilgrimage and mothers. Based on your own knowledge about the topic; you write without any research. We did not know any better. We did not receive any feedback from teachers, and no one told us how to write (P9).

One way of understanding the origin of such negative emotional states is based on the Saudi Arabian educational system, which, according to the participants, was

labelled to be traditional with a poorly style of teaching English. These could be taken as ground for disinvestment in classrooms (Carpenter et al., 2008). P1 explained:

It is hard to improve yourself as a student in Saudi Arabia because no one tells your mistakes and what is needed to do in order to improve. Even during exams in SA, most tests that I seated for were multiple choices style and no writing was needed. There is no motivation and no indicator that can show which area I need to improve and work on. (P1)

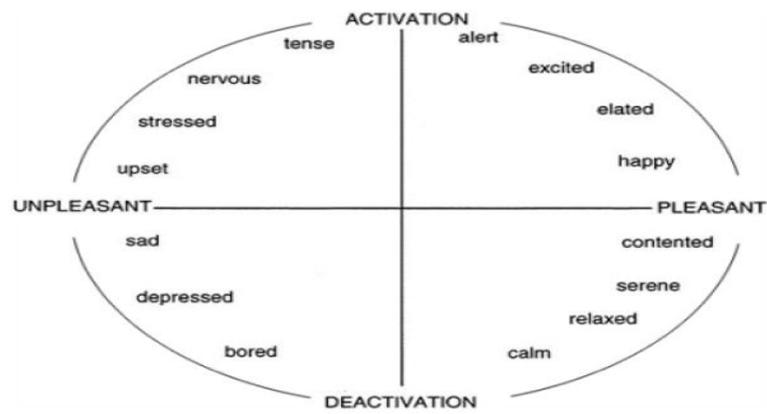
In the first interview, some participants used negative terms to describe their learning experience in Saudi Arabia. They illustrated that they did not learn anything prior to their arrival to the UK when it came to English. This indicates an extreme case of negative emotional state that had no effect, or possibly a hindering effect, on the development of a positive L2 possible self and motivation. P8 indicated that “We did not really learn how to write to be honest; it was like we would be asked to write and then we did”.

In summary, most participants associated emotionally negative states with their English learning experiences occurred in Saudi, partly due to its teaching style. These emotions seemed to be responsible for students’ lack of personal investment, motivation, and effective learning, to the point where they felt they had learnt nothing during those years.

Participants’ emotions were tackled in more detail in the thematic analysis of their diaries and last interviews. Overall, depicted themes showed how writing was an emotional experience for every participant. The contrast between past and present learning experiences also became even more obvious during these research stages. To classify participants’ emotional states, Posner, Russel, and Peterson’s (2005) circumplex model of affect was employed. This model indicates that emotions can be distinguished from one another in

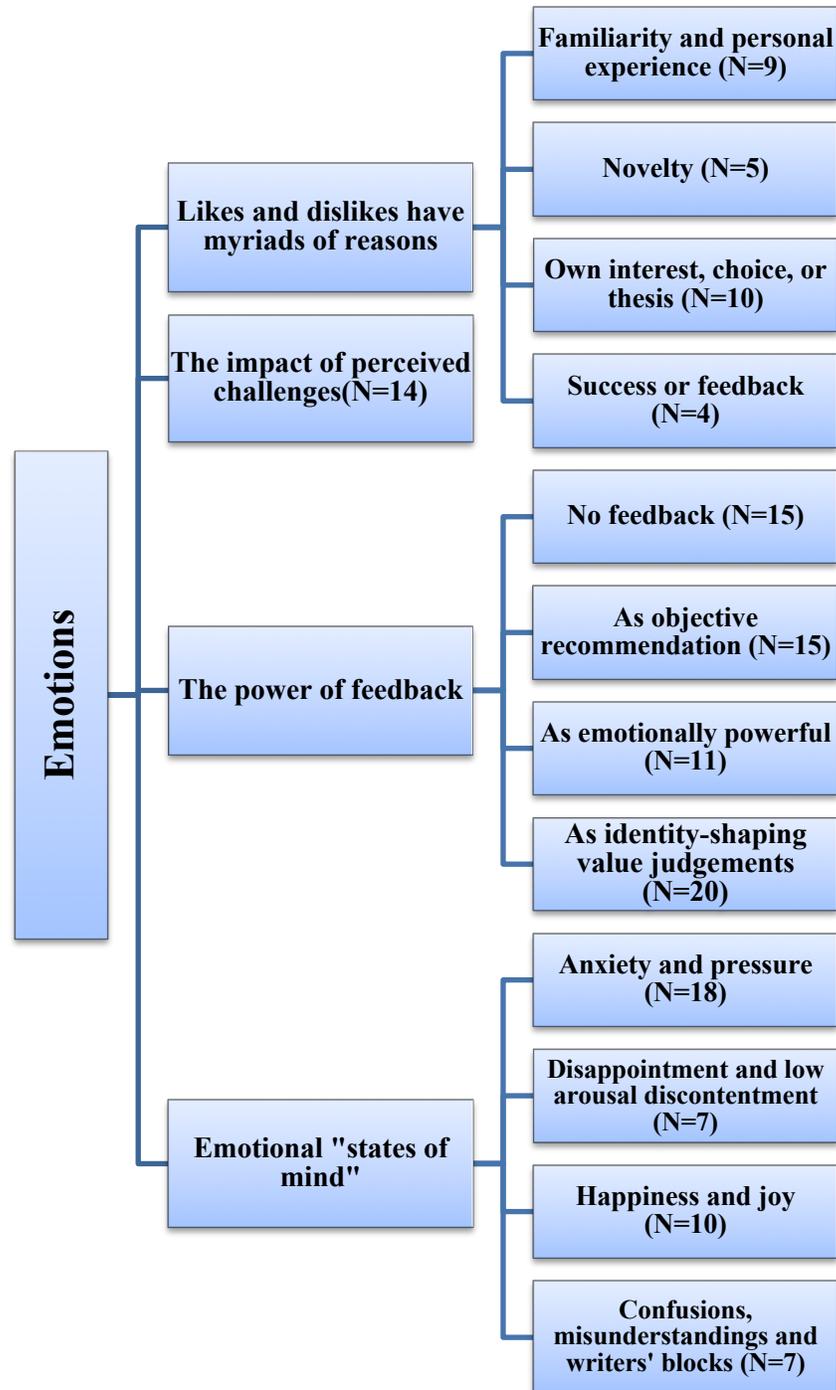
accordance with their physiological arousal levels (high or low) and psychological valence (positive or negative). Under this classification system, anxiety states are regarded as high arousal negative emotional states and happiness states are regarded as high arousal positive states. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.4. Posner, Russel and Perterson's (2005) circumplex model of affect



The analysis of diaries involves making use of what participants remember and share about recent past academic experiences. What they shared, and was systematized in this analysis, was what was brought to the forefront of participants' attention while writing. This memory-based process is often subjected to memory biases. That is, what participants shared each day is not necessarily exhaustive, complete, or even accurate. It amounts to that which they valued and managed to remember and express. For this stage, participants' emotions were described through four main themes: likes and dislikes have myriads of reasons; the impact of perceived challenges; the power of feedback; and emotional "states of mind" (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.5. Thematic structure of emotions in participants' diaries



The subtheme *likes and dislikes have myriads of reasons* reflects attitudes (positive and negative) manifested in their texts through their writing projects. This theme is the result of 28 quotations wherein participants enumerated the reasons behind their fondness of or discontentment with certain writing projects. It is generally based upon their answers to

question four. Despite the variety, it was possible to identify a few more common reasons for enjoying the writing projects. Namely, participants seemed to more commonly like the projects which involved topics of their own interest, thesis, or choice (N=10; e.g., P6: “I was very happy because the topic that I chose was of a great interest to me.”); which were familiar to them for personal or professional experience (N=9; e.g., P2: “Yes, because it’s the thing I experienced. I mean I have struggled with IELTS a lot like all other international students.”), which were a novelty to them (N=5; P2: “Yes, because it’s in my field. It was so interesting to explore the topic and find out about various techniques teachers use to teach this skill.”), and which had generated positive feedback (N=4; e.g., P3: “I also liked it because I received a positive feedback on it”).

The reasons here listed are not exhaustive. There were a few more unusually cited reasons, such as liking “practical” (P4) projects. These more uncommon reasons might be more idiopathic. However, the examples provided here for these more specific reasons, and specifically the reason related with the positive feedback received, partly show that diaries were written after the fact. That is, the reasons enumerated here are those which, for one or another reason, were brought to the forefront of participants’ attention while writing. This memory-based process is, as well known in psychology, often subjected to remembrance biases. For example, more recent aspects are more likely to be cited (recency bias). If participants had just encountered some new topic, they would be more likely to introduce this issue in the diary in relation to another project; they had just realized novelty was an interesting issue. In brief, the list provided by participants each day is not necessarily exhaustive and complete. The method is, by definition, memory based. Findings deal with what is more salient in participants’ memory of events.

The subtheme *impact of perceived challenges* included participants' diverse emotional reactions to academic challenges. Participants sometimes spontaneously and sometimes upon request provided descriptions about the aspects they had found difficult and easy concerning their writing projects. Although less frequently, they also sometimes described their emotional reactions to these qualities. An observation of these descriptions seemed to suggest that there was an *Impact of Perceived Challenges* (N=14). This subtheme included participants' diverse emotional reactions to academic 'challenges' (P1) and/or assignments perceived as difficult for whatever reason. It also includes remarks regarding the emotional impact of "easy" (P1) assignments. The quotes included here were all provided as answers to question four, about whether they enjoyed that week's writing project and why.

For example, P1 remarked he had liked that week's project because "it was a big challenge" (P1). Yet, the same participant also liked "familiar" (P1) and "easy" (P1) projects, and disliked a specific difficult project. That is, this participant did not necessarily enjoy a writing project simply because it represented a challenge. Overall, there are fourteen answers describing emotional reactions to challenging and non-challenging writing projects. Most participants disliked challenges and liked easy tasks (N=10, P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6). Nevertheless, a few remarks (N=4, P1, P3, and P4) also suggested that there were some demanding projects that participants enjoyed (e.g., P4: "I was quite enthusiastic at first and challengeable at some parts.") - or, some stated, projects which were still enjoyed despite the difficulties they posed (e.g., P3: "I do like it although it is demanding").

The power of feedback subtheme dedicated to the impact of obtained feedback was described. Notice that Saudi Arabian teaching was sometimes characterized through its lack of feedback. Observing their UK experiences regarding this issue might help to understand that better feedback might matter, and its impact on emotions (and thus, on motivation,

actual learning and identity). It was here considered that grades and similar evaluation outputs were also a form of feedback. They help to quantitatively describe the results of a writing project, and can complement less structured and qualitative forms of feedback, such as the one obtained with tutors when submitting a report or labels such as “good”.

In these diaries, in several instances, participants declared not having received any feedback about that week’s particular writing project (N=15 quotes; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6). In most cases (N=10 quotes; P1, P2, P3, and P4) they apparently were still expecting it. The exception was P6, who had never received any feedback at least once “because we are not supposed to receive any kind of feedback on our assignment unless the actual deadline has passed” (P6). That is, P6’s diaries did not help to clarify the value of feedback. The findings described here are based on the writings of the remainder of participants.

For those who had received it, feedback amounted to *objective recommendations* (N=15 quotes; P1, P2, P3, and P4). It clarified the strengths and weaknesses of the work they had presented (e.g., P3: “a friend of mine gave feedback and suggested a way in which the report can be organized better.”) Such operational evaluation was sometimes argued to affect their subsequent writing tasks; constructive criticism and advice was retained and subsequently shaped their writing process and output. For example, at a certain point, P2 commented that “previous feedback showed me how [to] approach any writing project” (P2). Suggestions such as the latter showed how some participants valued the obtained feedback because it supported their learning process. Their absence, would, theoretically, render them the possibility of improvement.

Feedback was also described as an emotional trigger that influenced their emotions. As *an emotion-trigger* (N=11 quotes; P2, P3, and P4), three participants described, over

eleven quotes, how feedback could have a powerful negative or positive emotional impact upon their moods and self-esteem. Such emotional effect of feedback was very clearly expressed by P3: “I struggled with this assignment. I am not happy with myself because I did not get a good grade. So I do not think I am a good writer.” This remark showed how the received numeric feedback had an emotional impact; it made P3 unhappy. In other circumstances the obtained feedback was responsible for P3’s happiness, rather than discontentment: “never felt happier to be honest after receiving the feedback.” (P3) That is, not every feedback has a positive effect on mood and self-esteem – though it might still end up having a positive effect on their actual learning.

Feedback was also often described *as identity-shaping value judgements* (N=20 quotes; P1, P2, P3, and P4). Feedback was a value judgement; it valued the work in positive or negative terms and allowed them to have a sense of their learning curve. (e.g., P3: “The feedback was really positive and I received 75% which was the best grade in this semester.”).

In this study, feedback not only had an effect upon participants’ moods, as previously explored, but it also had an effect on participants’ perceptions (self-confidence) and love (self-esteem) for themselves. This is demonstrated by, for example, P4, who claimed that he considered himself as “a good writer so far but this might change based on the feedback from my teacher”. Here, he clearly expressed that his opinion regarding his ability as a writer (a self-evaluation which is often a sign of that person’s self-esteem and self-confidence) changed as a function of received feedback. When the feedback was positive, he thought more highly of his own work, that is, he showed greater self-confidence – even if sometimes such higher grade simply derived from having included the overall requested information in the assessed work, and not quite so much a consequence of his writing abilities.

It was further observed that eight of the eleven quotes descriptive of the emotional impact of feedback were provided by P3. P1 never once mentioned this emotional form of impact and usually commented on obtained feedback by describing its objective recommendations. It is possible that some people are more emotionally affected by feedback. Psychologically, those with lower self-esteem are often found to be more profoundly or extensively affected by the opinions of others. This was most possibly the case for P3, who became a “bad” writer whenever the feedback was bad. If so, then the emotional impact of some feedback may be partly moderated by their identity and self-esteem – principally when the feedback was crafted with enough care not to be regarded as a value judgement applicable to aspects other than the presented work.

Another emerging theme was *emotional “states of mind”*. It sought to describe participants’ emotional states, as well as other subjective states of mind, such as feeling “confused” (P1). The most common emotional states were, in decreasing order of frequency, anxiety and pressure (N=18 quotes; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6); happiness and joy (N=10 quotes; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6), mental confusions, misunderstandings and writing blocks (N=7 quotes; P1, P2, P4, and P6), and disappointment and discontentment (N=7; P2, P3, P4, and P6).

The first emotional state is anxiety and pressure. It is interesting to note that, in comparison with other emotional states, anxiety was more common and discussed by every participant. Anxiety here is only discussed in relation to the skill of writing as it may be one of the most normal states associated with academic writing projects. Yet, not much should be read into these frequencies; the definition of the proprieties of each category and subtheme might be responsible for noticed disparities. Although care was taken not to improperly or

non-empirically broaden or reduce the scope of each subtheme, there may be instances wherein such attempt failed at its intent.

The subtheme anxiety and pressure included every reference to high arousal, negative, fear- and stress-related emotional states. More specifically, it included the emotional states of “anxiety”, “panic”, “stress”, “worry”, and “pressure”. Overall, its most common causes were associated with existing expectations (N=4; P2, P3, and P4), scheduled evaluations (N=6; P2, P3, P4, and P6), existing deadlines (N=4; P3, P4, and P6), and first time (or novelty, or lack of familiarity) insecurities (N=3; P3 and P6). Anxiety-related commentary appeared four times in the answers of P3, P4, and P6, justifying their dissatisfaction with certain writing projects (question 4). That is, even if participants did not explicitly establish a causal link between disliking and stress, the context of these answers supports the interpretation that sometimes anxiety is a sufficient cause for disliking a project, as in P3’s answer below:

Not really, it (discussion chapter) is the most difficult chapter in the thesis and it is the most important one as well. I approached the writing with great anxiety and stress. It must be a really good chapter otherwise the whole thesis will be bad.

(P3)

It does not seem to consist of a great, possibly biased, leap to conclude that a great factor behind P3’s dissatisfaction with the project was the experienced state of anxiety – even if this conclusion is merely implicit. There was also an explicit comment relating anxiety and self-confidence. More specifically, below, P6 argued that anxiety generated insecurity feelings; he lost confidence in his own skills:

Being involved in an assessed project may increase your anxiety level and thus cast doubt on your own ability. I was kind of worried about my assignment writing as this was the first time to be involved in such a lengthy written work.

(P6)

Most generally, unlike in the above comment, participants simply identified the emotional state and did not elaborate on it, such as in terms of causes, consequences, associated experiences, or qualities. Since there were some participants that were found to enjoy some perhaps stress-inducing demanding projects, it was not here assumed that participants disliked this specific emotional state – even if it can be argued, as it is discussed in the introduction to the findings section, that this is an intense negative emotion and that, at least in the instances where it is offered as a reason for disliking a project, that some did indeed experience it as a disliked state.

There was also a rather common high arousal positive emotion in participants' diaries, here named *happiness and joy*. It was experienced at least once by every participant. This emotional state was generally referred to as one of “happiness”, “joy”, and “*fun*” (N=9 quotes, e.g., P3: “Never felt happier to be honest after receiving the feedback.”) and once as being “eagerness” (P3). These positive emotional states were most frequently described as being caused by positive feedback (N=3 quotes; P3 and P4) or by the interest or enthusiasm triggered by the project's topic (N=5 quotes; P2, P3, and P6; e.g., P2: “Both articles were also interesting so it was fun working on them”). In two instances, it was discussed alongside high self-confidence. When combined with the statement concerning the relationship between low self-confidence and anxiety, it may be that happiness increases writers' self-esteem and self-confidence, and through this relationship affects participants' writing quality or style.

On the other hand, there was an additional negative emotional state named *disappointment and low arousal discontentment*. This subtheme included every reference to the low arousal negative emotional states of disappointment and discontentment. Although, in comparison with anxiety, this state was neither as commonly cited nor by everyone, it was still experienced by four participants at least once, with such significance that it merited an entrance in the diary. That is, it is here argued that not every experienced emotion was described by participants but that those which found their way into their diaries were more significant in some way, such as due to their intensity, impact, meaning, or expressivity. An example is provided by P2: “yes, it was good [the feedback] but disappointed to some extent because I felt that I have covered all the aspects of that assignment”. This sentence suggests that this participant was disappointed and/or dissatisfied with himself and/or the results of the evaluation. It was possibly a significant emotion translating his non-fulfilled expectations and/ or misjudgement of the work’s scope.

An additional negative state of mind consisted of *mental confusions, misunderstandings, and writing blocks* (N=7 quotes; P1, P2, P4, and P6). Though more commonly experienced by P1, and expressed via poor writing, it was also described by two other participants. For example, P6 remarked how “sometimes I find myself stuck trying to gather my thoughts.” According to P1, such writing block could be caused by misunderstandings and confusions and he saw his “writing getting better once my thoughts come easily” (P1).

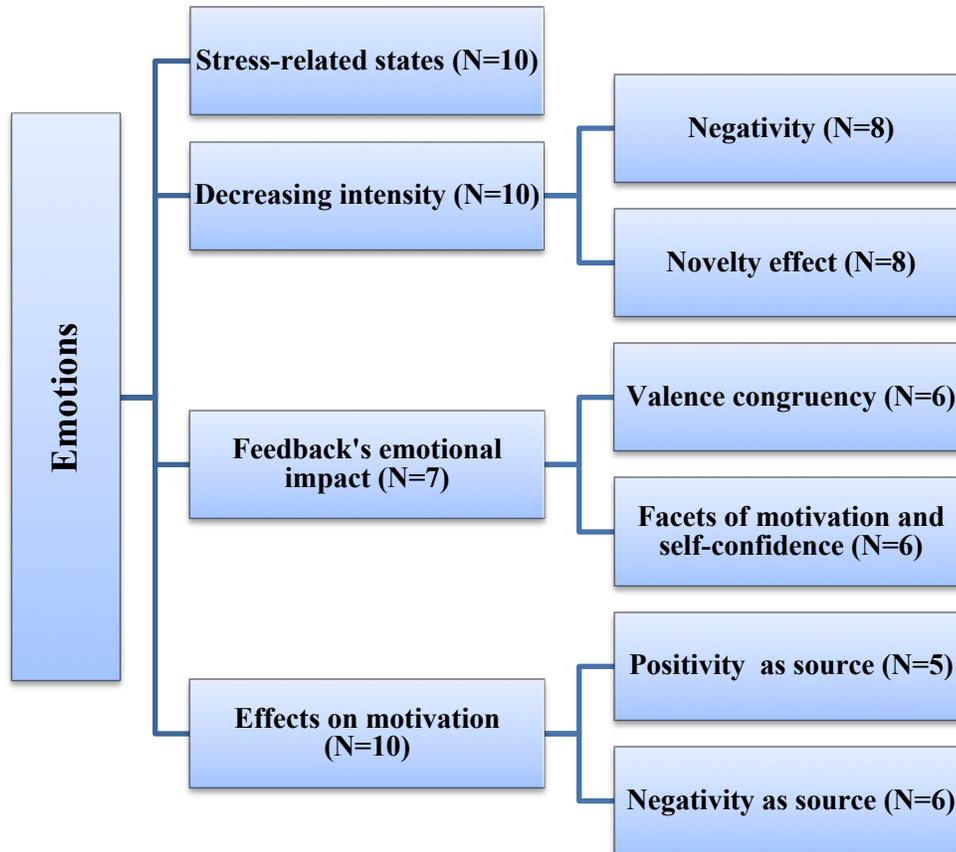
There were also other emotional states that were grouped in this subtheme *other emotional states*, such as feeling: “justly rewarded” (P3), “thankful” (P3), “angry” and “frustrated” (P4), “relaxed” (P6), and “resilient and hopeful” (P1 and P2). Since seldom were

these specific emotions repeated across participants, it seems reasonable to posit that the inclusion of less common emotions in the diaries might be expressive of participants' personality. For example, the emotion anger is only mentioned by P4 and twice. However, the data is not sufficient to establish any strong conclusion.

The thematic analysis of the second interview showed similar findings to the analysis of the diaries particularly in the stress/anxiety states experienced by participants. Participants were directly asked to describe their emotions. They sometimes spontaneously discussed them when approaching other topics, such as when describing positive and negative experiences or experienced difficulties and solutions. Such commentary was inspected for the theme Emotions. This theme included the following subthemes, illustrated in Figure 5.3 stress-related states, decreasing intensity, feedback's emotional impact, and effects on motivation. The naming of the themes immediately shows the importance of stress and anxiety, alongside the power of feedback as an emotional trigger. Yet, this analysis added up to the knowledge gathered through the analysis of the diaries by systematically scrutinising the relationship between emotions and motivation and the impact of novelty.

Note that these themes do not extensively approach existing material on emotions and that thematic analysis does not allow for causality determination. The causality implied in the last two subthemes was an inductive finding that should be understood as a suggestion, a possibility. It would be more accurate to state that these concepts were related in writing; that they co-occurred. Given that evidence suggested some direction, this direction was labelled in a way that suggests causality.

Figure 5.6. Thematic structure of emotions in participants' last interview



In their second interview, every participant expressed experiencing a negative emotional state which was stress. It was the most frequently discussed emotional state, mostly in emotion-related questions but also once when depicting negative experiences. Specifically, they claimed having felt: worry (P1), anxiety (P3, P9, P10), stress (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10), pressure (P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10), and fear (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). These were frequently associated with the following factors: time management issues (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10), novelty effect (P1, P4, P6, P7), writing quality issues (P1, P2, P4, P8), and work load issues (P2, P6, P7, P8). These factors represent the most pressing and anxiety-generating aspects of academic writing and master completion that affected interviewees.

For example, the following P3's comment highlighted time management issues ("not having enough time") and work load ("2 big assignments at the same time") as two anxiety-triggering concerns:

Of course, they did. I remember that I was stressed and under pressure because I had to work on 2 big assignments at the same time, this made me produce two tasks with low quality just to be done with them regardless of the outcome. Not having enough time was a problem for me and it always raised my stress level.
(P3)

In this particular case, the outcome of the experienced stress was producing low quality work. This was not always the case as there were participants who, for example, "worked well under pressure" (P7) and became more focused while working under an anxiety state. That is, the outcome of this state was not necessarily negative. Indeed, it was rather difficult to find a common trend regarding the effects of anxiety upon participants and their work, at least in these writings.

However, participants' experience of emotions shifted in accordance with their circumstances. The theme *decreasing intensity* exemplifies these changes for the factor time. Every participant mentioned how they experienced a decreasing emotional intensity as time progressed. The emotions they initially experienced were generally "negative" (P10), namely, "stress" or "pressure" (P1, P3, P4, P6, and P7), "fear" (P3, P4, and P6), "longing" (P5), and "anger" (P3). Two participants failed to identify the valence of their emotions (P8 and P2). The remainder explicitly identified negative emotions as those that decreased in intensity with time; this amounts to their common *negativity* (N: 8; P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 and P10). P8 simply noted experienced difficulties. As previously argued, it is not farfetched

to consider, principally given the remainder of comments and the context, that difficulty presupposes some negativity. Specifically, P8 explained that:

In the first semester, things were more difficult. Masters here is only one year so everything is packed. In the second semester, I knew how to deal with assignments and my time. I knew how to write them and what I need to get a good grade. My language skills and writing were much better in the second semester. This decreased the level of my emotions a lot. (P8)

This comment described how the beginning of the semester is more difficult because “everything is packed”. This left some impression of stress, of a great amount of tasks competing for attention. He continued by clarifying that subsequently he “knew” what to do. This suggests that initially he was unaware or unfamiliar with the tasks, and that, with time, familiarity increased. The result was “decreased the level of my emotions”. That is, the intensity of the emotions seems to decrease in time. Curiously, only P3 associated a positive emotion with the beginning of his masters, though one which quickly transformed into fear. This answer continued by identifying sources of stress; that is, more emphasis was given to negative emotions. P3 explained:

At the beginning of my masters, I was happy that I got accepted and I am pursuing my dream of doing masters in the UK. After few weeks passed, I became quite scared of upcoming assignments which were quite complicated and required a lot of work. I was afraid that my ideas were not coming across and my teachers would be able to understand what I am trying to say. I was also afraid of not receiving good grades in the first two assignments. (P3)

Finally, P9 commented that at the beginning “things were more emotional.” Then, the emphasis is simply on the experienced emotional intensity. It is precisely this intensity, and not the valenced, that was thus used to label the theme.

Indeed, most participants referred to how emotions were also initially more or subsequently less intense, sometimes via the use of quantifiers such as “very” or “a lot” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) and/or how they subsequently learnt how to “deal” (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9) with their emotions, at least in “better”, more efficient manners. Dealing with emotions is an expression that seems to suggest they needed to gain control over their emotionality; they managed to reduce their intensity or disorganizing impact. P5 gave a practical example of how this could be accomplished. He explained “If it [the feedback] is negative, I try to focus on what is coming. I remind myself that what is done is done. Just look ahead and do better in the next assignment”.

In this particular case, P5 showed how rationalizing a negative event helped him continue working; move on. He does not get overwhelmed or showed any lack of emotional control. This is just one of the many ways via which emotions can be dealt with.

To sum up, participants referred to how the intensity of their emotions, and most often negatively valenced emotions, decreased with time. The source of this intensity or lack thereof was often identified as corresponding to the novelty effect (N=8; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9; e.g., P1: “In the first semester, I was really stressed because it was a new experience”), that is, initial novelty and subsequent familiarity and knowledge regarding what needed to be done – from dealing with emotions, to dealing with time, and guaranteeing success. Note that the participants associating intensity with novelty do not completely coincide with those associating novelty with ease. Only P2, P3, P8, and P9 do. However, if

novelty increases intensity and difficulty, and intensity and difficulty are mostly unpleasant, then novelty is not commonly appreciated by participants. It seems to be an undesirable state in an academic context.

A second cause for decreased intensity was increasing “ease” (N=4; P4, P7, P8, and P9). These four participants had previously associated familiarity and task ease, and they also associated familiarity with decreasing intensity. One can feel a task is easy even when unfamiliar with it, that is, one does not necessarily presuppose the other. That is, albeit not always explicitly stated, and possibly not a universal finding, experienced difficulty, negative emotional intensity, and experienced novelty seem to at least frequently walk hand in hand in the academic context under study. P9 illustrates this: “things are more emotional at the beginning; then they start to become easier with time as you know how to deal with them.” Here, P9 claimed how knowing what to do, thus, of familiarity, increase experienced ease. In turn, this reduced the emotionality of the experience. This indicates that the reported decreasing emotional intensity seemed to result from increased familiarity and experienced ease.

Just like in their diaries, feedback was a prominent topic in participants’ last interview. They referred to *feedback’s emotional impact* (N=7; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7). That is, received feedback and grades triggered emotional experiences. There was some, albeit meagre evidence that the emotional impact of feedback had *valence congruency* (N=6; P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). That is, if participants regarded the feedback as bad, they indirectly expressed how they consequently experienced similarly valenced negative emotions. Specifically, a couple of participants explicitly associated negative emotions with negative feedback. They claimed it left them “sad” (P1), “worried” and “stressed” (P1, and P2), or

generally in a “bad state” (P5). It had an emotionally negative impact. On the other hand, positive feedback was more explicitly and frequently associated with positive emotions, namely “happiness” (P2, P4, and P5), “relief” (P3), and “lower stress levels” (P3).

Positive feedback was also described as resulting in motivation (P4, and P5) and higher self-esteem/self-confidence (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P7). This idea was joined under the category facets of motivation and confidence (N=6; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P7) from the feedback’s emotional impact subtheme. These are not pure emotions, as those in the adopted model in Figure 5.5. However, evidence suggested that these constructs had an emotional facet - or even amounted to an emotion to some participants, namely P1 and P3. P1’s remark illustrated this viewpoint: “when I receive positive feedback, this gives me a sense of relief, happiness and confidence”. In this sentence, P1 enumerated confidence as one of the positive emotions that resulted from positive feedback. Then, although this may consist of a slightly inaccurate use of the term confidence, it highlighted the emotional facet of self-confidence here under discussion.

Overall, the specific effects of differently valenced feedback were not systematically detected across interviews. There was not strong evidence to support this subtheme’s conclusions beyond the observation that feedback had, among others, an emotional impact. Some evidence suggested that positive feedback was associated with positive emotions, and negative feedback with negative emotions; its impact was emotionally congruent. This would be expected if indeed, participants’ self-esteem filters the way feedback is interpreted or if prior emotions narrow the way it is received.

Finally, feedback also apparently affected other aspects that are at least theoretically tangential with emotional aspects. These were motivation and confidence. Positive feedback

seemed to boost confidence and motivate participants, and negative feedback seemed to sometimes affect participants' self-confidence. However, the impact of negative feedback was less clear.

The subtheme *effects on motivation* (N=10; e.g., P9: "These emotions pushed me to finish all my assignments and deliver them on time. They motivated me to work harder.") was concerned with participants' established relationships between emotions and acknowledged willingness and drive (or lack thereof) to pursue certain goals. Positive emotions (e.g., relief and happiness) and/or positive emotion-triggering circumstances (e.g., positive feedback, finishing a task, or being interested in the topic) were always depicted as motivators (N=5; P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6).

On the other hand, there was lack of consensus regarding the emotional impact of negative emotions. Namely, two participants mentioned that negative emotions (e.g., stress, sadness, and fear), and/or negative emotion-triggering events (specifically, negative feedback and homesickness) demotivated them (N=3; P1, P4, and P5; e.g., P1: "Negative feedback demotivates me a lot and it makes me worried"). However, several participants, including two of those who had stated the opposite, remarked that the same cause (negative emotions and/or associated events) motivated them to work harder (N=5; P1, P3, P4, P7, and P8). One participant (P9) simply associated emotions and motivation. In context, he seems to be referring to negative emotions namely stress, though this is unclear. For this reason, he was not joined to either side.

A detailed examination of participants' accounts, aiming at better understanding such controversy, showed that negative feedback initially demotivated P1 and P4. Both pursued their efforts "step by step" (P4). That is, negative feedback was not completely demotivating.

Alternatively, the feedback was indeed totally demotivating but other factors compensated for their disappointment and experienced lack of drive to work. Finally, the demotivating effect was perhaps experienced in the short-term and their coping strategy involved was diligence and hard work. These are just possible explanations; there was not sufficient material to understand what happened in more depth when feedback perceived as negative was received.

Overall, it can be stated that positive emotions and/or positive emotion-triggering events were always described as motivating, whereas negative emotions and associated events were described as both motivating and demotivating. It is essential to note that negative feedback can be as motivating as positive feedback. Some researchers argue that it can be even more motivating because it emphasizes the need for more work and promotes goal pursuit (Higgins, 1987; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Locke & Latham, 1990; Powers, 1973). Evidence, here, is less definitive. There were instances depicting how they felt demotivated after receiving negative feedback.

In summary, the last interview reinforced the idea that academic writing was an emotional experience, principally at the beginning. The initial master's days were recalled as involving a great amount of negative emotions, in particular stress and anxiety states. The novelty effect apparently boosted the frequency or intensity of these states. Thereafter, anxiety was still experienced, often due to time management, writing quality, and work load issues. However, the emotional intensity apparently decreased with time, partly consequent of increased familiarity, experienced ease, and positivity.

5.2.2 Participants' behavioural states

Behavioural states refer to the way the participants conducted themselves as language users and English writers. For example, participants who claimed to prefer a certain language for a certain purpose demonstrate their self-confidence upon their writing skills in that language for that purpose. Additionally, participants' claims regarding experienced motivation to learn (or lack thereof), and even to excel, also characterize a certain behavioural state.

As previously reviewed, participants mostly lacked confidence, and sometimes drive, to write in English before moving to the UK – at least from a high standard viewpoint. After studying in the UK, they became more motivated (even if merely because passing their degree required them to master English). After a few language courses, they also started to slowly gain confidence when expressing themselves in the English language. P7's comment illustrates this point:

Before coming here, I was hesitant to write. I did not have confidence in myself.

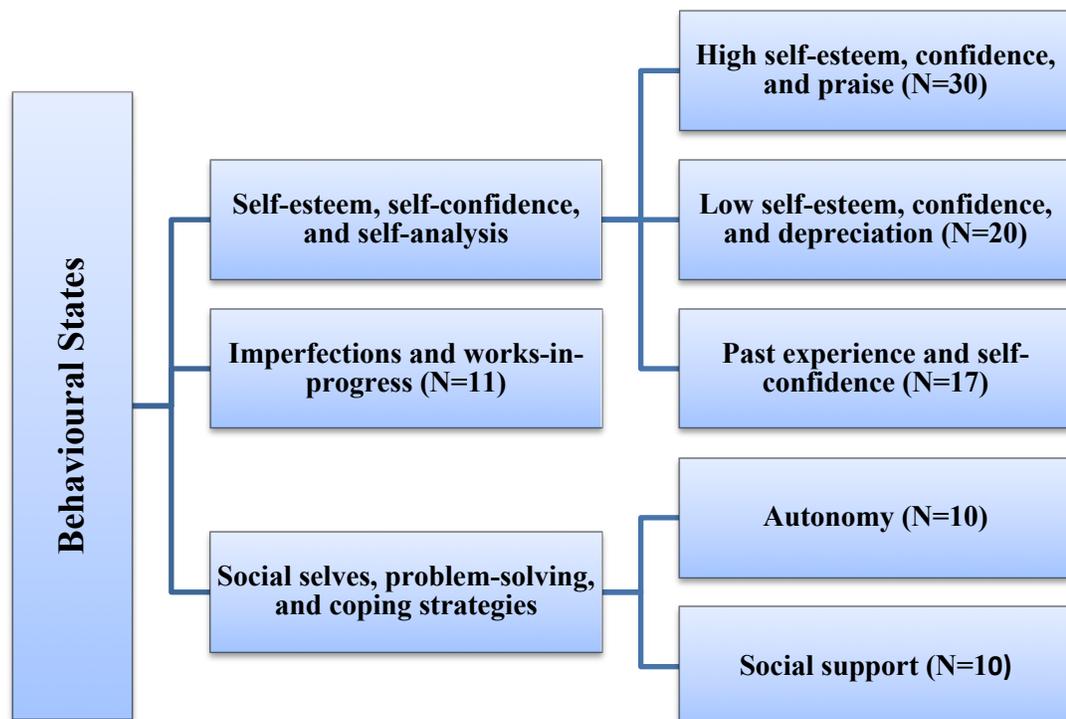
But after the first two months in my masters, I became much more confident because you know what is expected from you as a student and because of practice. (P7)

On the other hand, half of the participants showed lack of confidence when talking about their writing skills. For instance, P1 explained his lack of confidence as a result of being hesitant in writing in English and using a particular sentence or an expression. In the same token, P3 illustrated the fact that he is not confident in English writing, but he is comfortable now in using the language more than before. P5, however, seems to have no confidence in himself as a writer as he thinks his English writing skills are quite bad. His comments explain this point:

Even when I write something and I want to share it online, on Facebook for example, I do not share it most of the time because I am ashamed of my writing skills and I do not want people to think less of me. People would probably think that my writing is bad so I end up not sharing it. (P5)

The analysis of participants' diaries presented similar patterns to the first interview. The thematic analysis showed that behavioural states could be described through the following main themes: self-esteem, confidence, and self-analysis; imperfections and works in progress; and social selves, problem-solving, and coping strategies. These subthemes showed how their conception of themselves were both partly shaped and influenced by their writing experiences.

Figure 5.7. The thematic analysis of participants' diaries - participants' behavioural states



The diaries included remarks depicting participants praising or admiring themselves, their skills, and/or performance. These comments were taken as signs of high self-esteem and/or confidence. Diaries also included self-deprecating or self-reprimanding remarks. These were taken as signs of low self-esteem and/or self-confidence. These two concepts were, at times, difficult to distinguish, as they are closely related with their shared focus on learners' perception of their abilities (Dörnyei, 2005). For this reason, it was here considered that there was little background or contextual grounding to support some strong interpretation that went beyond the observation that a particular participant, in that specific instance, compliments or depreciates himself in writing. The link to confidence and esteem was regarded as hypothetical. Praise and depreciation are often presented in the literature as an identity or personality trait that is related to constructs such as self-esteem and self-confidence.

The analysis showed two main categories: positive, complementing self-analysis, possibly denunciative of high self-esteem/confidence (N=30; P1, P2, P3, and P4), and negative, depreciative self-analysis, possibly denunciative of low self-esteem/confidence (N=20; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6). Emotionally positive self-approving comments were of two forms: a positive thus emotional self-assessment or appreciation of the quality of their work or themselves (N=16; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6; e.g., "good"; "excellent"; and "decent"), or the explicit discussion of how "confident" they felt and why (N=14; P1, P2, P3, and P4; e.g., "I was confident" and "I felt like I can write a whole master's thesis").

Interestingly, P2 was the participant who overall provided higher self-esteem/confidence material. In particular, 13 of his answers, generally to questions 5 and 6, included remarks that apparently described his high self-confidence because of its focus on

abilities. Strangely, some of the sentences are literally repeated in different diary entrance days. For example, the very specific sentence, long enough to be hard to repeat word-by-word in different days unless copy pasted, appeared thrice in his diary, though in different days: “I felt like I can write a whole master’s thesis, I can definitely progress to a PhD degree in the future”. As this one, there were two additional different repeated quotations. This might indicate that P2 found a way of expressing a feeling that pleased him and thereafter decided to repeat the sentence. It can also be that he simply was being lazy and avoiding introspection. Either way, this repetition, might have increased the frequency of the high self-confidence subtheme to a point of non-significance.

The other participants provided two to one self-confidence related statements - neither 17 nor apparently copy pasted sentences. They also tended to answer the question about their self-image (about, more precisely, how they saw themselves) more in qualitative, emotional, appreciative terms, thus apparently more closely linked to the construct of self-esteem, than to self-confidence. Even if the possibly biasing weight added by P2 to the meaning and representativeness of this category, there was still a considerable amount of comments that univocally demonstrated how most participants generally thought highly of themselves and/or their abilities – even when the mistakes they performed while writing the diary provided meagre evidence in favour of such self-assessment.

In some instances, participants explored some of the reasons behind their self-esteem/confidence. These were apparently related to the easiness of the task (N=6; P1, P2, P3, and P6; e.g., P2: “I felt more confident working on this task because it required me to review other people’s work. It was also quite straightforward and I also like critiquing others.”). An alternative more common reason was related to participants’ past experiences

(N=10; P2, P3, and P6), a subtheme which was transversal to low and high self-esteem/confidence subthemes and will be explored further on.

On the other hand, there were twenty emotionally negative comments (N=20; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6), possibly denunciative of low self-esteem and/or confidence. That is, it was less common to express low than to express high self-esteem or confidence (though P2's 13 comments go a long way in establishing this difference). Moreover, participants adopted more diverse terms to refer to their low self-esteem/confidence state of being.

Those that were apparently more closely linked to low self-esteem included terms such as "struggling writer" (P3), "unhappiness" with oneself (P3), "I was not able to I thought that I was not able to justify the difference in the obtained results" (P6), "not good" (P3 and P6), and "poor writer" (P4). Those that were more likely linked to self-confidence issues included expressions such as "not confident" (P4 and P6) or "unconfident" (P4), but also by expressions such as "shaken up" (P3), "doubting' own abilities" (P6), "good writer, maybe" (P4), and "I did not exactly know which information to neglect" (P6).

That is, negative self-appraisals were described in less 'normalized' forms. There also seemed to be some significant inter-individual differences. More specifically, rarely did P1 and P2 seem to doubt or dislike themselves or their abilities, P3 frequently expressed his self-discontentment, and P6 his self-doubting.

Interestingly, this negativity seemed unrelated to their observed writing skills, as measured via the frequency of the theme poor writing. Although P1's diaries were those which more frequently showed signs of poor writing, P1 just once expressed lack of certainty regarding the quality of his results and expressed great self-confidence/ esteem. On the other

hand, P6 showed very little to null signs of poor writing but often expressed lack of self-confidence. He even remarked that his “English language is not that good, so I sought help. I sent my assignment to an online proofreading company” (P6).

These observations support the impression that the self-appraisals here under discussion were subjective and often not based upon objective, actual, observable behaviour. Some participants apparently did not ground their self-assessment upon visible aspects such as the English writing proficiency manifested in their writing samples here under examination. Table 5.1 illustrates this asymmetry in the amount of comments from these high vs. low categories that suggested this behaviour was influenced by participants’ L2 self, alongside the poor writing frequency. Only five participants were included, but they serve to exemplify how there seems to lack a direct match between writing quality and their self-judgements.

Table 5.1 Frequency of the subthemes poor writing, high vs. low self-esteem, confidence, and praise/depreciation per participant.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P6	Total
Poor writing	20	8	7	14	2	51
High self-esteem, confidence, and praise	6	13	5	5	1	30
Low self-esteem, confidence, and depreciation	1	1	6	6	6	30

Past experience and self-confidence was concerned with how participants’ self-esteem and/or confidence were apparently influenced by their past experiences (N=17; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6; e.g., P3: “I struggled with this assignment. I am not happy with myself

because I did not get a good grade. So, I do not think I am a good writer”). These past experiences could consist of feedback that classified their work in positive or negative terms, but also of professional, academic, or personal experience, such as making a successful experiment. This was the case either they were praising or depreciating themselves.

P2 was a participant that explored this connection between past experiences at the greatest length, providing examples of both feedback-based and non-feedback based influences of past experiences on how one felt about oneself. In the following answer P2 describes how managing to finish a project before the deadline apparently made him feel successful and demonstrate high self-esteem/ confidence:

It is the biggest writing project I have even worked on. I was able to finish it one day before the deadline. I was motivated to do a big project like that. I felt like I can write a whole masters’ thesis, I can definitely progress to a PhD degree in the future. (P2)

As for feedback based effects, there is P3’s remark:

Although I was confident about the topic because I was familiar with it, I was not confident as a writer as my previous assignment was not well received and I got a bad grade. (P3)

Here, P3 also suggested the existence of two different types of self-esteem/confidence: specific and general. When he considered the topic, he felt confident, but when considering his writing skills as depicted in recent feedback, he manifested low self-esteem/confidence. Either way, both high and low seemed to be at least partially derived from the way participants gave meaning and emotionally classified their past experiences as good or bad.

The subtheme *imperfections and work in progress* referred to descriptions of oneself as imperfect by stating the “need” (N=9; P1, P2, and P6) or “potential” (N=2; P2 and P3) to improve themselves, their skills, and/or their output. These remarks were joined together under the subtheme *Imperfections and works in progress* (N=11; P1, P2, P3, and P6). They showed some acceptance of their current imperfection, alongside their desire to achieve higher standards. That is, for one, these comments denoted participants’ motivation to better themselves.

For example, P1 claimed that “I am good but I need to improve writing skills”. In the example, P1 was addressing his qualities of being ‘good’. This is possibly denotative of his high self-esteem and/or confidence. At the same time, by confessing to the need to improve, he was also acknowledging his imperfection, his flaws. This is possibly denotative of low self-esteem and/or confidence. Such statement further expressed self-confidence in his abilities to self-improve. For example, individuals who suffer from depression are characterized by low self-esteem and hopelessness feelings. They would unlikely believe they would be able to change that which they disliked about themselves. Then, it was difficult to clearly relate this subtheme with the self-confidence/ self-esteem subtheme, and it was singled out as a subtheme of its own more expressive of participants’ self-motivation.

Social selves, problem-solving, and coping strategies looked at the type of experienced problems and their coping strategies. Two main problem-solving strategies could be distinguished: autonomy and social support. Both help to understand how participants interact with their social networks when difficulties are experienced.

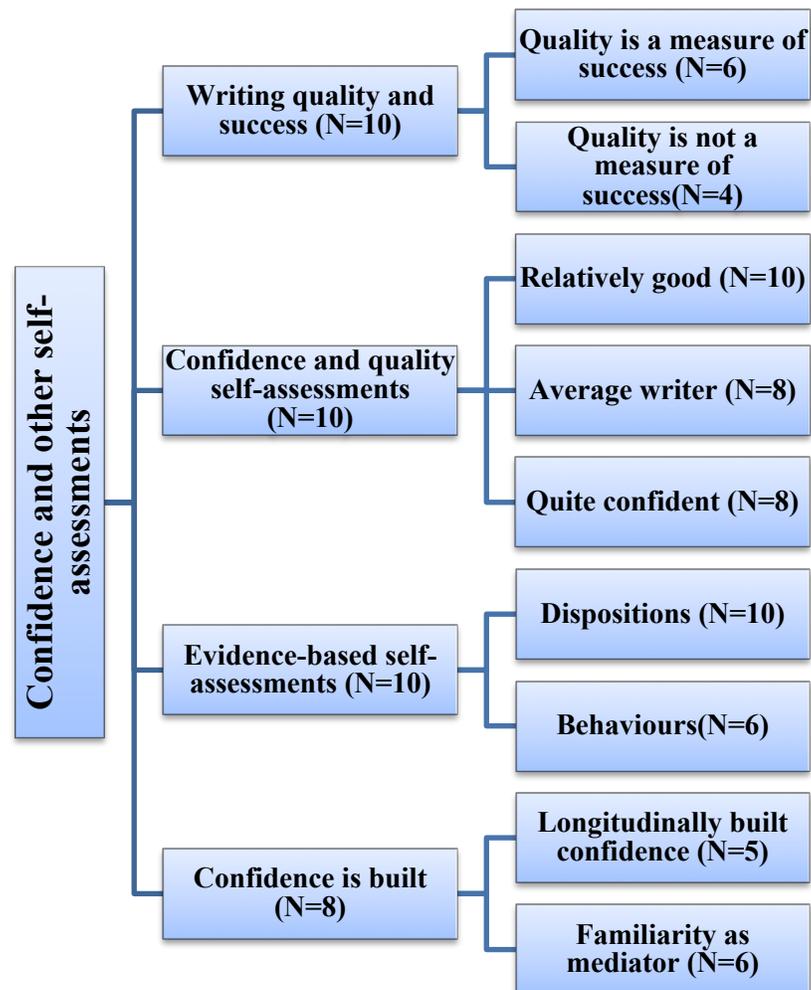
The *autonomy* strategy included examples of how students autonomously tried and/or solved their difficulties and issues (N=10 quotes; P2, P3, P4, and P6; e.g., “first draft was around 5000 words which was a way above word limit. So I had to work out the problem and only include what is necessary”), and “did not receive any help” (P1) when addressing their issues. Overall, this was a frequent option, adopted in a variety of circumstances, that could involve a particular use of time (N=2; P2 and P5; e.g., P2: “it took time to decide on one way to write it”) or a particular use of literature reviewing (N=6; P2, P3; P3, and P6: “I have been trying to include and read the most relevant and important work in order to deal with the problem.”)

Social support strategy was an alternative problem-solving strategy. It consisted of asking for the assistance and support of those in one’s social network, from close friends to professional proof-readers and teachers (N=10; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6). It was commonly used for the purpose of “proof-reading” (N=4, P1, P2, P4, and P6), gathering advice regarding the structure or clarity of written work (N=3; P3), and/or the to-describe-in-writing academic topic (N=4; P1, P2, P3, and P4). Then, almost every participant confessed to seeking proof-reading help. This suggests that, regardless of their opinion about the quality of their writing (one which was previously linked to constructs like self-esteem and confidence), these participants saw the mobilization of social support as advantageous for assuring a greater writing quality.

The second interview, on the other hand, revealed more aspects related to participants’ confidence in themselves as users and writers of English. It is important to mention this interview was conducted after all participants finished their master’s in the UK. Participants were directly inquired about how confident and successful they felt, and how

they saw themselves as writers after they finished their degree. In their answers to these questions (and sometimes spontaneously), they assessed themselves; they qualitatively evaluated or graded themselves, their skills, their performance, and/or their self-assurance. Main subthemes and codes derived from their commentary are described in Figure 5.5

Figure 5.8. Thematic structure of the theme confidence and other self-assessments



The first emerging theme was *writing quality and success*. In the dictionary, success has two main meanings: the accomplishment of some goal, and the attainment of fame, wealth, and so forth. Quality, however, refers to the general excellence of standard or level of

something. It is a comparative evaluation. It assesses the closeness or distance of an academic text to some standard (e.g., expectations or evaluation requirements).

That is, the two constructs differ. Quality, by definition, is a levelled evaluation. Success, if measured as a goal achievement, can simply be or not achieved; this amounts to a yes or no evaluation. There are no levels to it, no distance from excellence. For a writer, success can involve the ability to successfully finish some writing task. If measured in terms of fame, it involves being recognized and cherished by peers as having achieved the goal. Although readers may evaluate the work in terms of quality, and thereby recognize it as good, success is simply such recognition; it does not involve evaluation. In an academic context, grades can be experienced as a measure of quality, but also as a sign of fame, and in this sense, of success. A teacher has recognized via some grade a person's academic success. Asking participants about how successful they are puts them in the difficult position of having to decide how to measure their own success: Goal achievement? Fame?

Participants' answers to this question seemed to suggest that there were indeed two main types of responses. First, there were those describing their writing level or quality. This was done in qualitative, and/or comparative terms (e.g., P7: "I think I am a good writer especially after the constant writing practice I did during my masters"), and/or quantitative measurement terms (e.g., P3: "90% good" or P6: "5 out of 10"). Both being 'good' or 'bad' and grades amount to writing quality levels. They involve a comparison with some excellence standard, and measure one's distance from it. There were six participants providing answers that suggested that *quality is a measure of success* (N=6; P2, P3, P4, P5, P7 and P9). For example, P4 states that "I think I am to a certain extent. When I compare myself to my colleagues, I think I am much better writer than them." Here, his standard of

excellence was the writings of his colleagues, and he was “better” than them – this is a qualitative attribute. Nothing in this answer speaks of goal achievement.

Alternatively, there were those for whom their writing quality and their success were two different attributes. For example, P1 remarked that “I can’t say successful. I am good but not successful.” This sentence seems to suggest that quality and success were, for him, two different issues; that *quality is not a measure of success* – or, at least, that it does not accurately evaluate a writer’s success. There were four participants apparently interpreting these concepts in this manner (N=4; P1, P2, P6, and P9). Overall, the question requesting participants to rate their success seemed to lack trustworthiness. The term “success” was apparently differently interpreted by participants, and most commonly addressed in terms of writing quality. For this reason, it seemed to consist of an inefficient question that should not be re-used in future research. It however expresses that participants were able to self-assess their quality and/or success, and thereby make use of their confidence for such purposes.

Another identified theme was *Self-assessments* (N=10; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10). It was dedicated to the output of their overall self-assessments; those have been concerned with their own success, quality, and/or confidence. In terms of success, given the frequent translation of success in terms of writing quality, it seemed of little interest to explore whether they regarded themselves as successful. Quality self-assessments were not only more common, as a common definition of success. Moreover, there was insufficient evidence to systematically inspect differences between the meanings of success and quality across participants. Thus, quality-related observations appear as more meaningful and trustworthy.

Regarding their writing quality, every participant noted that they were *relatively good* (N=10; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10). That is, interviewees regarded themselves as good writers under certain circumstances, whether these amounted to a field (e.g., “academic” and/or “engineering”) or to specific tasks (e.g., achieving the needed word count). For example, P4 remarked:

Someone who can write well in his discipline. I think of myself as a good academic writer who is interested in the field of TESOL. I see myself as competent writer in my field. (P4)

Moreover, P7 explained that he is a
 Good writer based on being able to write various kinds of tasks at the same time.
 Good writer based on writing big assignments with 3000 words and receiving positive feedback which indicates my improvement as a writer.

Additionally, it seemed that many participants considered themselves as *average writers* (N=8; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, and P9). That is, even when claiming they were “good”, the way they unpacked this self-assessment often translated into a comparatively average level of writing at some distance from perfection or greatness. That is, none seemed to be totally and utterly pleased with their writing quality. As noted by P1, “I can’t say successful. I am good but not successful. Constant practice forced me to improve my writing skills a lot during my masters. I can give myself 6 out of 10”.

In this answer, P1 evaluates himself to be unsuccessful and good. However, this quality was self-rated as a “6 out of 10” – which is to say, far from the top of the scale. Overall, no participant regarded himself as perfect, even if some of these claims utilized as a comparison standard that of experienced native writers or some idealized maximum

perfection. It seemed far-fetched to interpret these answers in terms of self-esteem. Participants are approving or disapproving their writing qualities, which is a very superficial understanding of the term self-esteem.

It was interesting to observe that no single participant said he had the lowest degree of writing skills, such as by saying they were not good, were awful, their writing was very poor, or alike. This shows that, at this stage of their studies, every participant was able to find some aspect of their writing that satisfied them and met their expectations. Unlike wise, there were those plainly claiming they were “not successful”, and never relativized such self-assessments, as observed for quality. This suggests that writing quality was not sufficient cause for their self-perceived success. Other factors must contribute to the way success is subjectively experienced.

In terms of self-confidence, most participants explicitly argued they currently were *quite confident* on their writing abilities (N=8; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9). For example, P6 argued that “I am comfortable when I write so I think this makes me confident.” There were only two exceptions, P5 and P8. However, even P8, who said he lacked confidence when writing without a computer, implicitly demonstrated confidence when stating that “I am generally good. I think I have the needed writing skills in my discipline.” The same applies to P5, who, despite his acknowledged difficulties, argued that he “eventually got there”. That is, it seemed that most participants, even when not explicitly claiming so, manifested at least enough confidence to see themselves as *average* and/or *relatively good writers*.

In summary, participants regarded themselves as good writers for certain fields and tasks, and rated themselves as average writers that were distant from the top of the scale.

With two expectations, they were also quite (but not always and totally) confident, a trait that seemed to transpire in the way they self-assessed their writing quality. That is, no participant expressed he felt like a failure or a very poor writer, and only two lacked the confidence in their abilities to write in English. Inquiring about how good they were, was thus apparently an interesting way of assessing their self-confidence.

Evidence-based self-assessments showed that every participant tried to justify their self-assessment via the use of evidence. The evidence served both to ground their evaluation and to contextualize their prowess. It was partly because of such justifications that the way they assessed their quality appeared in the analysis as both relative and average. There were two main types of evidence or justifications: Dispositions, and Behaviours.

Dispositions (N=10) statements consisted of descriptions of how they had, or thought they had, the “knowledge” or skills (N=7; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, and P9), and the experience or “familiarity” (N=4; P1, P2, P5, and P6) for fulfilling a given writing task. As noted by P3, “I feel like I know how to write, and I am familiar with the structure of any writing.” There were also some rare instances where the argument consisted of some metacognition, that is, an impression they had about their knowledge or performance, such as “when I compare myself to my colleagues, I think I am much better writer than them.” (P4). In these cases, they justify their expertise and skill in accordance with some self-assessed inner disposition or trait.

Behaviours (N=6; P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10) consisted of descriptions of how they followed processes, met “requirements” (N=3; P3, P7 and P10), and/or got graded results (N=4; P3, P4, P7, and P9); this worked as evidence supporting their assessments. These statements pointed out objective goals that they needed to follow so as to succeed; they were

more closely linked with the idea of success. They also only depicted observable, practical processes (steps taken and their results); aspects external or extrinsic to the self. For example, P3's answer to how successful he was involved establishing a distinction between quality and success and observing that the only thing he was sure about was that he was "able to write an assignment and follow the exact requirements".

To sum up, every interviewee provided evidence to support their self-assessments. This was done in terms of dispositions and of performed behaviours. The need to provide evidence may reveal their academic nature, one which currently values evidence-based processes. It may also reveal the need they feel to prove themselves to others (and perhaps even themselves), and as such possibly some, even if minor, insecurity.

The last theme was *confidence is built over time* (N=5; P1, P3, P4, P7, P10). When inspecting their answers, inclusive but not restricted to confidence-related questions, the most apparent observation was that *confidence is built* (N=10). That is, their self-confidence was described as having been developed during their master's experience or somewhere along their path as students.

The longitudinal development of confidence during their masters was described in confidence and emotion-related questions. These participants expressed how they initially, or as consequent of negative feedback received at the beginning of their masters, lacked self-confidence and doubted themselves. This might have also contributed to the high emotional intensity, most commonly anxiety-related, experienced at the beginning. That is, many situated how confident they felt in different moments of their masters. That is, they felt confidence "when" (P1, P10) or "after" (P3, P4, P7) they received good results, succeeded at fulfilling a deadline, started the second semester, and so forth. They also "started" or begun

(P4) with a certain confidence level and thereafter “became”, “gained” or felt confidence (P3, P4, P7). These expressions denote the temporal dimension that grounded this subtheme.

For example, P3 remarked:

There was a big difference. In the first semester, things were intense. There was pressure to finish up all assignments and do very well in them. I was not also confident enough which made me anxious. In the second semester, I was more confident especially after receiving positive feedback for almost all of my writing tasks. This gave a sense of relief and reduced my stress level a lot. (P3)

Here P3 explicitly situated in a moment in time (second semester) when his self-confidence was higher. These comments also highlight how confidence is not a static concept; it fluctuates and is sensitive to contextual aspects.

As for other participants, there were three (N=3; P2, P6, and P9) that only indirectly depicted this temporal dimension. They did so by describing how their “familiarity” or “experience” with writing tasks increased with time, and how such variable enhanced their self-confidence. For example, P2 stated that one of the highlights of his studies was: “knowing to write correctly. I learned how to express myself, how to argue and explain and what works to use and not to use.” (P2). Subsequently, when explaining how confident he felt, he simply stated that “I think I am [confident] because I know how to write correctly.” Then, in P2’s account, the temporal dimension is associated with familiarity. With time he learnt how to write. This was the variable that he subsequently offered as a mediator or facilitator of self-confidence; time passed, he gained experience, and this experience made him feel confident.

The same link between experience (thus time) can be observed in participants who directly explored the connection between time and confidence. For example, P3, who described the longitudinal development of his self-confidence explicitly, also commented that

I became quite scared of upcoming assignments which were quite complicated and required a lot of work. I was afraid that my ideas were not coming across and my teachers would be able to understand what I am trying to say. I was also afraid of not receiving good grades in the first two assignments. After that, things became normal in the sense I was able to improve and deal with my emotions and also deal with these writing tasks in knowing how to do them perfectly. Being experienced was a relief for me and started to be happy and confident. (P3)

This co-occurrence supported the decision of considering that, via familiarity, confidence was also built. There were five interviewees offering comments in these circumstances (Familiarity as mediator; N=6; P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, and P9). For example, P1 explained the influence of familiarity on increasing his confidence level by stating that “I am confident because I know how to write. I am familiar with the writing style and structure”.

5.3 Summary

Every participant mentioned barely learning English in school; their L2 self was underdeveloped. In college, there were apparently two types of experiences: those who pursued English studies and saw their L2 self strengthen alongside their skills, and those who pursued non-English related studies and continued to manifest an undeveloped L2 self and poor skills. The analysis also showed that participants disliked and experienced difficulties

with writing tasks. None had been trained on how to write in English, and they mostly followed Arabic guidelines when writing in English. There was only one for whom writing was key, and who experienced some sense of enjoyment when writing.

Moreover, writing apparently was an emotional experience, which involved both low and high arousal emotions, as well as both positive and negative emotions. While writing, or concerning their writings, some of the experienced emotions were basic or simple (such as liking, feeling happy, or feeling anxious) and some were more or secondary complex emotions (such as feeling disappointed or thankful). The most common emotion was anxiety, followed by enjoyment and happiness. Due to the memory biases, it may be that such high arousal was responsible for their appearance in the diaries. Emotions resulted from a variety of aspects, such as obtained feedback, personal expectations, deadlines, and so forth. These emotions were related to participants' self-esteem and self-confidence, and thus to their L2 possible self.

Additionally, the analysis allowed a more in-depth investigation idea of how emotions related to academic writing. Most critically, positive emotions were more often associated with motivational and self-confident states, triggering participants' willingness to continue to succeed. This suggests that positive emotions seemed to strengthen their L2 possible self and identity. For some participants, or in certain cases, negative emotions had the same effect. For others, they seemed to, at least temporarily, stress participants to the point of not trying to excel in the task, and thereby contribute less, more ambivalently, or not at all to their L2 self.

Finally, it was found that some participants illustrated how their self-confidence was built, sometimes with the help of acquired familiarity and experience. This finding once

more relates the novelty effect with another factor, in this case, self-confidence. They were also able to assess themselves, and most commonly supported their evaluations with dispositional and/or behavioural evidence, drawn from their past experience. No-one manifested very low confidence or utterly disliked their writings; they mostly thought they had average and relative quality and confidence. Most also expressed wanting to improve their skills. This category directly points toward the current existence of an L2 vision.

CHAPTER 6

ACADEMIC WRITING, METADISOURSE AND IDENTITY

This chapter has three main sections. The first section examines the factors that influenced participants' writing based on the thematic analysis of the first interview. It also investigates participants' language preferences and difficulties experienced while writing mainly based on the thematic analysis of participants' think aloud protocols and last interviews. The second section discusses participants' utilisation of metadiscourse markers in their English assignments submitted during their masters which, in turn, will reveal the purposes of these writings and participants' intentions, opinions and their presence within the texts. In doing so, it will be possible to explore the relationship between discourse and identity in the last section and examines difficulties and conflicts experienced by participants when trying to become a member of the new academic community in the UK. The chapter will answer the last two broad research questions with their sub-questions:

4- Saudi students' academic writing

- a. What factors affect Saudi students' writing?
- b. Do Saudi students prefer to write in Arabic or English? And why?
- c. What kind of difficulties do Saudi students experience while writing in English? What strategies do they utilise to cope with such problems?

5- Saudi students' representation of themselves in their writing samples

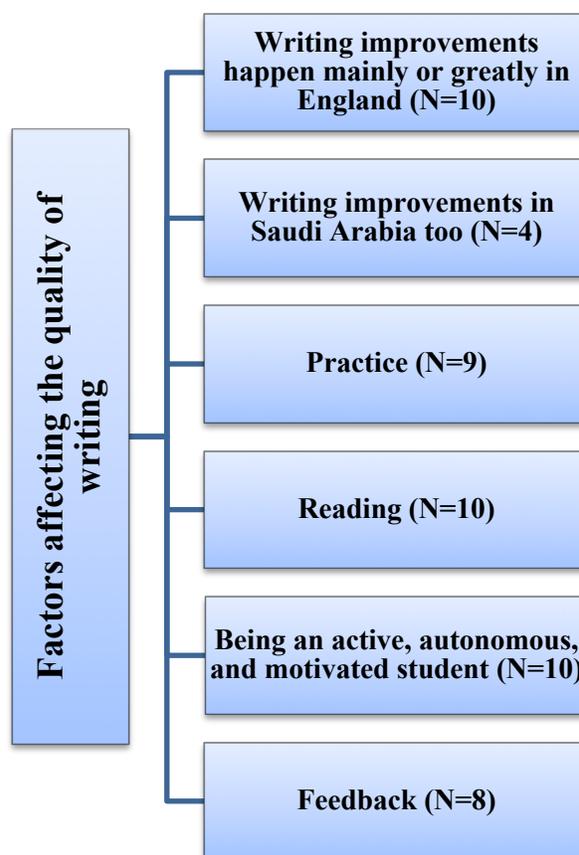
- a. What metadiscourse features do Saudi ESL students employ in their writing, and what do they reveal about their writing?
- b. Do Saudi express their voice in writing? And how?

6.1 Participants' Academic Writing

6.1.1 Factors affecting the quality of writing

Interviewees provided extensive data on how they had and kept improving their writing skills and their written outputs. Codes utilised to describe their opinions about which factors or experiences were or had been important for improving such skills were joined under the higher-order theme named *factors affecting the quality of writing*. These factors amount to lower-order categories that are listed in Figure 6.2, below. Given the wide number of factors, only those discussed by eight or more interviewees were retained. There was an exception that had a lower number of contributing participants. It was added to counterbalance the more general opinion that their writing improvements happened mainly in the UK. These categories were: Writing improvements happen mainly or greatly in England; Writing improvements in Saudi Arabia too; Practice; Reading; Being an active, autonomous, and motivated student; and Feedback.

Figure 6.1. Categories and codes for the higher-order category factors affecting the quality of writing



Every participant empathically agreed their *writing improvements had happened mainly or greatly in England*, and described such improvements as “huge”, “a lot”, and “great”. Yet, seven (P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, and P9) had already spontaneously discussed how they recognised significant improvements in their writing while in England prior to such question. For example, at the early stages of the interview, P5 stated that:

Practices in Saudi Arabia affected me greatly in a bad way because we did not learn how to write. (...) In the UK, the current practices are quite helpful and I can see that my language skills are in constant improvement. (P5)

Most participants appeared to feel that their writing skills had bettered significantly in England and described their learning experience as positive. Many, as P5, compared these

positive experiences with the negative experiences they had had in Saudi Arabia, particularly in regards to their language skills.

Nevertheless, four participants commented on their *writing improvements in Saudi Arabia too* (P2, P6, P7, and P10). Note that most of these participants were those who did not spontaneously discuss their writing improvements before the interviewer's explicit question about the issue (P2, P6, and P10). When inspecting the reasons behind the experiences of these four participants, it was found that two interviewees (P2 and P6) describe how a particular Saudi Arabian teacher was of great importance, encouraging them to practice and sometimes providing regular feedback to regular writing assignments. For the rest (P7 and P10), it is found that they both had the initiative to read, one or more books, and attributed their Saudi Arabian improvements to this experience. It is also essential to note that these participants were majoring in English which can explain the improvement of their English skills. These reasons already point toward factors which were regarded as responsible for enhancing their writing skills and highlighted how sometimes it was not the country but the people within the pedagogic system (students with initiative, teachers) that can make the difference.

There were few factors that positively affected their writing skills and output. First, nine participants (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10) discussed the effects of *practice* and of "working" hard on oneself and one's language skills. The importance of practice for improving writing and other language skills was detected in remarks that acknowledged how one should have practiced more (e.g., P1: "We used to write but it was not enough"), as well as in longer, explicit explanations of the effects of practice. P1 also provided a comment that illustrated this occurrence: "The more you write and read, the more you will improve and

increase your knowledge of the language. Practice is the key.” Such practice was sometimes associated with daily or “constant” (P8) writing habits.

There were only two participants who stated that practice did not always help them improve their writing skills (P2 and P5). One explained that the pressure created by the need to write intensively, which was apparently more often experienced in England than in Saudi Arabia, and of being part of a system wherein writing was the “measure of success”, could be disadvantageous (possibly for those who experience difficulties dealing with stress). The other thought that the initial effects of writing courses in England helped him with speaking and listening, but not actually with writing. This was categorized here too because another participant was of the opinion that “my speaking and listening skills improved a lot and this reflected positively on my writing skills” (P8). That is, it was here considered that, even when the effects are not directly upon writing, practice may help with some language skills in a way that potentially improves writing skills (indirect effects).

The second most discussed factor was *reading*, and often alongside practice. There were ten participants referring to the beneficial effects of reading on their writing skills. Most times, participants described how their own reading had helped to improve their writing skills (e.g., P7: “Reading is the key. If you want to write like a native or being able to write in an academic way, you must read books and journals. This is what I did”). Sometimes, however, the importance of reading was discussed through its lack thereof, as in “I do not read in Arabic and English which negatively affects my writing skills.” (P5). According to their overall commentaries, reading sometimes directly helped (e.g., P8: “My skills improved because my reading increased”), inclusively by allowing them to mimic someone else’s writing style, and sometimes indirectly helped their writing skills by increasing their familiarity with and knowledge of the topic, their vocabulary, and their self-confidence.

Ten participants further discussed the importance of *being an active, autonomous and motivated student*. In the sense of being active (e.g., P4: “As a student, you are expected to do a lot in the United Kingdom, you need to practice. In Saudi Arabia, you are not active as a student.”); this code is very close to the practice code. Nevertheless, there was only one participant (P8) who only described this idea in such sense. The remainder explored a sense of proactivity, self-motivation (e.g., P9: “I am not interested in writing so my writing skills have not been improving greatly in the last 2 years.”), and autonomy (e.g., P6: “You have more responsibility as a student; you are active.”) regarding one’s learning path that practice alone may lack. One can be forced to practice, in which sense one is not exactly manifesting pro-activity and motivation. For example, P6 makes such a distinction between practice and motivation:

Because of this teacher; he was great; his teaching style was great. He was motivated and at the same time, he motivated us to work harder. Another thing was practice. It helped me a lot. (P6)

In some instances, it was quite hard to consider whether an activity-related comment involved or not this more attitudinal, psychological sense. Yet, as noted, only P8 failed to explore these facets more explicitly. The other participants explored activity, but also autonomy or motivation. That is, they described at least sharing the learning responsibility with teachers, and making an effort to allocate time, dedication, resources, and enthusiasm to achieve learning objectives and improve skills. Such proactive attitude was often associated with the English teaching style and often contrasted with a submissive, passive attitude, more commonly adopted in Saudi Arabia. P5’s remark below illustrates this tendency:

Teachers in Saudi Arabia should be more strict in the sense that they need to make students practice inside the class and give them more activities to do at

home. In terms of students, we did not have the chance to ask teachers and be active in the class which affected our language skills negatively. The class was basically revolving around the teacher and not the students. If I had the chance to ask, I probably would not because I was not motivated. In the United Kingdom, I was really active. I spent so much time practicing and asking questions, which was an indication of how motivated I was during my English course. (P5)

Nevertheless, the cause of the teaching style differences was not necessarily the country itself, as previously noted. That is, even though a passive attitude appeared to be a more generalised trend in Saudi Arabia, according to participants, there were Saudi Arabian teachers who had also been able to foment an active attitude. Moreover, there were also students who showed little proactivity even while in England, for reasons such as lack of “interest” (P9).

The importance of obtaining *feedback* from teachers, proof-readers, and peers for improving the quality of writing was also discussed by eight participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9, and P10), though less explicitly by three of them (P5, P9, and P10). For these interviewees, feedback appeared as a step towards improving the quality of the written output that they sometimes used but which was not apparently extremely valued. For the rest of the participants (half of the sample), however, feedback was critical, and sometimes even a requisite for improving writing skills (e.g., P4: “We did not receive any feedback so there was no improvement”) and more frequently part of the British, but not the Saudi Arabian, teaching style. P9 expressed this idea in the quote transcribed below:

We did not receive any feedback from teachers, and no one told us how to write.

This was the case for learning English in SA. In the UK, it is whole different

story. You learn how to write and what to include in each section of the essay.

(P9)

6.1.2 Participants' writing preferences

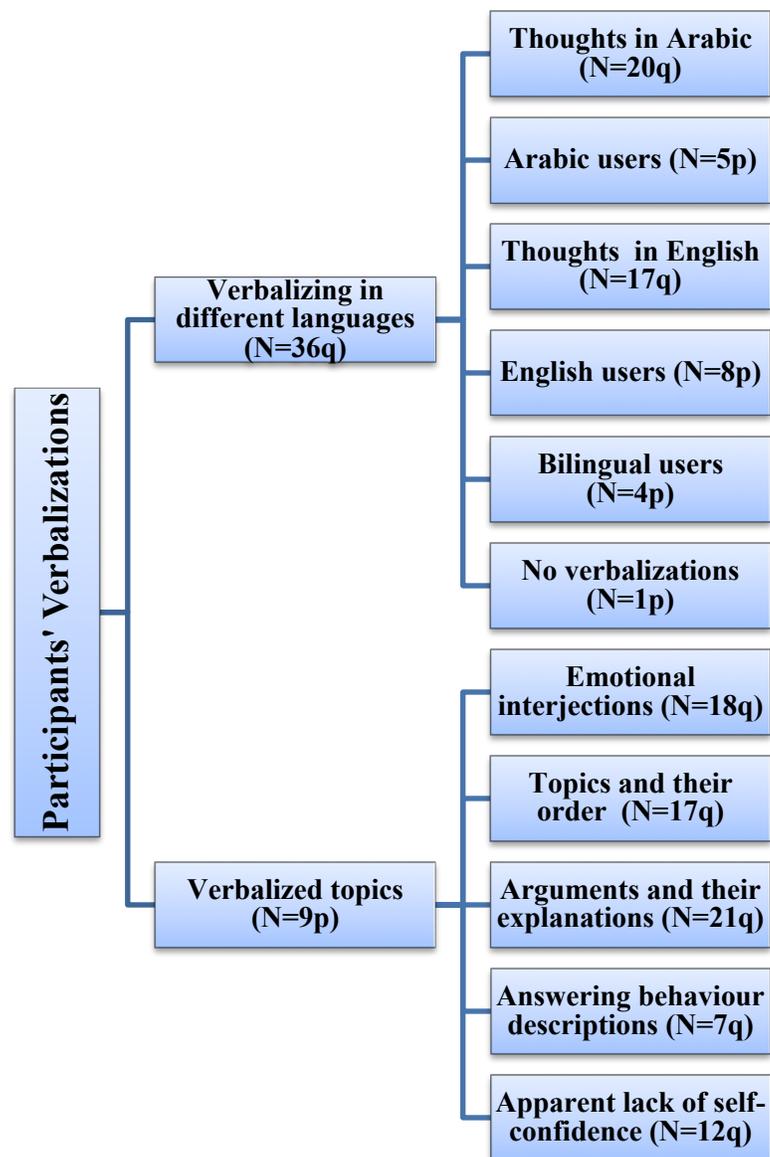
It is important to understand participants' preferences when writing and whether they liked one language over the other. In the first interview, participants were asked what language they preferred to write in and why. P4, 6 and 10 preferred to write in English because they were now familiar with English writing and they knew what they were supposed to do in order to produce a good piece of writing. They had been constantly writing in English and had lost touch with Arabic writing for the past years. The rest of participants preferred Arabic in only one occasion; when they were being asked to write something general that had no relation to their academic discipline. However, they all preferred to write in English when writing their academic assignments as they were familiar with the conventions and terminology of their discipline in English. P8 elucidated:

I prefer to use English when I am writing something related to my discipline. As an engineer, there are many technical terms that I only know in English and that's why English is my preference. I prefer Arabic when I am writing something general such as writing a letter to someone. I feel more comfortable and confident when I use Arabic for this purpose. (P8)

In the think-aloud protocol, participants were asked to describe their thoughts out loud while writing. They were free to use either Arabic or English while finishing a writing task in English. Figure 6.3 illustrates the results of the analysis. The theme entitled *Verbalizations* included two main subthemes: one which systematized the content of their comments (*Verbalized topics*), and one which explored their language of choice (*Verbalizing*

in different languages). These themes describe what participants were thinking about when writing in English which will help to understand better their aforementioned writing difficulties and utilised writing strategies that helped them cope and complete the task.

Figure 6.2. Thematic structure of verbalizations in think aloud protocols (themes, subthemes, and categories) (q stands for number of quotes – P stands for participant).



Overall, there were 37 out loud verbalizations (e.g., P9: “Ok! Let me start with something general like....”), and only one participant did not verbalize any thought during the whole activity (P5). Regarding the number of participants using a particular language, five were Arabic users (N=5; P2; P3; P8; P9; P10), and eight were English users (N=8; P1; P2; P3; P4; P6; P7; P8; and P9). There was another theme assigned to participants who used both languages named bilingual users (N=4; P2; P3; P8; and P9). That is, only P10 used nothing but the Arabic language, whereas four participants exclusively employed English (P1, P4, P6, and P7).

The verbalizations made by the participants were 20 in Arabic, and 17 in English. Since there were less participants utilizing Arabic and more sentences verbalized in Arabic, it seems that Arabic speaking participants more often verbalized their thoughts. This might be because they experienced greater difficulties fulfilling the task; they needed to reflect more so as to accomplish their goals. It may also be due to language command. English-speaking participants were not utilizing their mother tongue and may tend to consequently verbalize less for reasons such as insecurity, lack of knowledge, or lower spontaneity.

The *verbalised topics* subtheme is concerned with the content of participants’ verbalizations. The first emerging category concerned emotional interjections. Emotional interjections (N=18 quotes; P1; P4; P5; P7; P9; and P10) were abrupt remarks or exclamations that were included in the transcripts as having been verbalized. They most commonly consisted of self-reassuring exclamations such as “OK” (N=13 quotes; P1; P4; P6; P7; P8; P9) and “alright” (N=3 quotes; P4 and P6). These apparently served to motivate or reassure participants about their decisions and reasoning, and expressed positive emotions. Albeit rarely, they could also be apparently expressive of negative emotions associated with self-recriminatory thoughts (N=2 quotes; e.g., P3: “Ooh, I made a mistake”). Overall, these

emotional interjections were not expressed more often in either language; that is, they seemed to rather evenly distribute along the main language categories. Note that not much should be read into these interjections since they might at times simply consist of fillers of speech crutches.

The category *Topics and their order* (N=17 quotes; P1; P2; P3; P4; P8; P9; and P10) were comments concerned with how the text should be structured, that is, with defining sections, their content, and their order. They amounted to planning activities. For example, P4 stated, at the beginning of the activity, that he would “start with a brief introduction explaining the topic of the essay and then moving to write 2 body paragraphs and then ending up with a conclusion with my opinion.”

This category was also apparently rather evenly spread across main language categories. There was only an impression that Arabic planning commentary tended to be more vague and unstructured. This was because the only three participants who utilized Arabic to comment on structure (P2, and P9) commented on planning activities mid-thought the activity (not at the beginning), showing a step-by-step planning strategy (e.g., P9: “Ok, now I need to discuss the first side”). P2 even added that he “should have planned more before starting. I think the best way to answer the question is to discuss both sides and then present my opinion on the matter”. Unlike wise, English planning remarks were more often (though not always) expressed at the beginning of the writing activity. In addition, there also seem to be inter-individual differences. Namely, P8 and P9 tended to more often verbalize thoughts of this nature.

Arguments and their explanations (N=21q; P2; P4; P5; P7; P8) was about describing activity topic views, arguments, reasoning, and their justification. This category was also

fairly evenly spread across the language categories – though not quite across participants. P2 and P4 seemed to more often verbalize thoughts of this nature.

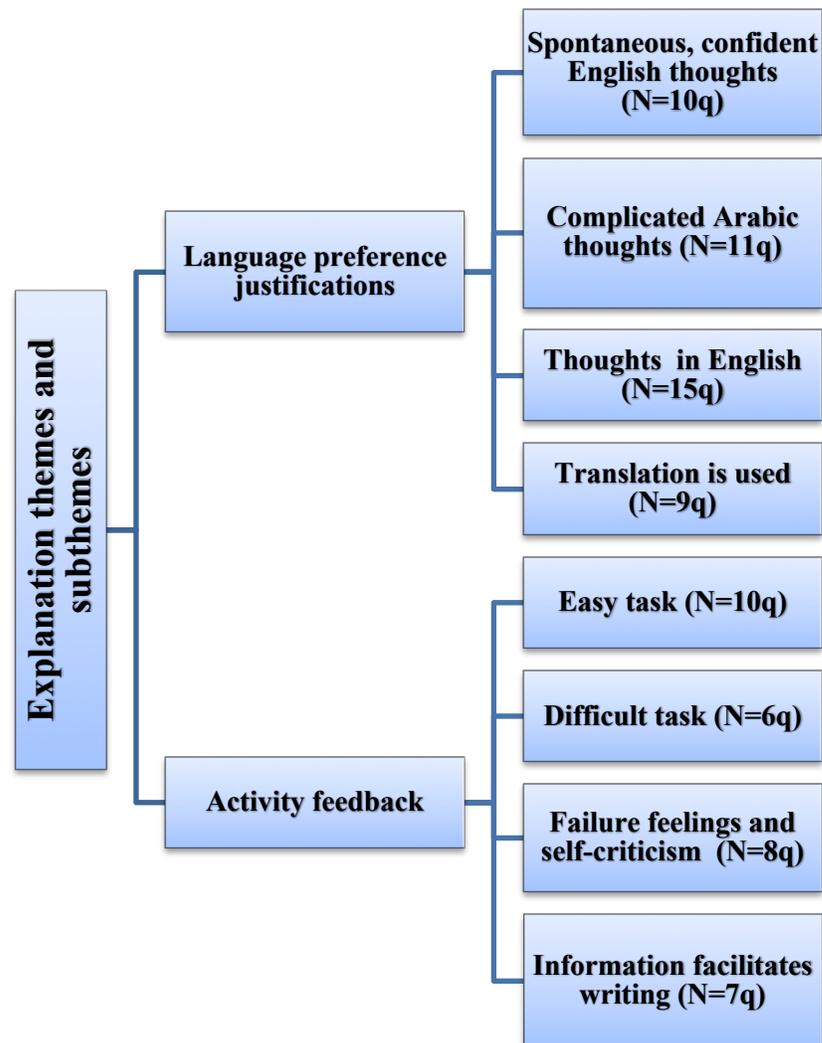
Answering behaviour descriptions (N=7 quotes; P2; P4; P6; and P8) joined diverse descriptions of behavioural actions or reactions to the activity task. Some participants commented on their own behavioural reactions to the task, from how many times they read the introduction, the answering mistakes they felt they had done or whether they were physically tired from writing with a pen. There were also inter-individual differences, for most participants did not seem to verbalize thoughts of this nature, whereas P8 verbalized four. Here was also some language preference; all but one of these comments were made in Arabic. This is interesting, since it is likely that more emotional and behavioural aspects were learnt to be expressed in one's mother tongue, seldom needing to be expressed in a foreign language and much less in an academic context.

Apparent lack of self-confidence (N=12 quotes; P2; P3; P4; P8; and P9) amounted to the use of cautious language or hedging (e.g., P8: “It is probably a good idea to include the learning theory in this side”) and any expression translating lack of certainty (e.g., P2: “Not sure”). It also consisted of the use of ellipsis in the transcriptions in sentences that seemed to accurately illustrate the notion of ‘thinking out loud’, that is, where the direction of the idea was vague and unclear, such as with “for my opinion, I think that.... Let me discuss it....” (P3). In the latter example, sentences seemed cut mid-through, perhaps because of lack of certainty about the conclusion of the thought. Half of the participants contributed to the formation of this category.

After the participants finished with the task, they were asked to justify their language preferences when verbalising their thoughts. Figure 6.3 illustrates the subthemes and

categories formed while analysing their answers to this question. Overall, there were two subthemes (and categories): Language preference justifications (Spontaneous, confident English thoughts; Complicated Arabic thoughts; and Translation is used); and Activity feedback (Easy task; Difficult task; Failure feelings and self-criticism; Odd new behaviours; and Information facilitates writing). Although mainly created in the light of the brief interview that followed the activity, verbalizations content also contributed to their constitution.

Figure 6.3. Explanation themes and subthemes (q stands for number of quotes)



Spontaneous, confident English thoughts (N=10 quotes; P1; P3; P4; P5; P6; P7; P8; P9; and P10) amounted to the utilization of the English language whenever the task was “straightforward” (P8), they were sure about what to say, and/or when the thoughts spontaneously “came to you English” (P3). In any of these cases, a certain degree of confidence is present whenever directly thinking in English. All but one participant (P10) mentioned adopting this strategy.

Unsurprisingly then, this strategy was sometimes complemented with the use of the Arabic language. *Complicated Arabic thoughts* (N=11 quotes; P1; P2; P3; P4; P5; P6; P8; P9; and P10) consisted of utilizing the Arabic language whenever the task was “complicated” (P1; P4; and P8) or there was a need to “plan” and/or brainstorm about what was to be written (P2; P4; P6; P8; P9; and P10). At the beginning of the task (e.g., P2: “I normally use Arabic at the beginning just like in this task. I use it to plan and gather all ideas I have”) or mid-through the task, whenever participants were “stuck” (P7 and P9), they made use of the Arabic language to find some reassurance and direction. Indeed, as P8 so clearly expressed, “I believe the influence of Arabic ranges based on the difficulty of the task”. This strategy is very clear in P2’s transcripts of the think aloud protocol. He started the activity verbalizing (probably thinking) in English and mid-through he verbalizes the following in Arabic:

I can discuss it from a different angle based on learning a foreign language. If I want to acquire a foreign language ... I should have planned more before starting. I think the best way to answer the question is to discuss both sides and then present my opinion on the matter. (P2)

Thus, it is possible that the feelings of insecurity detected while analysing the verbalizations are associated with the use of Arabic, whereas self-confidence is associated with the use of English.

It was here assumed that use of the Arabic language implied the subsequent utilization of translation strategies (N=9 quotes). That is, the use of the Arabic language necessarily created the need to translate into English what was to be written. There was only one participant who explicitly denied using this strategy (P6: “I don’t use Arabic because I don’t need to. I know what I want to say in English”), and one who acknowledged “always” (P5) this strategy. Again, this reinforces the idea of the association between self-confidence and English, and between insecurity and Arabic.

How was this use of Arabic experienced by participants? The majority (N=7p) claimed, like P10, that:

Using Arabic is quite useful. I use Arabic to think, plan and sort my ideas out. After thinking in Arabic, switching to English can be difficult sometimes in terms of expressing the ideas appropriately in English. (P10)

That is, translation strategies were utilized because they were “needed” or “useful” (most commonly to think, plan, and/or brainstorm), as five participants confessed (P2; P3; P8 P9; and P10). However, they had their shortcomings. Namely, they could pose difficulties (P1 and P4) such as involving more time or hindering the expression of one’s ideas in English. For two participants (P1 and P4), translation strategies were simply just “not a good idea”.

The second subtheme, *Activity feedback*, describes commentary related to the activity itself. Its categories are: Easy task; Difficult task; Failure feelings and self-criticism; and Information facilitates writing.

Participants were directly asked about the difficulties experienced with the task in Question 2 of the survey that followed the protocol. Some also provided spontaneous feedback about its degree of difficulty when verbalizing. Overall, the majority felt this was an Easy Task (N=10 quotes; P2; P5; P6; P7; P8; P9; and P10) and that they did not experience any or at least many issues with it. For example, P6 answered question 2 as follows: “Quite straightforward task and it did not take a long time to do. I am familiar with such tasks and debate regarding the topic because I am studying linguistics.”

However, some had more difficulties fulfilling the task. The Difficult Task (N=6 quotes; P1; P3; P4; P5; P6) subtheme showed that experienced difficulties seemed to be very person-specific. That is, there was great variability in what was qualified by participants as difficult. For example, P3 felt that the “lack of information” (P2) or topic knowledge was a challenge, P1 and P5 that it was hard to elaborate upon a side they “disagreed with” (P1), and P5 that the question was overall too “general” (P5) or broad.

Failure feelings and self-criticism (N=8 quotes; P3; P4; P8; P9; and P10) amounted to the fear of, or effective lack of success, inability to reach goals, and/or evaluations. Quotations contributing to this subtheme involved remarks involving the feeling of being “tested” (P7 and P9) or having not successfully reached the activity goals or their own set “plans” (P2), some of which expressed under the form of self-criticism (e.g., P8: “I should have discussed both sides more clearly”) or lack of self-confidence (e.g., P2: “I was not sure

about all the arguments I presented in my writing”). There was one participant who more fully explored this feeling:

I also was a bit worried because I felt like I am being tested which I am not. I probably was worried because I wanted to do very well in the activity. I also did not want to write something stupid or say something stupid as well because I am being recorded. (P7)

The above remark highlights his willingness to reach the personal goal of succeeding at the task and omit senseless comments. That is, it points toward the presence of some failure feelings. He did not want to fail at any cost, and partly because his efforts were being registered. It also points towards the novelty or strangeness category.

Information facilitates writing (N=7q; P1; P2; P3; P5; P6; and P7) consisted of commentary regarding the benefits of having information about the topic one needed to discuss in writing; about how having some knowledge about the topic, via research or personal reflection, facilitated accomplishing the task. Those exploring this issue mostly remarked that they felt “like I needed to read a bit of research before writing this task” (P2), needed to “make up” (P1 and P4) arguments for the side they disagreed with, or how their familiarity with the topic facilitated their writing (P6). That is, they acknowledged some lack of knowledge – or at least elaborate knowledge – about the activity topic.

Since their academic writing likely involves writing about topics about which they lack knowledge or have not yet formed a clear opinion, in the light of these results, they may eventually feel the need to turn to Arabic, and thereafter to translation procedures, and in the process experience greater English writing difficulties – than those they would experience if only writing about easy, well-known topics. There were, however, considerable inter-

individual differences, not only in terms of what amounted to a simple (hence more likely expressed in English) task, but also in terms of what worried them most when writing (e.g., structuring the text vs. justifying ideas). Finally, the detected insecurities and lack of self-confidence, and possibly linked reassuring emotional interjections, might have been enhanced due to taking part in this research as well as the research procedures.

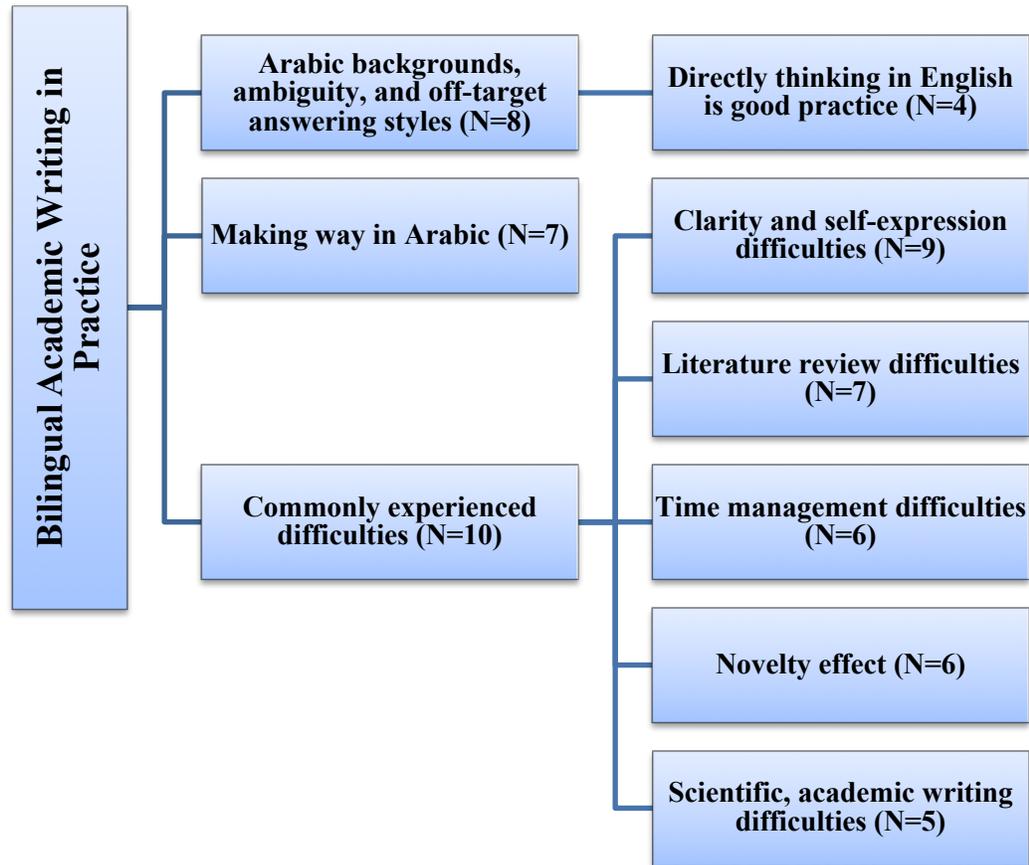
6.1.3 Participants' writing difficulties

The previous discussion showed some writing difficulties that participants experienced while working on the think aloud protocols and presented a few strategies that were used to help the participants cope with such difficulties. The last interview allowed participants to elaborate more on these difficulties while working on their assignments. The theme *Bilingual Academic Writing in Practice* was concerned with general day-to-day academic writing experiences of Arabic English academic writers undertaking their masters in the UK, particularly while working on their analysed writing samples. The subthemes included: *Arabic backgrounds, ambiguities, and off-target answering styles; Making way in Arabic; and Commonly experienced difficulties.*

Its subthemes amount to topics that were discussed by interviewees mainly while answering Q1, Q2, Q9, and Q10. There was one, but only participant, who referred to his Arabic background as a problem for Q1. This is interesting, for it suggests that most participants do not consider their mother tongue and nationality as their most pressing difficulties or problem solvers. Figure 6.4., below, summarizes the subthemes of the theme *Academic writing in practice.*

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Figure 6.4. Academic writing in practice and its subthemes



The first two questions were concerned with experienced difficulties. Sometimes participants referred to the influences of their mother tongue upon their writing experiences. Moreover, there were questions that specifically inquired about this topic. Answers provided for these questions overall pointed toward a consensus: *Arabic backgrounds, Ambiguity, and Off-target answering styles* were related experiences (N=8; P1; P2; P4; P5; P6; P8; P9; P10). Specifically, participants were of the view that English writing should be “direct” and “straightforward” (P3; P5; and P9), “concise” (P3), and “clear” (P3; P4; and P9), whereas Arabic was “indirect” or not “direct” (P3; P4; P5), and unfocused, “ambiguous”, “unclear”, or “confusing” (P2; P3; P4; P5 and P10). In addition, the Arabic style could include the

valuing of “aesthetic” features that were not valued in English writing, such as the use of “repetition” and “complex sentences” (P9). That is, there were “many differences” (P9) between the languages.

Possibly because of these differences, the utilization of Arabic “thought patterns” (P4), writing “style” (P1; P2; P4; P8), “structure” (P3; P5; P8), “form” (P5), “tone” (P10), during English writing was thought to negatively affect the quality of their English writing. It was interesting to notice how most participants referred to this Arabic-related source of English problems differently, and emphasized aspects such as thought patterns, style, tone and structure. It may be that they were trying to put into words an implicit experience they had never reflected upon before, let alone verbalize. This points toward the revealing value of the present study; it might have tapped into less ordinary experiences.

The highlighted negative consequences of such Arabic influences included the inability to write clear, accurate, and straight-to-the-point English texts. That is, to write as appreciated in the English culture. An example of an answer illustrating these observations was P10’s:

Yes, translation from Arabic into English is something that I used to utilise in my writing. It was a big problem. I would have the ideas in Arabic and then try to write them in English. This made me express the ideas in English in a way that was unclear or not even right. Sometimes, you can see that your English writing has an Arabic tone or structure. (P10)

This participant linked the utilization of Arabic structure and style to translation-based writing strategies, and explored its negative consequences, namely inaccuracy and lack of clarity. He also recognized this Arabian trait in written English texts - possibly his and

others, and due to his nationality. As one participant remarked, utilizing the Arabic style and structure should be avoided “at all costs” (P7). Instead, as some participants concluded (N=5; P1, P6, P7, P9, and P10), native Arabic-speakers would be better off by “thinking in English and writing in English” (P7). P6 referred to the lack of necessity of thinking in Arabic while writing in English, such as in his answer below:

No, I did not use any Arabic writing features or strategies in writing. I did not even use translation. I did not need to; I can just think and write in English without relying on my first language. (P6)

In summary, the command of Arabic language seemed to bear negative consequences upon the quality of participants’ English texts. A good command of English writing might involve the ability to avoid thinking in their mother tongue and rather think directly in English. This was possible when they either mastered English or lacked sufficient Arabic writing expertise (P2). This strategy seemed to help them avoid the structure and style valued by Arabian cultures, such as vagueness and ambiguity, and produce texts with qualities valued in England – namely directness. Although most participants shared this opinion, there was one interviewee (P8) that expressed the idea that translation was an art. That is, it was not necessarily the use of translation strategies that was behind the poor quality of a text, and thus, implicitly, the Arabic “thought patterns”, it was rather its misguided use.

The same questions that allowed for the constitution of the *Arabic backgrounds, ambiguity, and off-target answering styles* subtheme were also the basis of the constitution of the present subtheme. It was found that although the utilization of Arabic thinking was recommended against for its negative influence on the quality of their English writing, Arabic could come to “rescue” (P3). The Making way in Arabic subtheme (N=7; P1, P3, P4, P7, P8, and P10) systematizes precisely participants’ descriptions of the “positive” (N=5; P1,

P3, P4, P7, P8, and P10) influence of the use of the Arabic language for English writing purposes. Whenever they were “stuck in English” (N=3; P1, P3, and P4), that is, experiencing difficulties with the writing task or topic, some participants turned toward their mother tongue for the purpose of reflecting or planning (N=2; P1, P7) and expressing personal views (N=2; P4 and P8). An example of the beneficial use of Arabic for reflective or planning objectives is provided by P1, when acknowledging that “yes, there was an influence. It can be positive when you think about the topic and try to organise your thoughts.”

Overall, even if some participants did not feel such need, many made reference to the eventual importance of making way in Arabic when experiencing difficulties with the English writing task. In these cases, the influence of Arabic language was regarded as beneficial.

In the first question, participants were asked to identify specific problems and difficulties experienced while fulfilling academic writing tasks. They also sometimes discussed their difficulties and problems while answering to other questions. There seemed to be a relationship between negative emotionality and these experienced difficulties, such as: when P10 describes how he “used to get frustrated” while conducting literature reviews, thus explicitly associating a negative emotion with the identified problem; when many participants’ desire was to “eliminate”, “avoid”, or “overcome” (N=4; P1, P7, P8, and P9; e.g., P8: “I overcame some of these problems. However, I still struggle (...)”) their problems, as if they were a disliked occurrence with which they did not want to hang around; when they overtly classified the problems listed in Q1 as negative experiences in Q2 (N=7; P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, and P10; e.g., P3: “The negative things include being required to only use academic style which is something quite difficult for me.”); or when they made certain word

choices and emphasized possibly emotional aspects (N=9; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, and P10), as when claiming it was “really hard” or it was a “big problem”.

Nevertheless, it was not here assumed that the existence of a problem was necessarily responsible for an emotionally negative experience. This was because some participants might enjoy the challenge. Namely, P2 made similar word choices to the remainder. After pinpointing his difficulties, he argued that “there were not negative experiences when it comes to academic writing really”. That is, he did not apparently experience his difficulties as negative emotional experiences – and if so, to an unremarkable intensity or in a way that did not transform the situation into a negative one.

Hence, this subtheme was simply concerned with listing their most commonly experienced problems and difficulties while writing academic texts. As with other subthemes, each code was cited at least by three different participants; this is the reason for utilizing the adjective “commonly” in the subtheme’s name.

First, *clarity and self-expression difficulties* (N=9; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, and P10) were commonly experienced. This issue was sometimes regarded as consequent of their mother tongue, as in P2’s answer, below:

As for the writing in particular, one of the challenges was being clear writer. I used to utilise translation from Arabic into English which was a problem. It made my writing unclear and ambiguous sometimes. (P10)

However, not every participant related this difficulty with their mother tongue. It is quite possible that some writers simply experienced this problem due to lack of writing experience or their own personality traits. P5 seemed to provide evidence in favour of this interpretation:

I normally struggle to make a point in my writing. But I eventually get there. My problem is that I can't express myself in few words. I always end up writing a lot just to explain a small point. (P5)

Many participants also confessed to having *literature review difficulties* (N=7; P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P9, and P10). This involved knowing the rules of “referencing” and “plagiarism”, as well as “finding”, “choosing”, “collecting”, “paraphrasing”, and “summarizing” a considerable amount of works of other authors that were of relevance for their research or for the writing task. Whereas paraphrasing and summarizing others' research was sometimes linked to self-expression difficulties, thorough detail-prone subtasks such as referencing and collecting material were more commonly related to time management issues. P6 exemplifies some of these links between types of problems:

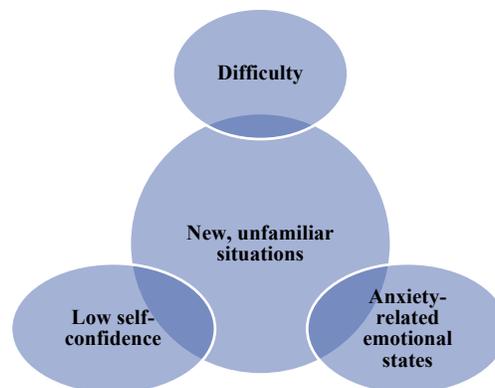
The most challenging aspect was expressing myself and trying to summarise what I read using my own words. Another challenge was finding references relevant to the topic I am working on. Also, I had to work hard to avoid plagiarism and make sure to cite everything I write. (P6)

Some participants also experienced *slowness and time management difficulties* (N=6; P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, and P10). This code included their references to being slow or spending too much time during the performance of some task (e.g., P10: “It took me a lot of time to do”), not having enough time (e.g., P3: “Not having enough time was a problem for me”), or not knowing how to manage their time, sometimes across personal and academic spheres (e.g., P7: “It was also hard to manage time”). It was considered that these references spoke of the way they inefficiently dealt with time and deadlines, a difficulty which was commonly

associated with the *anxiety-related emotional states*; and associated with the *novelty effect*. Most of these participants claimed having solved this problem during the second semester.

Participants also explicitly identified their lack of familiarity with certain situations and tasks as a difficulty. Remarks associating “new” experiences, lack of familiarity, or inexperience with difficulty (or conversely, between familiarity and task ease) were included in the *novelty effect* subtheme (N=6; P2, P43, P4, P7, P8, and P10). An example is P7’s comment acknowledging how “I was new to all that so things were quite difficult.” The newness or lack thereof of situations was frequently argued to elicit the emotions of *stress, pressure, anxiety, and fear* and to affect interviewees’ self-confidence. Figure 6.5, below, illustrates these relationships. They will be explored in subsequent sections. However, observing their existence, an effort was made to clearly highlight explicit associations between novelty/familiarity and task ease for the constitution of the present subtheme.

Figure 6.5. Novelty and its impact on experienced task difficulty, anxiety-related emotional states, and self-confidence.



Some participants also confessed to experiencing *scientific, academic writing difficulties* (N=5; P1, P3, P4, P5, and P8). Sometimes, the difficulties were experienced

solemnly in regard to particular types of writing such as “critical writing”, and sometimes to academic writing in general, as with P1’s answer below:

The most challenging aspect was the language style for my discipline. Science generally has a particular writing style, and you need to use certain scientific vocabulary.

6.2 Participants’ Use of Metadiscourse Features in Writing

Metadiscourse refers to the linguistics resources that writers utilise to organise their writings, their attitudes towards the content and their relationship to the readers (Hyland, 2000). It enables writers to “not only transform a dry, difficult text into coherent, reader-friendly prose, but also relate it to a given content and convey his or her personality, credibility, audience-sensitivity, and relationship to the message (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 157). Hyland’s model of metadiscourse (chapter 3) was utilised to analyse 3 writing samples for each participant. These samples were 3000 words in total for each participant, an overall of 30000 words for all participants in the study.

To discuss the metadiscourse features used, participants were put into two groups based on their disciplines. The first group involves the hard science majors (P1, P3, P5, P8, and P9). The second group contains all soft science majors (P2, P4, P6, P6, and P10). Each group will be discussed and followed by the thematic analysis of participants’ answers regarding their writing in the last interviews.

6.2.1 Hard science (Computer and Medical Sciences and Engineering)

Metadiscourse features can be of two types: interactive or interactional. Writers employ interactive metadiscourse to aid readers' comprehension of a text by clarifying, aligning and steering them through discourse (Hyland & Tse, 2004). In particular, they enable writers to arrange information in a coherent way based on the knowledge, experiences and needs of their readers. Interactive metadiscourse features are classified into 5 main categories: Transitions, Frame markers, Endophoric markers, Evidentials and Code glosses (table 6.2).

The analysis (table 6.2) indicates that hard science major participants utilised much more interactive than interactional features in their writing. It can also be noted that transitions markers are the most frequently used type of metadiscourse across all texts with an overall of 71.13 %. They are mostly conjunctions employed by writers to indicate addition, causality, adversative and temporal. Such high use of transition markers is an essential component of academic argument as it allows arguments to be explicit (Hyland, 2005a). These transition markers were employed to help participants structure their arguments and explanations and to aid reader comprehension and to avoid any ambiguity. For example:

This has, in turn, called for proper training *and* high levels of competency *and* compliance among the laboratory staff to attain highly accurate laboratory tests results. (P1)

Therefore, crowdsourcing open a new model for any organisation or company with limited resources to create and to solve their problem with less time consuming. (P3)

On the other hand, burning rice husk is not only harm people health but also it can contribute to air pollution. (P8)

The second most frequent metadiscourse is code glosses with an overall of 16.13 %. They are used by writers to expand ideational meaning by relating “a text to its context by taking readers’ needs, understandings, existing knowledge, intertextual experiences, and relative status into account” (Hyland, 2013, p. 69). Participants used them to restate ideational material and provide exemplification to ensure clarity of information presented. For example:

This situation has called for increased cooperation among different stakeholders in the health sector, *particularly* between the physicians and the laboratory personnel. (P1)

There are other potential alternatives for the provision of fresh water *such as* grey water or reclaimed water reuse, rainwater harvesting, fog water harvesting and laser cloud seeding. (P5)

The third most used metadiscourse feature is frame markers with an overall of 6.89 %. Frame markers were used to indicate text boundaries by presenting shifts and marking the next step in the discourse (Hyland, 2005a). They were deployed differently from one participant to another. For instance, P1 used the highest number of frame markers especially in his second text due to the argumentative genre of the text. In his second text, P3 employed more frame markers than the rest of participants making his discussion essay clear to his readers. The same goes with P5’s first text in which he utilised frame markers to clear up any ambiguity concerning his explanatory report. For instance:

Firstly, it does not disrupt the normal function or structure of the target protein. (P1)

This essay will describe the crowdsourcing process and the typology of crowdsourcing with the benefits and the drawback. (P3)

With regarding to the sustainable issue, this design could benefit Greenwich in various aspects. (P5)

Evidentials ranked fourth with 4.00 % across all texts. Evidentials are defined as “metalinguistic representations of an idea from another source” (Thomas & Hawes, 1994, p. 129). The analysis showed a strange pattern with almost half of evidentials being mainly deployed by P3, and the rest by the other 3 participants except for P1 who did not utilise them at all. Such high use of evidentials by P3 can be explained because of the explanatory nature of his texts. His texts, particularly 1 and 3, included external research results and statistics to support the explanations made in the report. Generally, participants tried to reference other resources to help strengthen their claims. For example:

According to the Internet World States, there are 3,035,749,340 internet users around the world. (P3)

Welch-Devine (2012) stated that one of the major difficulties due to which field experts are not able to develop valid guidelines for project evaluation is that there is no clear and consistent description of what success is. (8)

Hyland (2004) indicates that resources inclusion is part of academic writing; it enables them to persuade their readers with their claims. In the case of P1 and P3, there is a large difference in their use of evidentials suggesting a strong show of field knowledge by P3 and a developed writer identity, whereas P1 lacked any interest in displaying his academic credentials and showed weak skills in documenting information.

The least utilised interactive metadiscourse is endophoric markers with 1.85 % across all texts. Endophoric markers are devices that enable writers to point to other sections in the text (Hyland, 2005a). They were utilised similarly by all participants except for P8 who employed much more in his first text. This is maybe because of the nature of text which was a description of an experiment. This pushed P8 to include such markers to refer to various stages of the experiment. For example:

The following image is one such example of the problems mentioned above.

Another example showing the mishandling of chemicals is shown *below in the figure 2.4.*

In the above table, it can be noted that the financial services are becoming more competitive. (3)

Table 6. 9 Interactive metadiscourse features- Hard science discipline

Interactive															
	Code glosses			Endophoric			Evidentials			Frame markers			Transitions		
Text	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
P1	14	15	15	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	17	12	14	62	71
P3	10	12	17	1	1	2	12	4	7	5	9	4	43	62	64
P5	3	16	6	0	0	2	1	1	1	6	4	3	38	45	35
P8	9	13	12	6	0	1	1	4	4	3	1	1	51	49	56
P9	3	12	9	0	0	3	1	4	1	2	0	3	31	64	47
=	166			19			41			71			732		
%	16.13			1.85			4.00			6.89			71.13		

On the other hand, interactional resources were employed much less than interactive ones by all participants. These interactional features are mostly deployed to express writers' attitudes, judgments, opinions and to build a rapport with the readers (Hyland, 2005a). It can be noted that hedges were the most frequent interactional resource with an overall of 45 % (Table 6.2). According to Hyland (2005a) and Lee and Casal (2014), hedges are normally the

most frequent interactional metadiscourse. Their function is to demonstrate a fact from an opinion, and to express writers' views with caution (Hyland, 2005b). P5 used hedges far more than other participants especially in his third text which was a report. Both P1 and P3 utilised hedges in a similar amount. Initially, all participants used hedges to soften the claims they made in their writing. For example:

In some disease states, diagnosis *may* proceed without the need for a laboratory test. (P1)

Moreover, the project success rate may be further increased by engaging the senior management of Santander Bank in the plan of execution and various activities. (P5)

The overall objectives are to increase business growth by approximately 40%. (P9)

Engagement markers come second with an overall of 22.96 %. The use of engagement markers makes it possible for writers to relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in the text. Both P8 and P3 deployed these markers double the times used by other participants particularly in P3's second text, and in P8's first text, which were explanatory and descriptive in nature. They used these devices to make their readers part of the text through the use of the inclusive "we" and imperatives. The inclusive "we" is used sometimes instead of self-reference "I" because writers are discouraged from using it in hard sciences (Harwood, 2005b). For example:

We need software to explain how digital data can be interpreted across numerous kinds of networks without concern about the physical details. (P3)

Each label *should* contain the following information about the specific chemical. (P8)

Attitude markers are the third most frequent interactional metadiscourse with a total of 16.3 %. Their main function is allowing writers to present an affective judgement of

information in their texts (Hyland, 2005a). The analysis indicates that P1 used these markers the most with half more than the rest of the participants particularly in his second text which was a discussion essay. This might explain the need for such markers to indicate P1's affective states such as frustration. For instance:

Laboratory findings from proper examination of *carefully* collected, and *appropriately* tested, specimens from the patient. (P1)

Unfortunately, these problems are least considered in a lot of places; even in the Mechanical Engineering Laboratory. (P8)

Boosters are the fourth most frequent metadiscourse marker with a total of 13.4 %. They were utilised less than half the time than hedges. Boosters are employed to strengthen and emphasise propositional material, and occasionally to promote solidarity with the readers (Hyland, 1998). They were used by all participants with similar amounts in certain texts. Such lack of boosters indicates the inability to evaluate texts due to participants' lack of confidence and possibly the absence of critical evaluation in the Arabic culture generally and the Saudi education system specifically. In the case of P8, boosters only appeared in his second text and not in the other ones. P8 deployed them to emphasise some statistics and research studies that he included in his report. For example:

But with increasing scientific and empirical information, it became *apparent* that these factors, although very significant, are not the only factors to be considered. (P8)

It is *evident* that any project's outcomes have to be analysed from many different perspectives. (P8)

Gotland is *heavily* relies on the mainland's energy supply. (P9).

The least used type of interactional metadiscourse is self-mention with only 2.4 %. They were only utilised 5 times by P8. Their use indicates an explicit presence of

the writer in the text projecting his authorial identity (Hyland, 2005a). The analysis showed 2 instances in which P8 presented his authorial identity using personal pronoun “I”. In the other instances, P8 utilised the inclusive “our”. For example:

But *I* believe that success of project management is one of the aspects which affect the overall project’s success, and should thus be considered. (P8)

So, most of *our* products will be sold to *our* strategic partners, and part of it can be sold directly to the household customers. (P8)

Table 6. 10 Interactional metadiscourse features – Hard science discipline

Interactional															
	Hedges			Boosters			Engagement markers			Self-mention			Attitude markers		
Text	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
P1	1	9	6	0	4	5	0	6	1	0	0	0	4	8	4
P3	3	9	7	2	0	1	0	8	5	0	0	0	2	1	0
P5	6	8	17	0	3	1	1	0	8	0	0	0	1	2	4
P8	4	9	6	0	7	0	9	7	1	0	2	3	4	2	1
P9	0	7	2	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
=	94			28			48			5			34		
%	45			13.4			22.96			2.4			16.3		

6.2.2 Soft sciences (Social Sciences and Humanities)

The analysis (table 6.4) shows that soft science major participants utilised much more interactive than interactional features in their writing. Transition markers rank the highest across all texts with an overall of 64.9 %. They were employed by all participants to the same extent except for P10 who had more transition markers to explicitly structure his arguments. For example:

Additionally, learners' belief frameworks appear to be portrayed by their intrinsic complexity. (P2)

She is living with native speakers *in order to* improve her speaking skills. (P4)
Nonetheless, as there are adults who successfully master a second language, the author suggests that child language acquisition "is guided by UG and driven by domain-specific acquisition procedures. (P6)

The second most frequently metadiscourse feature is evidentials with an overall frequency of 13.4 %. To support their claims, participants utilised these markers in similar amounts except for P2 who employed them double the amount. By examining P2's texts, it can be noted that such high use of evidentials helped him explain and discuss the topics from different angles which supported any claims made in his essay and report. For example:

The author investigates the nature of a language learner's foreign language (FL) self-concept and their progressive development with time. (P2)

Neville (2010) in his book which is called "The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism" sheds the light on the importance of referencing. (P7)

Cresswell (2007) identifies few common features of a qualitative research. (P10)

Code glosses rank third with an overall of 10.7 %. Participants, in restating ideational material, deployed code glosses similarity apart from P2 who once again used more

discourse markers in his writings. In doing so, P2 was able to provide extra explanations and exemplifications in his discussion texts. For example:

The results are discussed *in terms of* convoluted thinking and the possibility of developing a thought and studying beliefs. (P2)

The efficacy of Corrective Feedback is one of the areas *that is* widely investigated in Second Language Acquisition *especially* in enhancing learners' written accuracy. (P4)

In other words, Bryson (2012) defines citation as "whenever an author uses a quote or refers to someone else's work. (P7)

The fourth most used metadiscourse feature is frame markers with an overall of 9.4%. Frame markers were deployed by participants to set text boundaries in different amounts. Both P6 and P10 used these markers the most with more than half the other participants. Their texts indicate that such high use of frame markers has helped in clearing any ambiguity that readers could have experienced while reading these discussion texts. For example:

This essay will utilize this model in order to calculate the processing costs of four sentences obtained from Gibson's (2006) paper (experiment 1). (P6)

In returns to the interview with the lecturer, in his answer to a question about academic writing and using some academic words to show the proficiency, the lecturer mentioned.... (P7)

The second section presents two sample studies of quantitative and qualitative research where a brief overview is outlined. (P10)

The least used type of interactive metadiscourse is endophoric markers with only 1.5% in all texts. These markers were mainly deployed by P4 and P6 in few occasions helping them to refer to other parts in their texts. For example:

As mentioned earlier, the learner will recognize the grammar feature, and she discovers and improves it in her own way. (P4)

Ten principals that highlight the differences between A-LL and child acquisition are explained briefly in *Table 1*. (P6)

Table 6. 11 Interactive metadiscourse features – Soft science discipline

Interactive															
	Code glosses			Endophoric			Evidentials			Frame markers			Transitions		
Text	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
P2	11	10	12	1	0	0	19	23	12	10	5	6	45	41	57
P4	9	11	5	0	2	6	19	0	8	4	2	6	43	51	46
P6	5	9	7	3	2	3	3	15	4	13	8	11	35	47	51
P7	3	7	14	0	0	0	8	8	6	3	3	7	53	37	48
P10	3	6	6	0	0	0	0	16	7	3	15	8	28	65	70
=	118			17			148			104			717		
%	10.7			1.5			13.4			9.4			64.9		

Similarly, interactional metadiscourse markers were also employed much less than interactive markers just like hard science major participants. Hedges were the most frequently type of metadiscourse with an overall of 42.7 % across all texts (Table 6.4). P2, P4, and P6 utilised hedges much more than the other two participants helping them express their point of views with caution. P7, however, only deployed hedges in four occasions in his first and second text. By examining his first and second texts, it appears that they were descriptive and explanatory in nature with many external references which might explain the need for fewer hedges since P7 did not explicitly express his opinions. His third text,

although being a research paper, did not include any hedges due to only analysing the introduction and small part of the literature review. For example:

They *may* even aspire to be English teachers themselves and for this reason are taking an upper-level English course to perfect their language skills; or *possibly* desire to use English in a business setting. (P4)

The FDH *assumes* that the Language Acquisition Faculty is no longer available for adults,

Attitude markers rank second with an overall of 18.7 %. To express their own judgement, participants used these markers in few occasions except for P2 who employed them more than double the times of the other participants. The fact that his texts were of discussion genre might explain the need for more attitude markers allowing him to judge information presented in his texts. For example:

Even on a neurobiological level, emotions form a *significant* part of reason and are the foundation of cognition including language learning. (p 2)

Corrective feedback is considered to have *an essential* role in the process of language learning. (P7)

Engagement markers are the third most frequent interactional metadiscourse with a total of 16.2 %. To relate with their readers, P6, P7, and P10 utilised engagement markers with the same amount in their texts. P2, on the other hand, employed these markers much more particularly in his second and third texts, which suggest more inclusion of readers in the texts. For example:

It *should be noted* that this is not the case with the predictions of Gibson's Model (2006), which will be discussed latter in this paper. (P6)

University students *must* follow the correct and the appropriate methods with respect to referencing and citations. (P7)

Language then, and learning a new language, is heavily tied to how *we* perceive *ourselves*, and how *we* want to portray *ourselves*. (P2)

Boosters rank fourth with total of 15.8 %. They were utilised half the number of times than hedges. To emphasise propositional material, both P2 and P10 used boosters the most in similar amounts in their texts except P10's first text which only contained one instance of booster. Moreover, P4 and P6 employed boosters with the same amount in their first and third texts. For example:

In psychology-oriented research, the idea that a learner's level of self-belief *largely* contributes to their academic performance is a widely accepted notion. (P2)

Thornbury (1999) points out that the good rule should *clearly* illustrate the limits of the grammatical feature and be clear, correct and simple. (P4)

However, it is noted that the idea that younger is *always* better needs to be rethought. (P6)

The least utilised type of interactional metadiscourse is self-mention with only 6.6 %. They were only utilised once and twice by P2 and P4 respectively, and zero times by P6. P7 and P10 explicitly presented themselves more than 12 times in their texts showing their authorial identity using the personal pronoun "I". For example:

I have developed the activities for teaching this feature inductively. (P4)

In the first part, *I* will focus on the use of referencing and citations and their significance in academic writing. (P7)

For more than three years, *I* have observed student's difficulties in learning vocabulary. (P10)

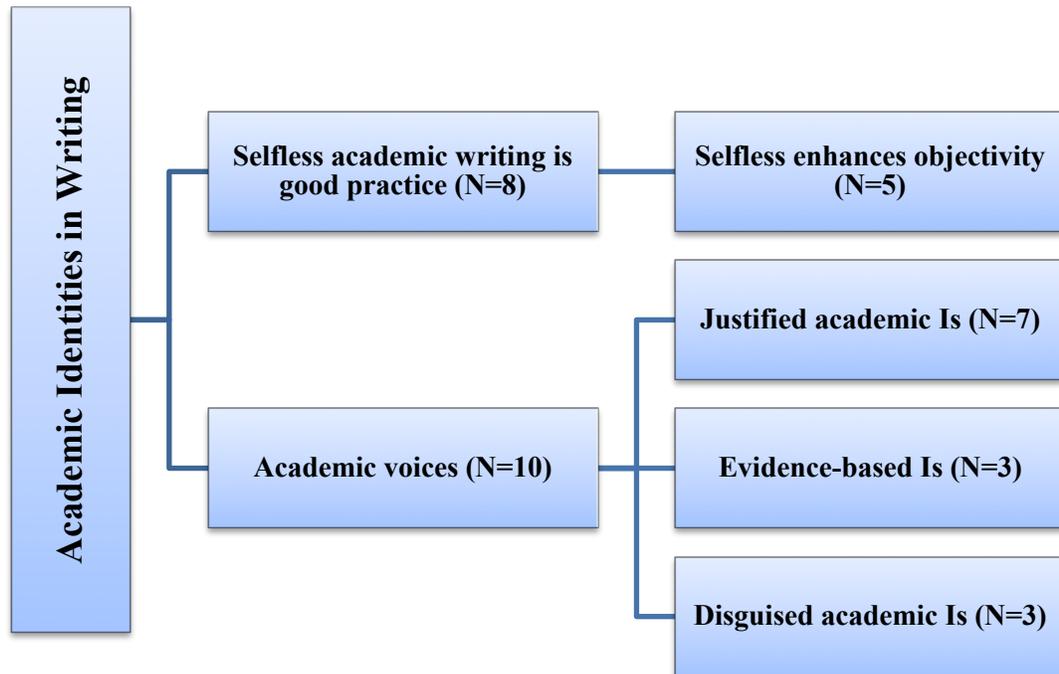
Table 6. 12 Interactional metadiscourse features – Soft science discipline

Interactional															
	Hedges			Boosters			Engagement markers			Self-mention			Attitude markers		
Text	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
P2	10	12	7	6	6	3	0	4	14	0	1	0	8	8	9
P4	2	18	3	3	0	3	2	3	4	0	0	2	3	0	2
P6	13	11	8	3	1	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
P7	2	2	0	1	2	2	1	0	3	2	1	4	1	2	3
P10	1	8	6	0	2	0	1	2	1	6	0	0	5	1	1
=	103			38			39			16			45		
%	42.7			15.8			16.2			6.6			18.7		

6.2.3 Academic identities in practice

Participants were directly asked about the use of metadiscoursal features in their writing with a focus on their expression of their “authorial identity” in writing, generally in the last question of the interview. This term was mostly interpreted in terms of the utilization of the pronoun I and/or the expression of personal views and opinions. Figure 4, below, describes this theme’s main findings. As it can be observed, there were two main subthemes: Selfless academic writing, and Academic voices. They describe how they considered that their ‘identity’ should be concealed, and how it should be conveyed in academic writing texts.

Figure 6.6 Thematic structure of the theme academic identities



Participants were inquired about how they expressed their “voice” in the last question of the interview. This was mainly interpreted in terms of the use of the pronoun “I” and the expression of personal opinions about topics. As P10 commented:

I don’t think I have a voice. I was actually taught not use the personal pronoun “I” in academic writing because academic writing is supposed to be impersonal. I was taught to express my ideas without using “I”. Therefore, I always avoid saying “I”.

P10 noted that he avoided using the pronoun “I” in academic writing. As P10, most participants acknowledged having been instructed by someone (P2, P3, P4, P5, and P8) and/or adhering to the practice of not using the pronoun “I” while producing academic texts. This commentary was joined under the theme Selfless academic writing is good practice (N=8; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8, and P10).

Some participants justified the practice of selfless academic writing. They generally argued that Selfless enhances objectivity (N=5; P2, P3, P4, P5, and P10; e.g., P2: “This is because I was told to not use it in my academic writing. Using it indicates being subjective so I did not use it.”). They reasoned or explained that “biases”, lack of “impartiality”, and “subjectivity” were more common when utilizing the pronoun “I”, as in P2’s answer previously mentioned. This was the only reason offered by participants to justify selfless practices.

Overall, most participants had been advised to avoid direct references to their selves in academic writing, most commonly with the aim of increasing its objectivity. The two participants that failed to mention this rule emphasized instead that one should be “tentative” (P6) or that they did so (P7) in particular circumstances, as those highlighted in the following section. That is, none argued against this rule; they simply did not discuss it. They might or might not be aware of it.

Regardless of the recommendations of selfless practices, every participant described particular ways and situations in which the pronoun “I” was utilized or their opinions were expressed. This commentary was included in the subtheme Academic Voices (N=10; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10).

The most common reasons offered behind academic voices practices (as opposed to selfless writing), consisted of direct requests or manifestations of personal “opinions”. In these occasions, these were Justified Academic Is (N=7; P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8). For some participants, this situation gave them free license to utilize the pronoun “I” (P1, P3, and P7; e.g., P1: “I normally do that by saying “I think” or

something like that”), whereas for others they still refrained from doing so (P3, P4, P8; e.g., P4: “Even when I am asked to express my opinion, I try to do that indirectly without putting emphasis on myself.”)

Additionally, when participants expressed their opinions, they might also embed their stance in evidence. These were Evidence-based Is (N=3; P3, P5, and P7). For example, P5 noted that “If I am asked to express my opinion, I try to provide enough evidence and examples before taking a side”. This answer illustrated how an exception to selfless practices consisted of being requested to share personal opinions, in which case he opted for supporting it via evidence and examples.

An alternative strategy, used sometimes in combination with evidence-based Is, was opting for Disguised Academic Is (N=3; P4, P7 and P10). This strategy involved utilizing the “passive voice and nominalisation” (P8, P10), or being “indirect” (P4, and P10) – both strategies likely involving the passive voice. As P2 commented:

The research I did is still mine even though I did not say that using the language.

My name is on the work so it is mine regardless of using “I” or not.

6.3 Summary

This chapter revealed various aspects regarding academic writing. It was found that participants thought that thinking directly in the output language was the best strategy. All the other alternatives were utilised but described as inefficient, by at least a few participants and for diverse reasons during the first interview. Additionally, the majority had seen their writing skills mainly improve in England; it was found that often it was not the country but the people within the pedagogic system (students with initiative, teachers) that made the

difference. The highlighted factors seem to corroborate this conclusion; there are no country-related factors beyond the place wherein most improvements had occurred. Other factors included practice, reading, being active, autonomous, and motivated learner, and feedback.

The analysis of think-aloud protocols suggested that, despite a preference for English while writing in English, most extensive commentary was performed in Arabic – principally when behaviour-related. The content of these verbalizations seemed to be specific to the individual; that is, different participants tended to express thoughts of different nature. This included their preoccupation with structuring the text vs. their preoccupation with justifying their ideas. Emotional and behavioural content was also expressed. Emotions were mainly positive or reassuring, which may link to the expressed insecurities. That is, when lacking confidence regarding the task, they might try to reassure themselves out loud.

It was also found that most participants preferred to write in English when dealing with academic issues, most commonly due to their current familiarity with the academic English style and writing guidelines. For different genres, some still preferred Arabic. The verbalization protocol also revealed that Arabic was preferred when they lacked self-confidence and clarity regarding their writing, whereas they opted for English when they were sure about what to say. Then, their Arabic verbalizations were more extensive and more often concerned with unstructured or complicated thoughts.

As for writing difficulties, interviewees confessed to having the following set of problems during academic writing, particularly when writing their own assignments: clarity and self-expression difficulties; Literature review difficulties; Time management difficulties; Novelty effect; and Scientific, academic writing difficulties. Some of these hardships may be aggravated due to their second-language study condition, and even their nationality. Namely,

the categories that seemed more closely linked to such issues are grammar, vocabulary, and spelling difficulties; clarity and self-expression difficulties; the novelty effect; or even the practicality of English academic writing. However, some of these difficulties might also be transversal across nationalities, including British academic students. For example, it is possible that time management, writing miles, and literature reviewing issues affect individuals of whatever nationality and language.

Finally, some participants expressed their opinion in particular circumstances, though mainly when directly asked. In this case, they might or might not use the pronoun I. They also tended to justify their opinions with strong evidence and/or disguise their voices by avoiding the pronoun and using the passive voice instead. This was how they solved the conflict between the recommendation of not manifesting their identity in writing and being directly solicited to do so.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This thesis aimed at exploring emerging self-identities and emotions among Saudi students in the UK by understanding their past and present English language/English writing experiences and their effects on the development of L2 possible selves. This chapter seeks to discuss the main results reported in the previous three chapters, offering a holistic interpretation of the data in relation to existing literature.

The chapter has three sections. The first one is dedicated to explicating participants' English writing experiences, and their influence on L2 possible selves and participants' views of themselves as English writers. The second section explores participants' relationship with English writing with a focus on their conceptualisation of this skill. Moreover, the role of emotions and the concepts of self-esteem and self-confidence and how they are implicated in the emerging of L2 possible selves are discussed. The third section evaluates participants' academic writing and the use of metadiscourse features in their writing samples. Finally, challenges that hindered participants' development of L2 self are discussed.

7.1 Participants' Past English Writing Experiences and Their Views of Themselves as English Writers

The data analysis has helped in understanding participants' writing experiences and their influence on their L2 possible self and perception of themselves as English writers. Many aspects concerning participants' English language experiences particularly their writing

experiences in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom were discussed. In particular, the analysis showed the influence of past learning on current and future learning of the participants. According to Miyahara (2015), understanding past experiences is the first step in perceiving the present and the future. Participants' learning narratives provided insights into the way in which the participants see their current learning and imagine their future. Although all participants shared a similar learning experience in Saudi Arabia, there are two emerging patterns that can explain how past learning experiences interfered with participants' current learning to construct their future self.

The first emerging pattern is lacking vision of L2 possible self. This marked the period of English learning experience in Saudi Arabia which consisted of two stages. The first stage was learning experience in school (from age 12 till 18). Participants' narratives showed no development of L2 possible selves in this stage. All participants described their English writing experience mostly in negative terms with almost no effect in generating a vision of themselves as writers of English. This lack of vision of a future L2 self can be explained as a result of the weak role of the learning environment in Saudi Arabia. Participants' narratives showed how the L2 learning experience lacked the capability in helping them construct a vision of their L2 possible selves.

The second stage was learning experience in college. In this stage, participants came across two distinct learning experiences. The first learning experience represented the story of half the participants in the study (P1, P3, P5, P8 and P9). These participants, who were studying engineering, medical science and computer science, had minimal exposure to English language with almost no practice in English writing which made them unable to form L2 possible self. The second learning experience portrayed the story of the other half of

the participants in the study (P2, P4, P6, P7, and P10). These participants, who were studying to be English language teachers, had more exposure to English and were writing more than once a week. Their narratives revealed that they started to see themselves as users of English due to the role the learning environment played in helping them generate L2 possible self.

All participants, however, were unable to form an ideal L2 self during their learning experience in Saudi Arabia. The fact that most participants thought of English as a school subject might have caused them to not be actively taking part in English language classes. Norton (2001) explained this as a result of not having reason to invest in an unwanted imagined community. Even with more English exposure during their bachelor's degree, participants did not have adequate past learning experiences from school which made it hard for them to construct an ideal L2 self. There was another crucial difference in that participants, who were studying to be English language teachers, had a strong obligation to learn and improve their English writing skills. The fear of failing their degree might have pushed the participants to improve their English writing skills, which indicates having an ought-to self.

The second emerging pattern is formation of an ideal L2 self. It marked the learning experience in the UK. Although all participants joined English language courses and pre-sessional courses to improve their overall language skills and to prepare for their masters, there were few emerging patterns that distinguished between the participants. The first pattern concerned participants who initially lacked vision of their L2 possible selves in Saudi Arabia. These participants were able to construct a vision of themselves as English language users due to the positive role of learning institution in the UK. Starting their masters was conditioned in improving their English language, particularly their writing skills which was

the weakest among all participants. This indicated that they had quite a strong obligation to improve, thus suggesting an ought-to L2 self.

During their masters, these participants experienced a different learning trajectory. Four participants (P3, P5, P8, P9) showed no clear interest in improving their writing skills further indicating a lack of an ideal L2 self. These participants wanted to finish their degree and go back to Saudi Arabia to work as engineers. They explained that they do not need writing for their future careers; their main concern was improving their speaking skills. As for participant 1, who initially lacked an ideal L2 self, he showed great interest in enhancing his writing skills; he wanted to become a competent writer and a published scholar in his discipline. The fact that he wanted to pursue his education and enrol in a PhD program after finishing his master's might explain his determination in becoming a professional writer. These signs can be taken as evidence of an ideal L2 self (Csize' & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2011).

The second pattern concerned participants who were able to envision themselves as users of English in Saudi Arabia (P2, P4, P6, P7 & P10). These participants continued to improve during these English language courses in the UK. The fact that they had a good proficiency level and a clear L2 possible self made their learning experience easier than the learning experience of the other participants in the study. Since these participants had already an ought-to L2 self, they were able to strengthen and authenticate this self, and in the process, started to form an ideal L2 self in which they see themselves as successful English writers because of the positive role of the learning environment and the many resources offered to them. The formation of an ideal L2 self is possible when learners encounter

positive learning experiences and are equipped with many chances and resources needed to customise the desired self (Dörnyei, 2005).

When these participants joined their master's, their ideal L2 self was authenticated further. They all showed great interest in becoming better writers in the future. This indicates a gradual development of participants' L2 possible selves. Every learning experience affected their visions of themselves as users of English. L2 learning experience in the UK played a much bigger role in the construction of possible selves, whereas it had a weaker effect on some participants and no effect on others in Saudi Arabia. Participants' L2 learning experience in the UK did not only help in reactivating and creating desires in becoming better and more successful writers for most participants, but also in sustaining and reinforcing participants' L2 possible selves through creating chances for the participants to be an active and autonomous part of the learning process.

With the L2 learning experience affecting both self-guides, the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009), most participants were able to form an ideal L2 self as they had the desire to improve further in the future. Other participants, however, had only an obligation to improve to pass their courses without constructing an ideal L2 self. It is important to mention that participants must see their desired self within reach as it is only constructive when being seen as a feasible objective to achieve (Miyahara, 2015). This reality feature allowed participants in this study to envision their ideal self as a result of their constant practice and improvement as well as their increased confidence in themselves over time.

After examining the influence of past learning experiences on participants' current learning while trying to achieve their future learning goals and providing many examples in

which participants' past learning affected their current learning and, in the process, impacted their own visions for the future, the following explores participants' views of themselves as writers and shows the effects of their engagement and negotiations on their L2 self and identity.

According to Kaplan and Flum (2009), factors such as learners' involvement in school, decisions they take, experienced conflict and negotiations, all have a major impact on who learners believe themselves to be, who they aspire to be in the future and who they eventually turn up to be. These factors influenced participants' views, their identity, and their L2 possible self in this study. Participants thought of themselves as writers differently based on their circumstances. The analysis showed that their opinions of themselves were a matter of perspective; these opinions differed based on the language considered, expertise level, and topic of the task. They appeared to be constantly changing and contradictory on a few occasions.

This indicates the possibility of language learners in forming identities in their new educational contexts. Their language classrooms can be a place in which their identities can be constructed (Huang, 2011; Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2012; Murphey et al., 2005). It can be concluded that all master courses and language courses in the UK (e.g. general English and pre-sessional courses) presented Saudi participants with ample learning chances which helped them authenticate their L2 possible selves and construct their identity as L2 users and writers of English. These findings are broadly in line with the work of Murphey et al. (2005) which suggests that learners have the ability to form their identities inside language classrooms contingent on successfully using the language with others. Another contingency of forming identities is based on learners' motivation and enthusiasm in improving their

language skills. This was apparent in most Saudi participants who actively endeavoured to enhance their overall English language skills with a focus on their academic writing skills.

With a poststructuralist interpretation of identities in mind, learners form different identities to fulfil certain social expectations (Hyland, 2011). This emphasises an important aspect that was detected in the data which was the fluid nature of creating identities; these identities cannot be viewed as static manifestations because they are constantly getting formed, evolving, and even conflicting with each other. Participants did not identify themselves with a fixed identity in different contexts; they were quite adaptable in associating themselves using different labels. The data showed multiple identities formed during their English language learning journey. For example, participants labelled themselves using various roles such as ESL learners, learners of a particular discipline, scientists, and/or engineers, husband, father, friend, and teacher. These findings are consistent with previous research which stressed the versatile nature of identities in learners' lives (Hall, 2000; Miyahara, 2010; Paiva, 2011).

This continuous change of identity can be explained further with participants describing their English writing skills as a work in progress. They all worked towards enhancing their writing skills and they had the desire to improve and project an identity that suits their academic circumstances. The fact that they believed that enhancing their writing skills was something doable motivated them to achieve that. According to Pizzolato (2006, p. 59), "the relation between what students want to become and what students actually become may be motivated by what students feel they are able to become". Some had the desire to sound and write like a native writer of English, which probably indicates a strong feeling of being associated with a new identity similar to a native English writer. This, however, was

not the case for everyone as some participants had to improve so that they pass their pre-sessional courses and start their master's. They only wanted to acquire sufficient skills for academic and not for professional reasons.

Nevertheless, more or less accentuated, this improvement direction was always present. Even in those who felt no need or desire to become great writers, there was a relative need to do so and particular skills that needed improvement due to their academic circumstances. Although there was no direct statement of why they needed to improve their writing skills, most participants indicated their desire to pursue a PhD after finishing their masters in the pre-interview questionnaire. Therefore, their desire to improve can be also explained to be instrumental in the sense that they see their L2 self to be part of an imagined community presented by the academic community. In associating themselves with the community, their desire will be a factor in bridging the gap between their past, present and future selves.

According to Norton (2000), learners' constructed identities constantly change and shift due to various contexts and communities they find themselves in and their capacities to be active members of these communities. Even though there were few emerging identities, this thesis concerns itself with learner identities. This type of identity was formed when Saudi participants became members of the learning community and educational institutions in the UK. By interacting with others in a native English language environment, Saudi participants started to gradually improve and gain confidence in themselves as users and writers of English as time passed. This, however, was not the case with all participants in the study; some participants struggled more than others in becoming part of the learning

community due to having a lower proficiency level and an undeveloped L2 possible self when coming to the UK.

The rest of participants, on the other hand, had an easier journey in which they integrated into the community of practice before the others due to having better linguistics skills and a clearer L2 possible self. These results coincide with Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund's (2012) study, which reported that advanced learners have an advantage over other learners in having a deeper engagement in communities of practice. As a result, this allowed these participants to construct imagined communities of their desired future selves. Their learning process was driven by the identities they wanted to project and the communities they desired to be members of. Murphey et al. (2005) explained the role of these imagined communities to be a prominent step in the construction of L2 identities. In this sense, language will push learners to put efforts to achieve their future self with the aim successfully integrating into their desired imagined communities.

Overall, it can be noted that being a learner in the UK has transformed Saudi participants L2 possible self and identity. It made most participants have clearer visions of their future selves allowing them to work harder to achieve their goals. Finally, learning a language is not only about acquiring information; it is a complicated process that involves emotions, feelings, and attitudes, which will be discussed in the following section.

7.2 Participants' Relationship and Orientation to English Writing

Data analysis showed interesting findings regarding participants' relationship with English writing. It clarified the way participants saw the English language and revealed their writing preference and whether they like to write or not. The analysis also displayed the emotional

and the behavioural states that participants ascribed to English generally and English writing specifically.

7.2.1 Participants' conceptualisation and opinions of English writing

One of the most important factors that affects the language learning process is learners' visualisation of the target language (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Participants' visualisation of English followed three main stages. The first stage took place in intermediate and secondary school (between the age of 12 till 18). In this stage, participants saw themselves as only learners of English. Yashima (2009) explained that learners can envision the L2 self if they are more open to the world and are interested in global affairs. This, however, did not happen for these participants as they had no exposure to the outside world. English was a foreign language to them that was taught as a school subject without clear communicative purposes outside classrooms. By lacking the ability to visualise an L2 using self, all participants were not able to form L2 possible self during school.

The second stage occurred when the participants joined their bachelor's degree. This stage marked the beginning in which some participants started to see themselves as users of English. These participants had the chance to practice English in both spoken and written forms in the classroom which altered their conceptualisation of English and helped them construct L2 possible self.

The third stage took place in the United Kingdom. Participants were given access to many resources inside and outside the classroom which led them to see themselves as users of English. These resources (teachers, curriculum, L2 learning environment and social

environment) played a significant role in the construction of L2 possible self and in helping most participants form an ideal L2 self.

Even though participants understood the value and importance of writing for their academic life, they did not enjoy it. The analyses showed that almost all participants confessed to not liking to write because of the complexity and difficulties associated with the skill of writing. Murphey (2007) explained that positive identification (e.g. liking to write) can help in constructing an ideal L2 self. This might explain why some participants struggled to form L2 possible self in Saudi Arabia, and an ideal L2 self in the UK. Their learning experience would have been easier if participants liked the skill of writing. According to Dörnyei and Csizér (2002), holding a positive outlook can help to facilitate the language learning process whereas a negative outlook hinders it.

As for language preference, most participants preferred to write in English when dealing with academic issues, most commonly due to their current familiarity with the conventions and terminology of their discipline in English. This might explain why most participants were able to strengthen their L2 possible self and eventually form an ideal L2 self in the UK. Some participants, on the other hand, preferred Arabic for different genres particularly when writing about general topics, which possibly made them struggle in constructing an ideal L2 self. Even in their think-aloud protocols, participants preferred Arabic when they lacked self-confidence and clarity regarding their writing, whereas they opted for English when they were sure about what to say.

7.2.2 Ascribed emotional states and the construction of L2 possible self

The previous discussion showed participants' conceptualisation of English writing, their view points and preferences and how they affected their L2 possible self. This discussion led us to a major concern in this study, which is the role of emotions in the process of the emerging L2 self. According to Matsumoto and Luang (2008), emotions can be understood as personal experiences that are socially and culturally formulated. They affect learners' present learning and frame their future (Swain et al., 2011). It is worth mentioning that recent research in the field of emotions in SLA has focussed on the role of emotions and what they actually do rather than regarding them as positive or negative states (Benesch, 2017 & Pavlenko, 2002). Despite what poststructuralism suggests, this study distinguished emotions from one another in accordance with their physiological arousal levels (high or low) and psychological valence (positive or negative). For example, anxiety states were regarded as a high arousal negative emotional state and happiness states were regarded as high arousal positive states. Such classification has been made due to the way participants framed their emotional states.

Emotions have been argued to shape learners' language learning experience (Arnold, 1999; Gass & Selinker, 2008). In talking about their English learning experience in Saudi Arabia, participants provided many examples of how their past English learning experiences were negative. For instance, participants were unhappy and dissatisfied with their traditional style of learning English with its focus on memorisation and theory. They also had issues with teachers, describing them as unqualified and unable to teach them. Since emotions are responsible for the activation and deactivation of learning behaviour and for switching on and off the process of learning (Swain et al., 2011), participants experienced great difficulty

in learning English which made it impossible for them to form L2 possible self during school years in Saudi Arabia.

Emotions do not only affect learners' language learning experience but also their motivation in foreign language classrooms (Garret & Young, 2009; Imai, 2010; Pekrun et al., 2002). It was shown that all participants in Saudi Arabia lacked motivation to learn English due to the negative effect of the learning institutions. Most negative emotional states were at least partly described as a consequence of Saudi Arabia's traditional and poorly qualified style of teaching English, providing evidence in favour of how this kind of pedagogy is a main reason for disinvestment (Carpenter et al., 2008). For example, P5 and P8 described their learning experience by indicating that "I did not learn anything at school" or "we did not learn how to write", which is an example of an extremely negative emotional state with hindering effect on the development of motivation.

On the other hand, participants mostly described their UK learning experience in positive terms because they were able to significantly improve their writing skills. In this unfamiliar and new context, participants went through many stages of identity negotiation which exhausted them emotionally. According to Pavlenko (2012), forming a new identity is a place of emotional conflict with L2 learners being forced to deal with many learning difficulties that they come across in their attempt to be accepted as a legitimate member of the L2 learning community. The thematic analyses presented few emerging patterns that explained the emotional states experienced by the participants during their masters with a focus on their English writing experiences.

The first emerging theme was the power of feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) explained that feedback has a powerful impact on the learning process. It can help in

boosting learners' self-confidence and in being a powerful motivator in facilitating the learning process (Drew, 2001). Since participants rarely received feedback in Saudi Arabia, it was hard for them to improve and form an L2 possible self. In the UK, most participants constantly received feedback; they described it in three different ways. The first one was feedback as an objective recommendation in which it showed the strengths and weaknesses of their writing assignments. This type of feedback reinforced participants' learning process and helped them improve their language skills, which reflected positively on their L2 possible self.

The second description of feedback was feedback as an emotional trigger. According to Hyland (2003), feedback affects learners by provoking certain emotional reactions. These emotional reactions can be either positive or negative based on the feedback itself and the way learners deal with it. Feedback also influences learners' moods (Coumts et al., 2011). Participants' comments showed how feedback had a powerful negative and positive emotional impact on their moods. Positive feedback made them happy, whereas negative feedback had the opposite effect. Regardless of its emotional impact, feedback might have had a positive influence on participants' actual learning.

Feedback was also seen as identity-shaping value judgements. Feedback allowed participants to have a sense of their learning curve by valuing their writing in either positive or negative terms. Value judgements have been found to affect self-efficacy beliefs, self-esteem and self-confidence (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). When received feedback is positive, this helped participants to think highly of their writing abilities. Positive feedback can be thought of as positive reinforcement for participants' performance. This positive reinforcement will help participants validate and support their future selves' visions

(MacIntyre et al., 2009). According to Campion and Lord (1982), positive feedback encourages learners to raise the goals they set for themselves (e.g. L2 proficiency), whereas negative feedback seems to have the opposite effect.

Overall, the extent to which feedback affected self-esteem differed among participants. Young (2000) explains that the self-esteem of recipients is the one determining whether messages received become negative or positive feedback. He indicates that learners with low self-esteem look at feedback as a judgement of their own capacities, whereas learners with high self-esteem view it as something constructive that they can exploit to improve. For example, participant 3 thought of himself as a “bad” writer whenever received feedback was negative. In this case, it can be argued that the emotional impact of some feedback may be partly moderated by participants’ identity and self-esteem especially when the feedback was presented with the intention of not being considered as a value judgement applicable to aspects other than the presented work.

There were also various emotional states that were experienced by all participants when writing their assignments in English during their masters. According to Miyahara (2015), emotions affect identity development by helping to construct and strengthen learners’ visions of their possible selves. In this study, each emotional state influenced participants’ visions of their possible selves differently. Most emotional states were generally negative. The most common negative states were stress and anxiety. Anxiety is a ‘subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system’ (Spielberger, 1983: 15). Although psychology-based research suggests that stress and anxiety are different, anxiety is used here as an umbrella term that includes other negative emotional states. It is presented by a subtheme with various high arousal negative

emotional states such as “panic”, “stress”, “worry”, and “pressure”. Recent research indicates that learner anxiety has a negative impact on every stage of the language learning process including language acquisition, retention and production (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Gkonou et al., 2017; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

Miyahara (2015) explained that negative emotions have a role in decreasing learners’ self-efficacy which might hinder them from forming an ideal L2 self. For example, P5’s comments showed a link between anxiety and self-confidence. His high level of anxiety caused him to lose confidence in his own writing abilities. This might explain why P5 was unable to form an ideal L2 self. This also can be explained the other way around; by losing confidence in his L2 self, P5 experienced feelings of anxiety. Such correlation can be understood with anxiety not being the threat; it is the threat of self-perception that causes learners to feel anxious (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005).

It is important to mention that feeling anxious was a temporary emotion that was constantly changing based on participants’ academic circumstances. This type of anxiety can be referred to as state anxiety (Spielberger, 1983). It was also found that anxiety did not particularly impede the learning process. Participants might have experienced a type of anxiety called facilitating-debilitating, which is believed to be helpful in improving learners’ performance and affect language leaning positively (Scovel, 1978). This was identified when some participants were anxious due to receiving negative feedback. This negative emotion pushed some participants to work harder and try to get better grades in their upcoming exams and assignments.

On the other hand, participants experienced few instances of high arousal positive emotions, which are represented by the theme happiness and joy. Participants felt happy when they received positive feedback or when the writing project was fun and interesting. This reflected positively on the participants due to the effect of positive emotions on pushing learners to take actions and become agentive of their learning (Miyahara, 2015). There also appears to be a link between feeling happy and having high self-confidence. In two instances, happiness was discussed alongside high self-confidence. Since a link has been established between low self-confidence and anxiety, it may be that happiness increased participants' self-esteem and self-confidence, and in the process, affected their L2 possible self. Being confident might explain why most participants were able to authenticate their L2 possible self and construct an ideal L2 self.

Another emerging theme was participants' ability to deal with and control their emotions. In their first semester, participants experienced "stress", "pressure", "fear" and "anger". These emotions appeared to influence participants' learning experiences negatively. In the second semester, most participants were able to decrease the negative effect of these emotions on their learning by gaining control over these emotions which helped in constructing and strengthening their visions of their possible selves. The other participants, on the other hand, were not successful in effectively dealing with these emotions, which might explain why they struggled in authenticating their L2 self and in forming an ideal L2 self in which they see themselves as successful English writers.

According to Erickson (1968), emotions make changes to the learning process by regulating the way learners perceive them; this leads to either a positive or negative outcome based on learners' competence in comprehending these changes and properly arranging them

into positive psychosocial identity. This can explain why most participants were more successful in minimising the negative side of emotions and, in the process, portraying a positive identity that reflected their L2 future self. By comprehending their own feelings regarding their emotional experiences, learners have the capacity to remove negative emotions and boost positive ones (Pekrun et al., 2002). These participants were also able to show what they like or dislike due to understanding their own learning experiences as well as carrying out an emotional assessment of these experiences (Garret & Young, 2009).

7.2.3 Self-esteem and self-confidence: The construction of L2 possible self

After examining how emotions were implicated in the development of L2 self, it is time to explore participants' self-esteem and self-confidence. Understanding these concepts can help in showing how participants' L2 selves were shaped and influenced by their writing experiences during their masters'. Self-esteem refers to the global or specific subjective, emotional, affect-demonstrative evaluation of oneself (Coopersmith, 1969). Self-confidence is defined as the trust one deposits on one's own abilities and skills; one's self-assurance or lack thereof (Corsini, 1994).

The analysis showed two main categories: positive, complementing self-analysis, possibly denunciative of high self-esteem/confidence (N=29; P1, P2, P3, and P4), and negative, depreciative self-analysis, possibly denunciative of low self-esteem/confidence (N=20; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5). The analysis also revealed significant inter-individual differences among the participants. For instance, P2 was the participant who showed the highest self-esteem/confidence in his own English writing abilities. His answers reflected a writer who has the ability to deal with any writing project regardless of the difficulty. He was also quite motivated to further improve his writing skills as he was planning to do a PhD as

soon as he would finish his master's. His high self-esteem/confidence was the main reason behind being able to form an ideal L2 self.

Negative, depreciative self-analysis comments, on the other hand, were less common than positive comments. Participants used diverse terms such as “struggling writer”, “not good”, “poor writer”, “not confident” and “doubting own abilities”, to indicate states of low esteem/confidence. Once again, there were significant inter-individual differences among the participants which affected their L2 possible selves. For example, P1 was quite confident and he rarely criticized his writing abilities. However, he had the highest number of grammatical mistakes in his diaries. P6, on the contrary, lacked self-confidence and doubted his writing abilities. By examining his diaries, he had the lowest number of grammatical mistakes. This suggests a mismatch between participants' actual writing abilities and their self-appraisals. It appears that their behaviour was influenced by their L2 self. Being confident seems to be enough for some participants to form an ideal L2 self regardless of their actual writing abilities.

According to Bandura (1982), confidence is a circumstantial specific concept. This indicates that confidence is flexible, fluctuating and sensitive to contextual aspects. This is represented in the way participants were able to build their self-confidence during their masters'. For example, participants used many temporal expressions when talking about their confidence which suggests a longitudinal development of confidence. Some participants explored the link between time and confidence based on their “familiarity” or “experience”. Participants' experience and familiarity increased over time which reflected positively on their self-confidence. Although all participants described their self-confidence to be

developed during their master's experience or somewhere along their path as students, its impact on their L2 possible selves differed.

For example, gained self-confidence helped four participants (P3, P5, P8, and P9) to authenticate their L2 possible self without particularly encouraging them to form an ideal L2 self. The rest of the participants were able to form an ideal L2 self in which they see themselves as competent English writers due to high self-confidence along with other factors such as high motivation, positive emotions and positive past learning experiences. These participants appeared to be more invested in the learning process due to having a clearer vision of their desired self. According to Lamb (2009), learners should make sure to keep a transparent image of possible selves in the future, as this will allow learners to clearly see their ideal selves with sharp visions of their desired self, causing an increase in their language learning investment.

While working on their assignments, most participants experienced difficulties such as writing difficulties, time management, confidence and motivation issues. These difficulties affected participants' L2 possible selves and the formation of an ideal L2 self. Participants negotiated their competence and identity in order to cope with these difficulties. Their determination to improve their writing skills forced them to turn to multiple problem-solving strategies. One of these was identified during the first interview, during which they described how, prior to the onset of their masters, most had come to the UK to firstly attend at least one English language course. They also worked hard on themselves and sought feedback from teachers and friends inside and outside class. Both involved the request of social support. Their constant practice also contributed to the enhancement of their writing

skills (autonomy strategy). Indeed, their past investment and their L2 future selves drove them to take actions and employ these strategies to improve their writings skills.

7.3 Academic Discourse and Identity

This section aims to examine Saudi students' academic writing. It explores the relationship between discourse and identity with a focus on participants' use of metadiscourse features in their writing samples.

7.3.1 Saudi students' use of metadiscourse features in their writing samples

Academic discourse refers to a type of social engagement between a writer and a reader (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1994, 2000, 2005). The writers' role centres on considering their targeted audience by anticipating what they know, what issues they might experience and how they would react to the text, whereas the readers' role is to question writers' claims and assess the value of their texts (Hyland, 1994). This shows that writing is an interpersonal struggle in which writers need to attend to not only arranging their texts but also showing their personality, trustworthiness, and empathy towards their readers (Hyland, 2005). This thesis focused on analysing the metadiscoursal features that Saudi participants used in their academic texts, and understanding how these participants negotiated their claims, tried to persuade their readers, and positioned their facts.

Metadiscourse is essential in academic writing as it equips writers with suitable and useful ways of showing and negotiating propositional information relevant to a certain academic community (Hyland, 2004). This means that analysing metadiscourse can reveal the existing relationship between written texts and disciplinary communities. The analyses

showed differences in the utilisation of metadiscourse among the participants in the study. These differences can be explained due to participants belonging to two academic disciplines. The first discipline was represented by hard science major participants (medical and computer sciences, and engineering). The second discipline was represented by soft science major participants (social sciences and humanities).

The results of the metadiscourse analysis showed that hard science major participants slightly utilised less interactive metadiscoursal features than participants in soft sciences. In their use of interactive features, transition markers were used the most which is expected from writers due to being an essential component of academic argument as it allows arguments to be explicit (Hyland, 2005a). Although soft fields tend to have more transition markers reflecting their nature in constructing a discourse that is persuasive and coherent (Hyland, 2004), this was not the case for participants in this study as they utilised fewer transition markers than participants in the hard science fields. These differences might be attributed to departmental styles, teachers, English proficiency and academic writing abilities.

The second interactive metadiscoursal feature is code glosses. These features are quite useful in helping writers expand ideational meaning and provide exemplification, restatement, and clarification in their texts. Participants in hard sciences deployed code glosses more than participants in soft sciences. It appeared that these participants felt the need to give extra information and explanations, which helped make their texts clearer to their readers. The high use of code glosses seems unexpected from writers who speak Arabic as first language. According to Sultan (2011), Arabic writing tends to be repetitive in nature which causes a lack of use of code glosses when these writers use English. As for frame

markers, they were utilised more by participants in soft sciences helping them set text boundaries and make their texts clear for their readers.

The use of evidentials helped in supporting the claims participants made in their texts. However, their use appeared to be the most striking one between the two disciplines. Participants in soft sciences employed evidential markers three times more than participants in hard sciences. According to Hyland (2004), referring to other resources is a central aspect of academic writing enabling writers to be persuasive and helping them provide a rationale behind their claims. Their high use can be taken as an indication of having a strong field knowledge and a developed academic identity.

Endophoric markers were utilised the least by all participants in almost similar amounts helping participants to refer to other sections in their texts and to indicate various stages in their writings. Participants in hard sciences used these markers slightly more than participants in soft sciences. Hyland (2004) indicates that endophoric markers are usually deployed more by students in hard disciplines to help them support their claims by referring to figures, tables, and photographs. However, the underuse of endophoric markers, particularly in hard sciences, might suggest that participants were not aware of the existing discourse structure as well as the elements of their texts due to lack of experience in writing such texts during their masters.

Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, was utilised much less than interactive metadiscourse by all participants. Using interactional features helped participants convey their own attitudes, judgments, opinions, and build a relationship with their readers. Hedges were the most frequent interactional feature used in participants' texts. The findings showed that soft science major participants deployed hedges a few times more than participants in

hard sciences. This coincides with Hyland (2004), who explained that, writers, in soft fields such as social sciences and humanities, base their findings on human participants and qualitative data, which compel them to use hedges to soften their expressed interpretations.

Engagement markers were the second most used type of interactional metadiscourse. The findings indicated that participants in hard sciences utilised these markers more than participants in soft sciences, which helped them relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in their texts. As for attitudes markers, they were the third most frequent interactional metadiscourse. These markers were used more by participants in soft sciences helping them communicate emotional judgement of information in their texts. According to Hyland (2005a), attitudes markers are important in soft fields because writers are expected to include their own evaluations in an explicit way with the intention of persuading their readers, constructing their own credibility and analytic understanding.

The fourth most frequent interactional metadiscourse marker was boosters. These markers were employed more by participants in soft sciences helping them to stress propositional materials on some occasions. It appears that high use of boosters might be an indication of high confidence. However, this was not the case for participants in this study. The low use of boosters can be explained due to participants' inability to evaluate texts, their lack of confidence, and possibly the absence of critical evaluation in the Arabic culture generally and the Saudi education system specifically.

The least used type of interactional metadiscourse was self-mention, which indicated that participants lacked authorial identity. Participants in hard sciences used this type of metadiscourse on few occasions which is something expected in such disciplinary community. According to Hyland (2004), writers in hard science fields are expected to avoid

putting themselves in the front when presenting their research findings. He also suggests that these fields tend to reduce writers' role and focus on competence in research practices to give the impression that there would not be any differences in the findings reached when done by another writer. As for participants in soft sciences, they utilised self-mention on more occasions than participants in hard sciences. Even though self-mention has a bigger function in soft disciplines (Hyland, 2000), participants only use it in few instances. They chose to downplay their presence in their texts to the minimum.

In this study, participants portrayed writing to be impersonal, which negatively affected their authorial identity. Haneda (2005) highlighted the virtually non-existence of impersonal writing. He stressed the need for negotiating an academic identity in writing regardless of learners' belief in the existence of impersonal writing. According to Morita (2004), ESL students experience difficulties in finding their voice in writing due to the linguistic difficulties and their different cultural and social backgrounds, which grant them a voice in conflict with the voice in the new academic environment. It appears that participants in this study went through a similar experience in which their voices were suppressed causing their writings to lack authority.

When these participants were asked why they were not vocal in their writings, they explained that they were instructed to avoid that during their pre-sessional courses in the UK for the sake of objectivity. However, it appears that they brought this with them during their masters. Differences in the use of self-mention among the participants can be attributed to several reasons including departmental styles, teachers, and English proficiency and academic writing abilities. Even though the use of first person pronoun is a first step in the promotion of scholarly identity (Hyland, 2001b), participants in this study are still novice

writers and researchers and it might be a while for them before they become competent scholars in their fields. Another reason behind participants' lack of scholarly identity could be attributed to the collectivist tendency in which Arabic learners choose to identify themselves using 'we' (Al-Balawi, 2005) instead of the more dominant 'I' found in English academic writing (Feghali, 1997).

Overall, the use of metadiscourse varies substantially from one discipline to another. However, this was not the case in this study as there were not significant differences between participants in hard and soft sciences. The findings indicated that participants in soft sciences slightly employed more metadiscourse in their writing, which coincides with Hyland's (2004) conclusion that soft science disciplines utilise more metadiscourse markers particularly in the use of interactional metadiscourse. This is because writers in the social sciences and humanities need to embody a role of explicitness in which they explain, discuss and argue in a clear way thus building a rapport with their readers in order to convince them with their interpretations (Hyland, 2000). The findings also showed us the important role of context in affecting the way participants chose to construct their research claims and present themselves in writing.

7.3.2 Identity formation: issues and challenges

As stated in the literature review, identities are bound by a specific discourse (Bourne, 2001) and when learners get involved in a discursive formation of identity, the process tends to be collaborative in nature with identities being forced into processes of negotiation and impositions (Gee, 1999). This means that constructed identities are tight to certain social standards which govern the social group and the way its members interact with one another.

It was also found that language has a central role and it is the medium through which individuals form their identities in their social contexts (Fägersten, 2006). Interacting in these social contexts presumes the existence of certain linguistic conventions which make up a community of practice (Fägersten, 2006).

Since forming a new identity is not a straightforward process (Gibbons, 2006), all participants in the study faced difficulty in finding the right identity to project. Firstly, they had to familiarise themselves with various academic demands in their new learning institutions, which can be quite complicated for second language learners (Chamcharatsri, 2009). This complexity stems from the need to be an accepted member of these new communities. Learners need to familiarise themselves with the social constructs and the linguistic conventions of the new community of practice (Miller, 2000). This community of practice is presented by the academic environment that Saudi participants have joined in the UK. The findings showed that most Saudi participants eventually succeed in becoming part of this academic community. They emerged themselves and learned the community's social constructs and linguistic conventions.

Since ESL students' cultivation of identity is highly contingent upon the environment and students' socio-cultural origins (Grad & Martin, 2008; Ortega, 2009; Huang, 2011), Saudi participants' new academic environment played a central role in pushing them towards identifying themselves with a particular identity. Nero (2005) indicated that learners often desire to be associated with a certain dominant group. Saudi participants showed desire to project an image of themselves based on the norms and expectations manifested in scholarly works written by native English writers. This also might suggest that these identities were imposed on Saudi participants leaving them with no choice but to transform their social

interactions, modes of self-expression, and their own self-image due to the structures and power arrangements that designate the social and linguistic engagement taking place in the new learning environment (McKay & Wong, 1996).

Secondly, L2 learners, while engaging in the process of identity reconstruction, often encounter issues of confidence (Kinginger, 2004). Saudi participants' confidence was fluctuating and sensitive to contextual aspects. For instance, feedback was one aspect that affected participants' confidence; positive feedback raised their confidence, and negative feedback decreased it. Participants also experienced constant restructuring of their motives while trying to improve their writing skills. Some participants were more tenacious than others in having a strong sense of self, an ideal future image and a determination to excel as English writers.

Thirdly, the linguistic proficiency was another challenge experienced by participants. Benwell and Stokoe (2006), Block (2007), and Pavlenko (2002) argue that having a low proficiency level restrains the learners' journey in forming their identities. Most participants in the study came to the UK with a low level of proficiency; they all were also unfamiliar with academic English writing and its conventions, which made it quite difficult to construct an academic identity suitable for their academic environment.

Moreover, learners often struggle during the period of identity development due to the strong attachment to their cultural background and past learning experiences (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). However, this was not the case with the participants in the study as they had quite a negative past learning experience, and an awareness of influence of these negative experiences on their current learning which made them discard almost everything they learned in Saudi Arabia. For example, they were passive learners, who mainly relied on

memorisation to pass their courses, which appears to be a characteristic of the Saudi education system (Smith & Swan, 2001). Participants lacked English practice in schools, which negatively affected their learning and their L2 possible self. Adas and Bakir (2013) explained that the dominance of Arabic language in classrooms might be a reason behind the lack of English practice. According to Dörnyei (2009), active engagement with the learning process is an essential step that allows learners to generate future self-images. However, participants did not engage properly with the learning process in Saudi Arabia and hence they lacked the ability in constructing future self-images.

The fact that these participants acknowledged the possible negative effect of past learning experiences encouraged them to eliminate such impact on their current English writing experience. This gave them the chance to succeed in forming new identities in the UK. Most participants had negative identity when coming to the UK as they had low proficiency level, low self confidence in their writing abilities, and low motivation. Although Miyahara (2015) contends that negative experiences can be as potent as positive experiences in forming an ideal L2 self, it was participants' positive learning experiences in the UK that actually made the difference. Participants were able to change their negative identity into a positive one. Their pre-session courses and positive feedback received during their masters enhanced their writing skills and made them confident, active and autonomous learners. This suggests that participants had multiple identities and they experienced a continuous negotiation for a better identity.

Another widely discussed challenge in literature is the negative label 'ESL'. According to Kanno and Applebaum (1995), learning institutions can be a place in which L2 learners get sometimes discouraged from forming their identities due to using the negative

label 'ESL'. In their own words, the learning environment becomes "a site of domination because relegating students to ESL programs perpetuates their status as second-rate citizens of the school and diminishes their motivation to advance their English beyond the level required in the ESL environment" (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995, p. 47). Adopting such social identity can have a destructive influence on L2 learners because it characterises them as inferior writers (Burke, 2009).

However, by examining participants' narratives, it can be noted that participants seemed quite happy with the learning institutions in the UK. They believed that their courses helped them greatly to improve their English language skills. They felt active and autonomous learners and mostly used positive terms when discussing their learning experiences. They actually used 'ESL' to describe themselves on many occasions which suggested that they felt comfortable with such social identity. It seemed that they used this label to their advantage; they understood their current level and they were motivated to enhance their writing skills and become as good as native writers of English.

Lantolf (2000, p. 5) explained that the "learning of a second language, under certain circumstances can lead to the reformation of one's mental system, including one's concept of self". This suggests that learners might experience a period of ambiguity when trying to form their identities due to the linguistic differences between their L1 and L2. These linguistic differences present an added difficulty for ESL learners requiring them to figure out the differences in rhetorical features and devices between their L1 and L2 (Chamcharatsri, 2009).

Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) showed that ESL students experience a period of struggle when trying to fit into the discourses in place and cultivating identities that

reflect the expectations of the academic communities. In the context of this study, participants understood that there are many differences between Arabic and English writing. According to them, both languages differ in “thought patterns” (P3; P4; P5), writing “style” (P1; P3; P4; P5; P9), “structure” (P2; P6; P9), “form” (P6), “tone” (P2), and/or “answering” style (P6). Consequently, participants admitted the need for being aware of such differences as they would negatively affect the quality of their English writing. This awareness seemed to facilitate the process for the participants; they succeed in improving their writing skills and in constructing new identities.

7.4 Summary

This chapter presented a holistic explanation of the main findings reported in the previous three chapters in regard to existing literature. The first section examined participants’ learning experiences and their effect on L2 possible selves and participants’ views of themselves as English writers. It was found that participants went through few stages until they were able to construct L2 possible self and eventually an ideal L2 self due to their positive learning experiences in the UK. The second part of the chapter explored participants’ orientation and relationship to English writing. It was shown that participants did not enjoy writing, which might be a reason behind their struggle to construct an ideal L2 self. They also preferred English over Arabic when dealing with academic issues due to familiarity with writing conventions of their disciplines and recent practice.

Moreover, the role of emotions and the concepts of self-esteem and self-confidence were explained. They were all implicated in the emerging of participants’ L2 possible selves shaping participants’ learning experience and their motivation. If participants were able to manage learning changes and control their emotions, a positive outcome is expected with the

possibility of turning negative emotions into positive ones. As for their confidence, it can be concluded that confidence is a circumstantial specific concept that is quite flexible and sensitive to contextual aspects. By having high self-confidence, participants succeeded in authenticating their L2 possible self.

The last section examined participants' use of metadiscourse and challenges that complicated the process of identity formation. The analysis showed that there were not significant differences between participants in hard and soft sciences in the use of metadiscourse. The findings indicated that participants in soft sciences slightly employed more metadiscourse in their writing, which coincides with Hyland's (2004) conclusion that soft science disciplines utilise more metadiscourse markers particularly in the use of interactional metadiscourse. Finally, constructing new identity is a complex process due to the need in familiarising oneself with the new conventions of the L2 community and the importance of having a high self-confidence, motivation, proficiency level, and active engagement with community.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises the thesis, discusses its findings, contributions, and highlights limitations and implications of the current work. It will also outline directions that can be taken to aid future research. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section is a summary of the findings, and the second presents a discussion of the limitations of the current work. Section three explains the implications for teaching of the thesis, and the last section discusses possible recommendations for future work.

8.1 A Summary of the Findings

This research was designed to examine Saudi participants' past and present English writing experiences and their views of themselves as writers over time and in various contexts. It also investigated the influence of past and present learning experiences on the development of participants' L2 possible self and identity. It aimed at exploring participants' orientation and self-perception of English writing along with their emotional and behavioural states and their role in influencing L2 possible self. Lastly, the thesis looked at academic writing strategies discussed by participants during the interviews and their use of metadiscoursal features in their collected writing samples.

This thesis was based on poststructuralism as a theory of interpretation. By taking such perspective, it was possible to understand how identity was formed by Saudi participants in the study and how learning experiences, emotional and behavioural states were involved in the process. This thesis was guided by the theory of possible selves

(Markus & Nurius, 1986), the theories of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), imagined communities (Norton, 2000) and Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system (2005, 2009). To achieve the study's objectives and answer the research questions, this exploratory case study employed various instruments to collect data including a pre-interview questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, diaries, think aloud protocols, and writing samples. To analyse the data, content, thematic, narrative and metadiscourse analyses were utilised in this study.

8.1.1 Participants' past and present learning experiences and their views of themselves as English writers

The findings showed that participants shared a similar learning trajectory in Saudi Arabia during their school years. This experience was mostly negative as participants were unmotivated and lacked chances to practice English particularly in written form. The learning experience had no apparent effect on the construction of L2 possible selves. After joining college, participants came across two distinct learning experiences that influenced their L2 possible selves differently. Half of the participants (P1, P3, P5, P8, and P9) were not able to improve their English language skills, hence the inability to see themselves as users of English. The rest of the participants succeeded in enhancing their English language skills due to their academic circumstances which allowed them to see themselves as users of the language in later stages of their bachelor's degree.

In the UK, the analysis showed the tremendously positive role played by the learning experience. Participants were able to enhance their language skills significantly, allowing the participants, who were unable to improve in Saudi Arabia, to start seeing themselves as users and writers of English as time progressed. As for the other participants, the constructive

learning experiences reinforced their L2 possible selves and in the process, helped them construct an ideal L2 self. The learning experience made them motivated, active and autonomous; it helped most participants form desires in becoming better and more successful writers in the future. As for their own views of themselves, they continued to shift and change due to their academic circumstances and emotional states. Participants made various cultural remarks and value judgments such as having a different perception of themselves based on the use of L1 or L2, belonging to a certain culture, and being an ESL writer with different expertise and knowledge levels, and feeling bad or good writers. All these signs were taken as a manifestation of their identity.

8.1.2 Participants' conceptualisation of English writing and their ascribed emotional and behavioural states

The findings suggested that emotions had a role to play in the construction of L2 possible self. It was discovered that there was a relationship between emotionally negative states and participants' English learning experiences in Saudi Arabia. These emotions appeared to be the main reasons behind participants' lack of personal investment, motivation, and effective learning. In the UK, participants experienced positive emotions which were more often associated with motivational and self-confident states. These emotions triggered participants' desires to continue improving, which empowers these individuals to strengthen their L2 possible self and identity as English users and writers. As for negative emotions, particularly the ones resulting from negative feedback, they also had the potential to cause a similar effect as positive emotions for some participants. Even though negative emotions initially demotivated some participants, they did not cause them to stop working. They encouraged some participants to work harder. This, however, was not the case for everyone, as negative

emotions placed some participants under pressure and became a barrier for them when attempting to excel, which may have hindered them from forming an ideal L2 self.

As for participants' self-esteem and self-confidence, two main categories were depicted: positive, complementing self-analysis, possibly denunciative of high self-esteem/confidence (N=29; P1, P2, P3, and P4), and negative, depreciative self-analysis, possibly denunciative of low self-esteem/confidence (N= 20; P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6). The findings also indicated that a relationship between self-confidence, familiarity and experience exists. An emerging theme was that as time progressed, participants had increased self-confidence, influenced by a deeper familiarity and experience. Moreover, participants assessed themselves, and most commonly based their evaluations with dispositional and/or behavioural evidence, drawn from their past experience.

As for writing, it was an emotional experience, which involved both low and high arousal emotions, as well as both positive and negative emotions. The initial master's days were recalled as involving a great amount of negative emotions such as stress and anxiety states. The novelty effect seemingly boosted the frequency or intensity of these states. However, the emotional intensity was reported to have decreased with time, partly as a consequence of increased familiarity, experienced ease, and positivity. The analysis revealed that most experienced emotions were basic or simple (such as liking, feeling happy, or feeling anxious) and the most common emotion was anxiety, followed by enjoyment and happiness. The occurrence of these emotions can be explained through obtained feedback, personal expectations, deadlines, and so forth. These emotions were related to participants' self-esteem and self-confidence, and thus to their L2 possible self.

8.1.3 Participants' academic writing and their use of metadiscourse features

The results revealed various aspects regarding Saudi students' academic writing. For example, participants explained that being in the UK was the main reason behind significantly improving their writing skills. Contributing factors to this transformation included constant practice, reading, being active, autonomous, motivated, and the feedback they received. The findings also indicated that most participants preferred to write in English when dealing with academic issues as a result of their current familiarity with the academic English style and writing guidelines. A number of participants, on the contrary, preferred Arabic when writing for non-academic purposes. In addition, participants' verbalised protocols revealed that Arabic was preferred when they lacked self-confidence and clarity regarding their writing, whereas they chose English when they had high self-confidence.

Moreover, participants expressed their opinions in writing reluctantly. They focused on supporting their point of views with much credible evidence and/or concealing their voices by avoiding of the pronoun "I" and the use of the passive voice instead. This helped them take care of any issues that might take place between being recommended not to display their identity in writing and being directly asked to do so. Participants explained that they were instructed during their pre-sessional courses to avoid using "I" in academic writing for the sake of objectivity. Some participants were more vocal in showing their authority as writers more than others due to a variety of reasons such as departmental styles, teachers, and English proficiency and academic writing abilities. As for their use of metadiscourse, there were not significant differences between the participants. The analysis showed that participants in soft sciences slightly employed more metadiscourse in their writing, which is

expected due to the need in being more explicit in explaining, discussing and arguing their claims.

8.2 Limitations of the Research

Although this study has achieved its objectives and answered its research questions, there were some unavoidable limitations, which mostly stemmed from the methodological choice taken in the study. The findings of qualitative research cannot be extended to wider populations due to the utilisation of a small sample size. Having more participants in this study could have potentially led to finding better relationships from the data. However, it was not the intention of this study to ensure a representative distribution of the population as this case study was exploratory in nature, with the aim of achieving a deep understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Opting for an exploratory rather than an explanatory research design was motivated by the lack of research on identity and emotions in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Another limitation arose from the complex, difficult and time-consuming process of data collection, interpretation and analysis. Dealing with identity as a topic was also complicated. The dynamic and multiple nature of identities made it hard to find identity themes across the interviews. Moreover, there were limitations concerning the data collected. Information gathered from the diaries and the think aloud protocols did not particularly generate rich data. For example, upon analysing participants' diaries, the methodological choice of analysing data per question might have helped to observe that some answers were apparently at least partly copy pasted across days. For example, for four days in a row, P4, when asked to describe his writing project in detail (question 2), used the same answers. Even though the repetition of questions was done intentionally in order to triangulate data

and increase confirmability, this might have desensitized participants and slightly reduced the introspection and reflection that diary approaches seek to reach.

Additionally, there was the need of creating a theme entitled “Poor Writing”. It included diary entries from participants that appeared difficult to understand or contained errors. Such output might derive from participants’ difficulties in expressing themselves and describing complex experiences in written English, or some careless attitude. The reason for discussing this theme here is that, as noted, the sentences were slightly difficult to understand; they had an ambiguous meaning. For example, P1 states the following:

I wrote the result and gave the literature review about what has been done in the same area also mention my comment and doing comparison. Discuss two patient cases they have dieses and describe how to deal with patent and what kind of lab test I will use with all safety procedures (P1).

The above sentences include grammatical and spelling mistakes that hinder the accurate understanding of what the participant sought to express. In this particular case, instead of presuming this or another meaning (e.g., the task involved, at some point, literature reviewing), no code was assigned beyond Poor Writing and Personalization, which consisted of using the first pronoun “I”, “me”, “my”, and “mine” when discussing writing projects. That is, to decrease the possibility of the occurrence of projection mechanisms, other analysis biases and mistakes, I tried to be as grounded as possible and, when faced with poorly written sentences, avoid very subjective interpretations.

The analysis showed a total of 49 sentences that included grammatical mistakes. It became evident that these errors were more frequent in the diaries of P1, then P4, then P2, then P3, and finally P6. It varied greatly, from 20 (P1) to 2 (P6), which can be explained as a

result of some participants choosing to write only in English and others opting to write mostly in Arabic and occasionally in English. Those who used English made more mistakes whereas those who used mainly Arabic had no mistakes in English due to translation. This also suggests that the theme might indeed translate individual difficulties, which show their greatest exponent for P1. The implication is that the present results are likely to represent less accurately, the experiences of those with more poorly written sentences; these were not understood or were coded at rather superficial analyses levels to enhance trustworthiness.

As for data collected from the think aloud protocols, there might have been a limitation regarding the questions established prior to data analysis. These questions worked as non-inductive themes guiding me towards the detection of codes that were related to them. Such methodological choice may have produced biased results and narrowed my focus of attention. In addition, preceding data analysis studies concerning the same topic may have influenced category identification and development. Nevertheless, I believe all data collected complemented each other providing extensive information on Saudi learners' journey in the development of L2 self and identity, and the implicated emotional states in the process.

8.3 Implications for Teaching

The findings of this study highlighted the negative role of the learning experience in Saudi Arabia. Participants saw English as a school subject without clear communication purposes. English was just a compulsory subject that they needed to pass which in itself is demotivating because “we will be more motivated to do something of our own will than something that we are forced to do” (Dörnyei, 2001, P. 12). By lacking motivation, it was impossible for these participants to develop an L2 possible self during school years. Since

motivation has a significant role in the language learning process, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia should find ways to motivate students in developing an L2 possible self and eventually achieve a higher level of English proficiency.

The findings also showed that participants lacked motivation during their bachelor's degree. Half of the participants continued to see English as a subject that they need to pass. The other half had to improve their language skills due to their academic circumstances. They were studying to be English language teachers and their motivation was instrumental. They appeared to be more obligated to improve and only showed signs of ought-to L2 self. These obligations did not play a huge role in increasing participants' motivation and investment in classroom practices which clearly slowed down their development of L2 possible self as users and writers of English.

The findings clearly demonstrated the positive impact of practice and feedback in facilitating the language learning process and in boosting learners' self-confidence. Without these two factors, there is a very small space for improvement as a language learner and in the development of an L2 possible self, which was the case for all the participants in this study during their school years in Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, participants constantly practiced and received feedback in the UK. This allowed them to have a sense of their learning curve, their strengths and weaknesses as writers of English and what they needed to do to improve further. Indeed, this positive learning experience did not only support the learning process and help participants improve but also reinforced their L2 possible self as users and writers of English, and helped most participants construct an ideal L2 self.

With factors such as practice, feedback, motivation and high self-confidence, participants were able to significantly improve their language skills in the UK. This allowed

them to be more active, agentive and autonomous learners which positively impacted their development of an ideal self as successful users and writers of English. Having an ideal L2 self is essential as it influences learners' language experience and, in the process, impacts their motivated behaviour (Papi, 2010). This means that by having an ideal self, learners will be aware of their language experience and have a clear perception of they need to do in order to make their ideal and future self a reality.

All these factors were associated with participants' learning experience in the UK. These positive aspects helped them integrate into the learning community. The academic discourse community in the UK had a powerful impact on Saudi participants, helping them create new positive identities. By actively engaging in practices of the community, it becomes a matter of time before new learners turn into accepted members (Casanave & Li, 2008). By implementing these positive aspects in the Saudi context, teachers will successfully support their learners in developing L2 possible self.

The findings of this research can be of help in raising awareness of the role of identity and emotions in language learning. The findings can equip teachers with useful information in regard to their learners' needs and experiences in language classrooms. Understanding such differences in the many ways learners form identities in language classrooms is significant because "they position students in different socio-emotional positions, provoking different investments in learning" (Murphey et al., 2005, p. 83). Moreover, the results can demonstrate to those in the teaching profession, the effect of learners' past and present learning experiences in the construction of L2 possible self and future self. It will also allow them to comprehend what factors influence and strengthen L2 identities, and what motivates learners to improve and become part of the community of practice.

Teachers in the Saudi context will be able to understand their learners' possible selves and work towards uncovering their ideal and ought-to selves. In doing so, they will be competent in identifying the appropriate teaching methods and materials that support the possible selves of their learners in the classrooms, which will increase students' motivation, encouraging them to achieve their future desired learning goals. This can be done through the incorporation of teaching materials and tools that help in making learners' ideal and future selves more real. For example, Saudi teachers should demonstrate to their students the role of English language as an international language and the advantages of speaking it. They need to show their students that speaking English means being connected to the whole world. I believe this will create inner interest in learning English for Saudi learners and increase their motivation and investment in the English language learning process.

Another thing that Saudi teachers should take into consideration is focusing more on developing an ideal L2 self rather than an ought-to self among their learners. This can be done through isolating learners from their obligations as English language users and writers and instead creating inner desires in the language learning process. This will be a key in increasing their learners' motivation and in allowing them to truly enjoy the whole language learning process. In doing so, these learners will begin to see themselves as proficient users and writers of English.

Since language learning is more than just a simple pedagogic activity concerned with learners' language skills and proficiency, there is a need to focus more attention on the non-linguistic aspects occurring in classrooms. When speaking or writing, Saudi learners do not only engage in a process of information exchange with the target audience; they also shape who they are as individuals and establish connection with the social world. This emphasises

the need for teachers to be aware of the fluid and changing nature of learners' identities. They should raise the motivation of their learners in order to boost their self-confidence. By specifying the short and long-term objectives that learners want to achieve, teachers will help their learners become agentive, autonomous and have stronger self- efficacy beliefs.

Furthermore, Saudi teachers need to increase their focus on communitive activities inside the classrooms. For example, they can provide their learners with activities including face-to-face or online interactions. These activities will enhance learners' language skills helping them construct their L2 vision and then work towards achieving this vision. These real learning situations, according to Fried (1995), will connect learners' minds with experience. Teachers should also incorporate appealing materials and activities inside the classrooms as this will ignite their learners' ideal selves and enhance their performance as English language users and writers.

Indeed, teachers have the power to help learners construct, reinforce and put their future visons in operation (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). In doing so, this will increase Saudi learners' motivation and reflect positively on their learning experience. By following Hadfield and Dörnyei's (2013) suggested classrooms activities, teachers can help empower learners to build a vision of their ideal L2 self, and delineate learning objectives to achieve their vision. By using these learning activities as teaching materials in classrooms, Saudi learners will be motivated to enhance their language skills and imagine an ideal L2 self in which they can see themselves as members of the L2 community.

When it comes to the skill of academic English writing, which is a neglected skill in the Saudi education system, teachers need to allocate more time to it in classrooms and treat it more than just a range of grammatical or linguistic features. They should teach students

what to expect when writing in English and what is meant by academic discourse. Learners have to understand the significance of academic discourse and what they need to do in order to identify themselves with the academic community. This identification in the new academic discourse community is contingent upon Saudi learners conceiving “such socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting” (Gee, 1999, p. 17).

The findings indicated that Saudi participants did not have enough opportunities to practice English which made it impossible for them to develop an L2 possible self. With current changes taking place in Saudi Arabia at the educational level (e.g. introducing the English language to learners at the fourth grade), the Ministry of Education should seriously consider an earlier exposure to English as it is the first step towards the basis for future language learning and use (the formation of an ideal L2 self). For Saudi learners to construct an image of a desired future self, they must engage in ample learning opportunities involving the L2 (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014).

Another essential thing that must be taken into account is the role of emotions in the language learning process. The findings showed that emotions play a significant role in affecting learners’ motivation, self-confidence and their development of L2 possible self. What is needed here, I believe, is a new curriculum design and class activities in the Saudi Arabian context. The Ministry of Education should take into consideration the introduction of classroom activities that are geared towards raising learners’ emotional awareness. In doing so, teachers will be able to prepare suitable teaching tools and materials and hence positively influencing their students’ language learning experience.

These implications of teaching writing can be extended to other contexts including English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and teaching writing in higher education. Alongside being explicit when teaching writing, educators need to make sure that their students are aware of they are expected to do when it comes to academic writing. Both teachers and students have to engage in a discussion at the beginning of these writing courses explaining what is meant by academic discourse and what steps can be followed to make students' writing more conversant with the dominant discourse. Another thing that teachers should be aware of is the writing beliefs students bring with them to language classrooms. Some students might come to classrooms with particular assumptions such as academic writing being formal and impersonal. Teachers need to show that academic writing is quite dynamic and that there are various options and alternatives that exist in academic discourse.

This suggests a more complicated view of learning to write in academic settings. Learning is equated to the acquisition of various linguistic practices grounded on complicated series of values, opinions, beliefs, objectives, commands and methods of using language (Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2014). Without being introduced to such linguistic practices, it is expected that students will struggle in EPA classes. It is for this reason that teachers have to familiarise their learners with the new academic discourse and provide them with ample learning chances to use the language and practice the rhetorical patterns prevalent in their academic discipline.

To familiarise their learners with the academic discourse, teachers should be explicit when explaining the writing conventions of learners' academic disciplines, which can be done via the teaching of metadiscourse features in writing. In doing so, learners will have a better control over their writing, helping them successfully present and argue their claims,

assert or soften their arguments. Learners will be equipped with the necessary resources that can provide opportunity and potentially guarantee their success in the future when they move on to higher education, whether it be in their home countries or in a native English-speaking country.

8.4 Recommendations for Future Research

There has been a notable lack of research on emerging L2 identities and emotions from the perspective of Arabic learners. This study focused on and raised awareness around the topic of identity development and the influence of emotions on L2 possible self. However, the findings of this research only constitute a small part of the issue under investigation. There are a few future directions that could lead to better understanding of the concepts of possible self in language learning.

Firstly, there is a need for conducting more research exploring the complicated process of the development of L2 possible self and identity particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia. It is important to understand what Saudi students go through when they learn English and how their new learning experience shapes their possible self. Secondly, it is crucial to carry out more research to understand the role emotions plays in the language process and how they are implicated in the emerging of L2 possible self. It is important to investigate how learners become aware of their emotions and how these emotions are managed and regulated in classrooms. The third direction includes understanding how past learning experiences affect present, and how in the process, may shape future learning. These possible directions can be investigated through conducting more qualitative research from different standpoints such as learners' academic discipline, age, gender, learning objectives,

nationality, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These different perspectives will bring more understanding into the process of L2 identity development and the role that emotions and past and present learning experiences play in shaping the future.

Secondly, more research is needed in understanding the role of communities of practice and imagined communities in identity development. I believe possible ways of exploration include the adoption of naturalistic enquiries in a form of longitudinal case studies, narrative inquiry, ethnographic observations and action research. The fact that the notion of possible self infers the existence of a future-situated self, demands for a longitudinal research because “how the future visions that learners hold for themselves develop, transform or are abandoned, as well as how that process affects their identity construction, is an area that merits further longitudinal investigation” (Miyahara, 2015, p. 179).

Although this thesis used various data collection tools, I believe other tools such as observing participants and interviewing their teachers might provide future researchers with richer data in regard to identity development, emotional states and learning experiences. Finally, even though the findings of metadiscourse analysis cannot be generalised over all Saudi English writers, it provided insights into some of the writing features of Saudi learners. What is needed now is probably more quantitative and qualitative studies as well as corpus-based approaches (Hyland, 2004a, 2005d) in order to reach more solid conclusions. Another possible direction is through the study of genre which is a key element in the practices of participation in academic literacy (Tardy, 2009).

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Project: Emerging Self Identities and Emotions: A qualitative Case Study of Ten
Saudi Students in the United Kingdom

What is the project about?

This research aims to understand the processes of L2 identity construction and development among Saudi Arabian students in the United Kingdom. It will explore participants' past and present learning experiences and emotions, and their effects on participants' orientation and self-perception to English writing.

What does participating involve?

Taking part in this qualitative case study research will involve four main stages. The first one is conducting a first interview. The second one is collecting 3 writing samples from each participant. The third stage is keeping a diary for a period of 3 months. The fourth stage is a think aloud protocol. Finally, a second interview will be conducted with the participants.

Taking Part

- I have read and understood the project information given above.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and audio-recorded.
- I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.

Use of the information I provide for this project only

- I understand my personal details such as name, email address and phone number will not be revealed to people outside the project.
- I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive.

I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

Name of participant Signature Date

Researcher Signature Date

Project contact details for further information:

[Researcher's name] Email: [Researcher's email] Telephone: [Researcher's number]

APPENDIX B : PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Name :

Age :

E-mail: _____

Mobile Number: _____

I. Personal Data

1. What is your current level of education? (Please circle):

Masters

PhD

2. Majors:

3. Location in the UK:

4. Duration of Stay in the UK:

5. Have you experienced living abroad before?

6. What are your plans after graduation?

II. Your linguistic History & proficiency

7. At what age did you first begin to learn English?

8. What was your proficiency level before coming to the UK?

1 = understand but cannot speak

2 = understand and can speak with great difficulty

3 = understand and speak but with some difficulty

4 = understand and speak comfortably, with little difficulty

5 = understand and speak fluently like a native speaker

6. What is the IELTS overall score of your first test?

7. What is the IELTS score of the writing module in the first test?

8. What is the IELTS overall score of your last test?

9. What is the IELTS score of the writing module in the last test?

APPENDIX C: FIRST SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Arabic and English Writing experiences in Saudi Arabia

1. Did you go to public or private school in SA? Names of these schools?
2. What kind of writing courses/ writing activities did you do?
3. How did you learn to write in the English language? Describe these practices? (e.g., translating individual Arabic sentences into English, combining short sentences into one longer- complex / compound-sentences, writing journal entries, etc.)
4. How much writing (Arabic & English) did you do in School? College?
5. Which steps do you follow when writing in Arabic and English? What do you do first, second, (editing, revision)?
6. What do you do in order to improve your writing skills? Which strategies and tools do you use?

English Writing experiences in the UK

1. What English courses did you do in the UK?
2. What is your experience so far? Course? Teachers? Teaching?
3. How much writing do you normally do in your class?
4. What kinds of writing have you done in the UK?
5. Do you like writing courses? What aspects? Why or why not? What aspects do not you like?
6. What resources do you use when writing?
7. Which steps do you follow when writing in English? What do you do first, second, (editing, revision)?
8. What aspects of writing do you find easy or difficult?
9. What writing aspects would you like to improve?

Identity development in English

1. What is your definition of “academic writing”?
2. Are there any similarities or differences between academic writing practices in SA and UK? (e.g., assignment, teachers and students’ roles)

3. Any challenging aspects of academic writing? Have you experienced them? How did you manage to deal with them?
4. In evaluating writing, what aspects do you think are important in order to write a good academic text? Why? (e.g., clarity, originality, grammar, organization, exploration, fluency, content).
5. What do you think of yourself as a writer? Do you see yourself as a successful academic writer in Arabic and English? Why or why not?
6. Describe what do you do when you write a paper? (time, effort, tools, processes)
7. Do you write based on your own beliefs or based on what is expected from you (reader expectation)? Do you attend to your readership? Why?
8. Do you include your own opinions in your writing? How do you form these opinions? (e.g., life experience, classmates, social environment).
9. Can you name some aspects that influence your writing? (e.g., previous practices in SA, current practices in UK (teachers – group- individual work), social environment, and classmates).
10. Since you started your course, have your writing skills improved? Why?
11. Do you feel confident when writing in Arabic/English? Do you prefer to write in Arabic or English?
12. What makes a good/bad writer? Strengths and weaknesses? What do you think of yourself as a writer and your own writing?
13. What identity do you project in your writing? Is it your true identity? Is it a reflection of who you are? (Your personal, social, or ethnic identity).
14. Does your identity differ when you write in English and Arabic? Why?
15. How do you see yourself as a writer? Has it changed since you started your course? Do you think it is in constant change?

APPENDIX D: FIRST SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (P 6)

Arabic and English Writing Practices in Saudi Arabia

Interviewer: Did you go to public or private school in SA? Names of these schools?

Interviewee: I went to a public school.

Interviewer: What kind of writing courses/ writing activities did you do?

Interviewee: We used to write short paragraphs during school. In college, I did 4 writing courses (writing 1-2-3 and advanced). We started with paragraphs and then essays and writing stories.

Interviewer: How about Arabic?

Interviewee: Yes, we had a composition class during school. It was from fourth grade till the first year in secondary school.

Interviewer: Alright! How did you learn to write in the English language? Describe these practices? (e.g., translating individual Arabic sentences into English, combining short sentences into one longer-complex / compound-sentences, writing journal entries, etc.)

Interviewee: I used to be a really bad writer. The last two courses at college (writing 3 and advanced writing) were really helpful and I learned how to write. We did not learn anything at school, we only memorised short paragraphs before exams. At college, the first two writing courses were not helpful and I did not improve. In writing 3 and advanced writing, we had a great teacher who helped us learn and improve a lot. We had to write about something every day which helped a lot.

Interviewer: Could you please describe the practices?

Interviewee: Translation was a big thing. I used to translate from Arabic into English. It was mainly translation during the first two writing courses in college. In the last two courses, translation had less effect on me.

Interviewer: How much writing (Arabic & English) did you do in School? College?

Interviewee: Arabic was once a week. English was once or twice a semester. In college, we used to do more, once or twice a week.

Interviewer: Which steps do you follow when writing in Arabic and English? What do you do first, second, (editing, revision)?

Interviewee: It depends on what kind of assignment you are asked to do. Every assignment type has its own requirements. For example, for university assignments here in the UK, you need to make sure that you have understood the question before you start. Then you need to have a plan, brainstorm some ideas, collect relevant resources and take notes. Based on that, you write and structure your ideas. After finishing your first draft, you need check your work few times before submitting it.

Interviewer: How about in SA?

Interviewee: We did not do that. Basically our first draft is the final one. We did not do any research so we did not include any references. It is not academic writing; it is general writing and the topics did not require adding references.

Interviewer: What do you do in order to improve you writing skills? Which strategies and tools do you use?

Interviewee: Reading is an important thing to do if you want to improve you writing. You see how people write and you mimic their work and follow their writing style. This helps you improve.

Interviewer: How about your time in SA?

Interviewee: We did not read much so no improvement. I did improve in the last two courses as I said before.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Interviewee: Because of the teacher. He was great, his teaching style was great. He was motivated and at the same time, he motivated us to work harder. Another thing was practice. It helped a lot.

English Writing Practices in the UK

Interviewer: What English courses did you do in the UK?

Interviewee: I joined a pre-sessional course for 15 weeks.

Interviewer: What is your experience so far? Course? Teachers? Teaching?

Interviewee: It was great course. It helped me a lot, taught me academic writing and how to avoid some writing issues like plagiarism. The course was helpful in showing us how to research for relevant and reliable resources. It focussed primarily on writing. The course was designed to prepare for university work and how to write your assignments.

Interviewer: How about teaching style?

Interviewee: It was completely different from the one in SA. We did not have to focus on one book or certain materials. At the end of each class, we would be given a reading list and we can read anything we want. You have more responsibility as a student; you are active. In SA, you have one book and you only need to focus on it.

Interviewer: How about your experience at your masters?

Interviewee: The first term was quite difficult. Even though I was at the pre-sessional course, the first term was really demanding and I could not believe how much work we needed to do.

Interviewer: How about the course itself?

Interviewee: Although it is quite demanding, it is really interesting and I really like it

Interviewer: How much writing do you normally do in your class?

Interviewee: In pre-sessional course, we had small writing projects every week. At the end of the first module (5 weeks), we had to submit an assignment of 750 words. At the end of the second module, we had to submit an assignment of 1500 words. At the last module, we wrote an assignment of 2500 words. During masters, I used to write between 3000 to 4000 words for each course.

Interviewer: What kinds of writing have you done in the UK?

Interviewee: Essays ad reports. I also wrote articles like the ones in academic journal. It is a research paper.

Interviewer: Do you like writing courses? What aspects? Why or why not? What aspects do not you like?

Interviewee: No really! It is demanding, tiring and time consuming. Another aspect that I do not like is searching for relevant resources. It takes time and you need to be careful of what to include in your writing.

Interviewer: What resources do you use when writing?

Interviewee: Journal articles are the primarily resources that I use in my writing. Books come next.

Interviewer: Which steps do you follow when writing in English? What do you do first, second, (editing, revision)?

Interviewee: The first thing is understanding the question. You also need to break the task into few parts sometimes when you need to write a big assignment. You look for relevant resources as well. I also like to have a timeframe for writing. I need to clear up certain hours for writing.

Interviewer: What aspects of writing do you find easy or difficult?

Interviewee: One of the easy aspect is when you need to describe, define and explain something in writing. Theses aspects of writing are easy to do. The problem is when you need evaluate, and critically review something. This type of writing is really difficult and time consuming for me.

Interviewer: What writing aspects would you like to improve?

Interviewee: Spelling is an issue for me. But thanks for computers for that. I need to improve my critical writing skills. Another thing is word choice. I normally make mistakes choosing the wrong word to express something. I need to work on that.

Construction of Identity in the English

Interviewer: What is your definition of “academic writing”?

Interviewee: Academic writing is the kind of writing that is suitable for a particular discipline or intended for a particular community or people.

Interviewer: Are there any similarities or differences between academic writing practices in SA and UK? (e.g., assignment, teachers and students’ roles)

Interviewee: It is hard to compare because BA and MA are two different things but there are differences in terms of being restricted as student in SA and UK. In SA, you need to stick to a certain book and particular resources but you do not need to do that in UK. One of the similarities is between my pre-sessional course and the last two writing courses I did in SA. We had to write an essay every week. Another difference is the teaching style. Some teachers were strict in terms of form and structure and asked us to follow a particular structure in SA. In the UK, you are free to choose and follow any correct structure that you like. Even with feedback, teachers in SA focus mainly on

grammar whereas in the UK, they focus on how you express yourself academically. As for my role as a student, I am an independent and autonomous learner in the UK but this is not the case in SA.

Interviewer: Any challenging aspects of academic writing? Have you experienced them? How did you manage to deal with them?

Interviewee: One of the challenging aspects is misunderstanding what you are asked to do. I used to experience such a problem and it affected my writing negatively.

Interviewer: In evaluating writing, what aspects do you think are important in order to write a good academic text? Why? (e.g., clarity, originality, grammar, organization, exploration, fluency, content).

Interviewee: Language style, reliable resources and structure are important aspects that I look for when evaluating a text.

Interviewer: What do you think of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I think I am a good writer but I can improve a lot.

Interviewer: Do you see yourself as a successful academic writer in Arabic and English? Why or why not?

Interviewee: I don't think I am a successful writer in Arabic because it is not my speciality. Although I am a native speaker of Arabic, I can't really write in Academic/standard Arabic as someone who specialises in Arabic. I think I am much better writer in English. If I work hard on my writing, reread my work and do editing and proofreading, I believe I can produce a text of a really good quality and for this reason I think I am a successful writer in English. I also prefer to write in English because I have been writing in English for so long and I am also familiar with all kinds of writing tasks.

Interviewer: Describe what do you do when you write a paper? (time, effort, tools, processes)

Interviewee: It takes a lot of time to write. It takes me time understating the task, collecting resources, reading resources, summarising important resources and taking notes. You need to go through all these steps before starting writing. After finishing writing, you must go through few more steps such as editing and proofreading before you end up with the final draft. All these processes are what makes writing hard thing to do.

Interviewer: Do you write based on your own beliefs or based on what is expected from you (reader expectation)? Do you attend to your readership? Why?

Interviewee: Well, I always try to answer the question regardless of my opinions and whether I agree or not. Yes, you have to take the reader into consideration. I remember that I included the results of an experiment in research even though I am not really convinced of the findings. The experiment was about the prime and target word. I had to include the findings without criticising them because my course teacher is the one who did the experiment. I think most students take into consideration their course teachers. I always do that and sometimes I cite their work in my writing even if I do not agree with it.

Interviewer: Do you include your own opinions in your writing? How do you form these opinions? (e.g., life experience, classmates, social environment).

Interviewee: Yes, I do! I form these opinions based on the readings and resources I intend to include in my writing. Your own reading is an indicator of your own beliefs, and the way you present yourself in writing. While reading, you consolidate the new knowledge with your current knowledge and then you form your opinions.

Interviewer: Can you name some aspects that influence your writing? (e.g., previous practices in SA, current practices in UK (teachers – group- individual work), social environment, and classmates).

Interviewee: One of the aspect that influence my writing negatively was over generalisation which is something I used to do a lot in my writing. This bad habit is something that I gained from learning in SA. Most influences in the UK have impacted positively so far. Teachers and their feedback, social life and discussions with classmates all helped me with my writing.

Interviewer: Since you started your course, have your writing skills improved? Why?

Interviewee: They improved a lot. All courses helped me greatly to improve all aspect of writing.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident when writing in Arabic/English? Do you prefer to write in Arabic or English?

Interviewee: I feel confident when writing in English more than writing in Arabic. I definitely prefer to write in English.

Interviewer: What makes a good/bad writer? Strengths and weaknesses? What do you think of yourself as a writer and your own writing?

Interviewee: Structure is an important thing that I always look for. Also being clear and simple are two essential things that make someone a good writer.

Interviewer: What identity do you project in your writing? Is it your true identity? Is it a reflection of who you are? (Your personal, social, or ethnic identity).

Interviewee: I present myself as a student, ESL student studying linguistics in the UK. I don't think there is a true or wrong identity, there is only appropriate or inappropriate identity. You need to present yourself in a way that's suitable for your own discipline and community.

Interviewer: Does your identity differ when you write in English and Arabic? Why?

Interviewee: My presentation of myself is probably the same in Arabic and English. It is hard to say because I do not really write in Arabic.

Interviewer: How do you see yourself as a writer? Has it changed since you started your course? Do you think it is in constant change?

Interviewee: I am not as good as I want to be. I need to work on myself. I improved a lot since I came here but I believe I can be much better.

Thank you! This is the end of the interview.

APPENDIX E: SECOND INTERVIEW

- 1- What are the most challenging aspects of academic writing that you have come across during working on your master's thesis? How did you overcome these challenges?
- 2- Have you come across any positive or negative writing experiences during your master's degree? What are they?
- 3- Do you consider yourself as a successful academic writer in English?
- 4- How confident are you when writing English?
- 5- How do you see yourself as a writer?
- 6- Describe your emotions while working on your assignments.
- 7- Did these emotions affect your writing? How?
- 8- Are there any differences between your emotions in the first and second semester?
- 9- Did you use any Arabic writing features and strategies in your writing samples?
- 10- Do you think that your knowledge of Arabic writing influences your English writing? Why? How?
- 11- How did you show your academic voice in your paper? What kind of features (content, linguistic, and textual) did you utilise?
- 12- Describe your experience working on this project. Did it benefit you? How?
- 13- Did your participation in this research help you understand and deal with your own emotions and identity in writing? How?

APPENDIX F: SECOND INTERVIEW (P7)

1- What are the most challenging aspects of academic writing that you have come across during working on your master's thesis? How did you overcome these challenges?

At the beginning, there was a big challenge due to the big difference between studying in Saudi Arabia and here in the UK. We did not write a lot in Saudi Arabia. Even when we did, it was a general writing. During my masters, it was a challenge to constantly write and collect a lot of references. It was also hard to choose the right wording to express your ideas. Another thing was referencing everything you include in your writing which was something new to me. Also waiting for a long time after finishing my BA and then starting a master was difficult because there was a big gap. This affected my academic writing negatively. There was also a big difference between the kind of writing that I did and learnt during pre-session English course and the one I did during my masters. Writing was much easier during the pre-session course whereas it is quite challenging during your masters. There were so many expectations from you as a student in the masters' degree. All these were new to me; something that I did not experience before.

I was able to deal with these problems by reading as much as possible. Feedback was also a key in eliminating most of these problems. I used to receive a detailed feedback from my teachers which helped me a lot. Reading in your field helped in showing me how to write and appropriate words to use in your writing.

2- Have you come across any positive or negative writing experiences during your master's degree? What are they?

One of the negative experiences that I faced at the beginning of my masters was inability to write big writing tasks. It was a problem for me to write an assignment of 1500 words. Another thing was the quantity of the writing tasks that you are expected to do. It was hard to

focus with so many assignments due soon. This pressure, however, helped me practice all the time and made me able to deal with any problems. This constant work paid off as I started to improve from one task to another. I also gained confidence in being able to write big assignments. 1500 words tasks became something easy to do. It prepared to deal with bigger assignments of 2000 and 3000 words.

3- Do you consider yourself as a successful academic writer in English?

I think I am a good writer especially after the constant writing practice I did during my masters.

4- How confident are you when writing English?

Before my masters, I was not confident at all. But after finishing my masters, I believe I am confident especially after passing all my courses. I improved a lot and so my confidence in myself.

5- How do you see yourself as a writer?

Good writer based on being able to write various kinds of tasks at the same time. Good writer based on writing big assignments with 3000 words and receiving positive feedback which indicates my improvement as a writer.

6- Describe your emotions while working on your assignments.

I was under a lot pressure at the beginning of my masters. I was new to all that so things were quite difficult. This made me quite diligent in working on my writing tasks few weeks before they are due. Being a full time student with many courses and assignments to do put

me under pressure. It was also hard to manage time and I felt like there was not enough time to do all tasks.

7- Are there any differences between your emotions in the first and second semester?

But with time, especially in the second semester, things became easier. I was able to deal with my emotions better. I became more organised and also happy that I was able to finish and pass previous courses. I became experienced not only in dealing with my emotions but also in knowing how and when to write and where to collect materials.

8- Did these emotions affect your writing? How?

Yes, my emotions affected my writing. I remember that being stressed because of first assignment made work harder which was the reason behind getting a good grade. You can use your own emotions for your advantage helping you to work harder achieving your goals. It is not always easy but with time, you can manage to deal with your stress, for example, and use your time wisely. This will make things much easier for you.

9- Did you use any Arabic writing features and strategies in your writing samples?

Yes, I leaned towards using them especially at the beginning of my masters. I was advised by my teachers to “think in English and write in English”. I remember one of the feedback I received. My teacher said in his feedback, it looks like you were thinking in your first language before writing this sentence. His advice was read, think and write in English only. I also used to utilise translation a tool to help me write in English. this was not a good idea. I think it is ok if you use your own mother tongue to understand a text when reading but when you want to write.

10- Do you think that your knowledge of Arabic writing influences your English writing? Why? How?

Yes, there was an influence, probably more negative than positive. It can be positive in one case only when you want to understand the topic and its requirements. You probably utilise that when reading as English is not your other tongue and hence helping you comprehend the content. But in writing, you should avoid it at all cost.

11- How did you show your academic voice in your paper? What kind of features (content, linguistic, and textual) did you utilise?

Mostly when expressing my opinion using “I”. I used to explain the topic and use strong evidence to support the side I lean towards. Finally, I would mention my opinion.

12- Describe your experience working on this project. Did it benefit you? How?

I think it benefited me in giving my ideas on how to conduct an interview. I am planning to do a PhD in the future, and being a participant gave me an idea of what to expect. It made me to think of I want to focus on my PhD project.

13- Did your participation in this research help you understand and deal with your own emotions and identity in writing? How?

Yes, I think so. I did not pay attention to some of the aspects you asked me before. Sometimes you only write without taking into consideration your emotional state or your identity. This made me think of my writing a lot.

APPENDIX G: DIARIES

- **Guidelines for the participants:**

A diary is a record in which you can talk about all the writing projects that you are involved in. In the diary, you are supposed to discuss all the details about any writing activity that you will be doing during your course. You can include information about the activity and its aims as well as how you manage to finish it. You should spend between 10 to 15 minutes every two weeks writing your diary. The following questions will guide you to complete the diary. Please address as many of these questions as possible in your diary entries every week.

- 1- What writing activity did you do this week? What was the aim of this activity?
- 2- Describe this project in details. What procedures did you follow to complete it? How long did it take you to finish it?
- 3- Did you receive feedback on it? How was it?
- 4- Did you like this writing project? Why?
- 5- Can you mention some aspects that you found easy or difficult? How did you deal with them? Did anyone help you? What kind of help were you offered?
- 6- How do you see yourself as a writer?
- 7- Describe your attitudes, thoughts and emotions while working on this writing project.

APPENDIX H: DIARIES (P2)

1- What writing activity did you do this week? What was the aim of this activity?

An assignment about teaching and testing listening. The aim was to find out the difference between them and to explain in details their importance in relation to the teacher as we as the learner.

2- Describe this project in details. What procedures did you follow to complete it? How long did it take you to finish it?

The assignment was about listening teaching and assessment. In other words, how teachers teach listening and how do they assess the output they get. I read about teaching listening and the strategies teachers use to teach it and how after all they build their assessment. Then, I created the outline for the assignment. Then, I start writing the assignment. It took me three weeks to finish it.

3- Did you receive feedback on it? How was it?

Yes, it was good but disappointed to some extent because I felt that I have covered all the aspects of that assignment. The comments were about different types of listening and that was not mentioned in the assignment question and if I write about types of listening I won't be able to write them in 3000 words!

4- Did you like this writing project? Why?

Yes, because it's in my field. It was so interesting to explore the topic and find out the about various techniques teachers use to teach this skill.

5- Can you mention some aspects that you found easy or difficult? How did you deal with them? Did anyone help you? What kind of help were you offered?

I found difficult somehow because the question was too broad. I wrote what I have read and I added my experience. I did not receive any help.

6- How do you see yourself as a writer?

I feel that I can convey my message and a good communicator.

7- Describe your attitudes, thoughts and emotions while working on this writing project.

As international student writing to a native teacher, I feel so stressed and anxious. Maybe because I am expected to write like natives, I was under pressure to do very well.

APPENDIX I: DIARIES (P4)

1- What writing activity did you do this week? What was the aim of this activity?

The writing activity was about *Evaluating Grammar Activities*. The aim of this activity was to demonstrate the ability to choose appropriate grammar activities; 2-

2- Describe this project in details. What procedures did you follow to complete it? How long did it take you to finish it?

It was about a specific grammatical feature and a learner with a specific level of English. I should teach this learner a 60 minute-grammar lesson about present perfect using for and since. Then, I had to evaluate my grammar lesson. The level of the learner was general English. I followed similar steps from reading for few days and taking notes and then writing for few days. This activity took 2 weeks to finish it.

3- Did you receive feedback on it? How was it?

Yes, I did. Generally, the feedback was good and reasonable. I was not as good as the previous writing activity.

4- Did you like this writing project? Why?

Yes, I did. This kind of activity was favorable to me due to its nature which was practical so that I had a clear idea about this activity.

5- Can you mention some aspects that you found easy or difficult? How did you deal with them? Did anyone help you? What kind of help were you offered?

There were both easy and difficult aspects. The literature was generally demonstrated and showed a good understanding of pedagogical principles. However, there some inaccuracies in grammar of the activities which may lead students into making errors in their use of for or since. Yes, a friend proofread my writing.

6- How do you see yourself as a writer?

Good writer, maybe.

7- Describe your attitudes, thoughts and emotions while working on this writing project.

I was a quite enthusiastic at first and challengeable at some parts. I felt like I need to work harder and do as good as the previous task but this did not happened. I was under pressure to perform well so things did not go as planned.

APPENDIX J: THINK ALOUD PROTOCOL

- **What is think aloud protocol?**

It is a technique in which the participants say what they are thinking about an activity aloud. Using such a technique to do a writing activity will be helpful in capturing how the participants approach and finish an activity, what strategies are utilised to carry out the activity, and what emotions the participants experience during the activity.

“Being able to speak a foreign language is an advantage these days. Some people think that children should start learning a foreign language at primary school, while others think children should begin in secondary school. Discuss both sides and give your opinion”.

- **Steps in carrying out this technique:**

- 1- Before the study takes place

An individual meeting with each participant will take place where I will explain the technique, how it is carried out and the outcomes of it.

- 2- During the study

Each participant will be presented with a short writing activity. This activity will be a short of essay (250 words). I will be observing and recording the participant while they finish up the activity.

- 3- After the study is complete

The participant will be asked if they have questions or any comments at the end of the activity.

APPENDIX K: THINK ALOUD PROTOCOL (P6)

Being able to speak a foreign language is an advantage these days. Some people think that children should start learning a foreign language at primary school, while others think children should begin in secondary school. Discuss both sides and give your opinion.

Ok, children should begin learning a foreign language in primary or secondary school. English language is the lingua franca.... It is commonly used nowadays... people learn English because they want to make friends, use technology, and for inventions. However, how good you are at English is determined at when you start learning that language. It is believed that if you start learning English at younger age, you will achieve a native like proficiency using that language, and you will have vast amount of vocabulary, and you will be able to speak fluently. While others think that learning English could be achieved easily if you start in your adulthood because you will be mature and your cognitive processes will allow you to make use of.....

Alright! I think I have what I need to write now.

The English language is the lingua franca. It has been widely accepted to be the global language. People learn English for different reasons. Some want to make friends, while others learn that language because they want to make use of the new technological development and inventions.

Among linguists there is a heated debate whether learning English at younger age could contribute to significant outcomes in the achieved proficiency level. Many language teachers believe that being exposed to the target language at much young age could facilitate the learning process. This fact is always contingent upon the idea of critical period of language learning. This critical period is explained in terms of the learners' ability to pick up any given language under normal circumstances and during specific age. This age is believed to be from birth till puberty. As a result, those people argue that the above mentioned claim could be of great importance in the process of language acquisition.

On the other hand, some may claim that learner's age is of no difference. That is to say it does not matter if the learner starts learning English while his/her adulthood. *(God, I can't hold the pen no longer) ha-ha.* In fact, the adult learner will be mature enough to take responsibility of his/her own learning. Moreover, he/she will be in a cognitive state that allows that learner to understand the subtle components of any given language. Adult learners of English may rely on problem and solving technique to language learning. That could be attributed to the fact that they have already possessed a L1 language in their mind.

In conclusion, no matter if you were young or old, if you have the determination to learn will eventually learn.

.....

Follow up questions after finishing the task

1- How did you answer the question?

As you saw, I spent few minutes planning and brainstorming and then started working the task. Quite straightforward task and it did not take a long time to do. I am familiar with such tasks and debate regarding the topic because I am studying linguistics.

2- Did you have any issues or problems while working on the task?

Maybe the think aloud technique was a bit of an issue, I do not normally think out loud while working on something. It is definitely a great technique; it helps you focus on your ideas. The task was quite straightforward and I did not have any issues with it.

3- I see that while you were working on the task, you did not use Arabic, Why?

I don't use Arabic because I do need to. I know what I want to say in English.

APPENDIX L: THINK ALOUD PROTOCOL (P9)

Being able to speak a foreign language is an advantage these days. Some people think that children should start learning a foreign language at primary school, while others think children should begin in secondary school. Discuss both sides and give your opinion.

Ok, the task asks me to do three things. The first thing is to discuss people who believe that children should start learning a foreign language at primary school. The second thing is to discuss people who think children should start learning a foreign language at secondary school. The third thing is to give my opinion. This essay will have 4 paragraphs: an introduction, two body paragraphs and a conclusion.

Ok! Let me start with something general like....

Learning foreign language is a good thing because it makes you know the culture and tradition of the country. If you study one language this can help learn other languages. Additionally, you can get job if you speak foreign language. However, some people think it is good to learn in primary school, and others believe learning foreign language in secondary school is better.

Ok, now I need to discuss the first side: people who agree with teaching children at primary school.

Some people think teaching children foreign language in primary school is really good for many reasons. The first reason children can learn many things when young in a quick way and they don't forget easy. When children learn new language, this gives the chance to make new friends from different countries. Also, learning foreign language gives you the chance to read information and learn new things online and in books.

Alright! Now I need to think of some arguments for the other side who thinks it is better to teach a foreign language in secondary school.

On the other hand, some people think it is better to teach children new language at secondary school for many reasons. For example, children can focus to learn other subjects like math and physics when they young. Making children learn new language distracts them from important subjects so it is good to teach them when they are old. In addition, children learning foreign language at secondary school gives them time to learn their first language.

Now, I need to write a short conclusion with my opinion.

To sum up, learning foreign language in young age is better for children because they can learn quickly, they can make new friends and learn new information about different things.

Follow up questions after finishing the task

1- How did you answer the question?

I read the question carefully at first making sure that I understand what I am required to do. The task is not complicated and it can be answered by discussing two sides; one agrees with teaching children a foreign language at primary school, and one supports teaching a foreign language at secondary school. So I started with an introduction and then 2 body paragraphs and then a conclusion.

2- Did you have any issues or problems while working on the task?

I felt like I am being tested which I do not like. But because I was talking while I was doing the task, I felt at ease because you can do anything you like. I like speaking out loud when I am studying so I liked doing the task.

3- I see that while you were working on the task, you used Arabic, Why?

I used Arabic at the planning stage because it is much quicker. After finishing planning, you switch to English. However, I switch to Arabic sometimes when I am stuck or can't figure out something in English.

APPENDIX M: WRITING SAMPLE (P10)

Various definitions and related terminologies to multilingualism have affected people's understanding of this word. Most researchers define multilingualism as the ability of use three or more languages in daily life in different domains (speaking, listening, reading and writing), while some researchers include multilingualism under bilingualism, which is described as the ability of utilize two or more languages for communication (Kemp, C, 2009). As Grosjean, F (2010) said that bilingualism is a widespread phenomenon and more than 50% of the world's population are bilingual, bilingualism has become increasing concern at most countries in the world. Bilingualism is mainly affected by migration between too many different languages and countries people migrate at this point in time. (El Aissati, A., & Schaufeli, A.,1999). United Kingdom is one of the countries that has recognized multilingualism and multilingual communities as it has a large number of migrants from all over the world. When a country has been exposed to multilingual practices, the essence of observing language maintenance and shift aspect in this country should be highly considered. Language maintenance indicates to the continuous using of dominant language of the community while language shift refers to the gradual displacement of the subdominant language in the same community (Kaplan, R. B., 2010).

This paper will investigate language maintenance and shift among teenager members of migrant Arabic and Persian communities in the UK. It will focus on their proficiency and attitudes to their languages to identify the push and pull factors towards maintaining multilingualism and how these factors can be detrimental in their language maintenance or shift.

In John Edwards' book (*Understanding Linguistics Diversity*, 2012) he examines the characteristic of languages, the emergence and the consequences of multilingualism and the impact of it on the community at large. In chapter eight (Languages and Identities in Transition), Edwards touches on the "languages in contact", and states that bilingualism can be an easy distinction between the language for home and another for the outside world. Moreover, the term *diglossia* is analyzed to understand the essence of bilingualism and the effects it has on language maintenance and culture beyond the second and third generation.

To conclude Edwards clarifies the important of language within culture during difficult periods of assimilation or integration. Therefore, this chapter highlights interesting factors, which affect language maintenance and shift.

Hatoss, A. (2013) identifies a connection between language and identity in immigrant communities. He classifies the immigrants according to the strength of their ethnic self-concept, which can mostly predict whether an immigrant will integrate or assimilate in a certain society. Secondly, he identifies the general factors, which form one's identity. Thirdly, he explains the importance of how the host community reacts to the immigrants and vice-versa, which might influence their language maintenance or shift and more generally even form their identity.

Following Fishman's model, the three authors Holmes, J., Roberts, M., & Verivaki, M. in their article (1993) analyze the stages of language shift and revival through observing three diverse ethnic communities in Wellington, New Zealand. Furthermore, this study goes on to predict the success-rate of language maintenance in these communities. The first part of the study highlights a decline in language proficiency over time in all three communities, yet the younger generation seems to be more concerned about the loss of their mother tongue. The second part of the study observes the macro-level factors associated with predicting language maintenance. The study concludes that the language shift and revival can be seen as a micro-level factor while the maintenance of the native language as a macro-level factor as per investigation identified in Fishman's study. Interestingly, the study determines a number of key factors for language maintenance, all linked to prolonged exposure to their respective communities.

When using only a questionnaire some weakness may occur in providing precise and reliable data, which means basically that face-to-face interview method with open-ended questions when used, may provide more accurate data to investigate language proficiency, domains of language use and attitudes to language (Holmes, Roberts & Verivaki, 1993). The interview was conducted on 15th of February 2016 at London where intensive multilingual practice can be found. In this interview, data were collected among five teenagers from Arabic and Persian migrant families. This data will be analyzed depending on literature review to show

language practices across all domains, both positive and negative experience when practicing multilingualism through all macro skills and what factors were involved to push or pull back from practicing multilingualism.

Five participants, three from Arabic background and two from Persian background, were interviewed to answer open-ended questions related to their languages proficiency, domains of languages use and attitudes to their languages individually to avoid any embarrassment and enhance the authenticity of these data.

The first of the participants is an Iraqi girl, (16 years old), her name is Sarah. Her mother tongue is Arabic as she was born in Iraq. Then she moved with her family to another Arabic country (Kuwait) when she was 5 years old. She spent seven years in Kuwait before her family decided to migrate to the UK. Sarah started learning basic English at school in Kuwait. The second participant is Hajer who is Sarah's twin sister. So, she has the same background information as Sarah.

The third interviewee is Hasan (18 years old); he is an Iraqi boy who speaks Arabic as his first language and English as a second language. Hasan has been in the UK for few years and he has never studied English before;

The fourth participant is a Persian girl (Maryam, 16 years old). She was born in Iran and then she moved to the UK, with her family when she was 2 years old, so she has acquired Persian language from her parents, as she did not study Persian at school.

The last participant is a Persian boy (Ali, 16 years old) born in Iran. His first language is Persian and he speaks English as a second language. His family decided to live in the UK when he was 9 years old. Ali has started learning English when he just arrived to the UK.

After introducing the participants, the interview showed some limitations and unique circumstances, which have occurred and affected the full potential of their proficiency and attitudes towards the languages in everyday life. For example, different timing of their families' immigration to the UK might have influenced the degree of proficiency of their

languages, which in turn affected language maintenance and shift. Moreover, having twins as participants the results may end in having the same or similar answers, which will narrow the variety of data that should be analyzed. However, differentiation in the twin answers will be beneficial to determine the factors of their language maintenance and shift.

Results and Discussion

After examining the data, it is noticed that most of the interviewees have acquired equal proficiency in both their first and second languages. For example, Sarah, Hasan and Ali have shown that the significant improvement in their English proficiency since they came to the UK, which means that the period they have lived in the UK has led to the equality of proficiency and ability to switch fast in both language macro skills. Furthermore, in the cases of Sarah and Ali as they have had basic information about English language learnt at school in their homeland resulted in even better and higher degree of proficiency in both languages. This quality of competence in their two languages supports them to keep using both languages in different domains in their daily life.

However, the other participants Hajer.....

APPENDIX N: WRITING SAMPLE (P2)

An essential aspect of language is listening skills, which have a significant contribution in terms of developing other language skills. Through listening, learners are able to suitably interact with the input which they receive, either in the classroom or outside (Nunan, 2002). Nonetheless, listening skills are often given the least attention in language classrooms, such that the proper tools are not given to learners with which they might manage their listening, for instance when working with oral messages or texts (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Rather than focusing on the process of listening, emphasis is often placed on the outcome of listening activities (Field, 2008; Sheerin, 1987). Frequently, learners are left alone to develop listening skills and do not benefit from the systematic instruction of their teacher (Field, 2002; Flowerdew, Miller, & Richards, 2005).

This report focuses on the differences which exist between the teaching and testing of listening skills. It will also highlight the value of teaching listening skills to learners and how these skills may be improved for learners at different ability levels with the use of classroom activities. This discussion is carried out in the context of intermediate level Saudi students attending a college level English language department, and some of the activities which may be useful for both beginner and advanced level learners.

In the literature which focuses upon the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the differences which exist between the teaching and testing of listening skills are discussed at length. Many researchers place an emphasis on how crucial it is to distinguish between these two elements in order to facilitate learners in becoming more proficient listeners (Sheerin, 1987; Vandergrift, 1999; Mendelsohn, 2001, 2006; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Field, 1998, 2006).

As stated by Sheerin (1987), classroom listening lessons commonly consist of recordings being played, along with testing through comprehension exercises, after which feedback is given in terms of what is the right or wrong answer.

Sheerin asserts that, in this instance, listening 'is not being taught but tested' (p. 126). In agreement with this statement, Vandergrift (1999) goes on to state that when listening activities are used as a way of testing the listening abilities of students this can result in increased anxiety levels, which is not conducive to the acquiring of listening skills. As reported by Mendelsohn (2001), frequently when teachers claim they are teaching listening,

they are in fact testing listening. Mendelsohn continues to state that without investigating the listening process itself, listeners will persist in making the error of employing ineffective techniques whenever they are faced with the same type of listening challenge.

As highlighted by Vandergrift and Goh (2012), when the product of listening is the only focus, then each activity will simply become a means of testing the abilities of learners, as opposed to building upon their skills. For the achievement of improved learning instruction, it is clear that a greater understanding is necessary as regards the act of listening. Mendelsohn (2001) highlights that it is unacceptable for listening to continue to be labelled as a passive process, since it is in fact an active skill and someone who is listening well is as active as someone who is speaking.

In addition, Mendelsohn states that, in contrast to what is found in traditional learning material, listening is an interactive process and is not simply the act of listening to dialogue. Both top-down and bottom-up processes are involved in the understanding of spoken discourse (Harmer, 2007; Nation & Newton, 2008; Richards, 2008). The top-down process relates to moving from whole to individual parts with the use of prior knowledge, schemata and content. In contrast, the bottom-up process relates to comprehending a message from the smallest to the largest part. Here, the listener focusses on individual words, clauses and sounds.

As stated by Richards (2008), 'In real-world listening, both bottom-up and top-down processing generally occur together'. It is therefore important that, as a teacher, I give consideration to activities in which both of these processes are combined. Mendelsohn (2006) makes a clear distinction between the teaching and testing of listening. In his opinion, teaching refers to the 'how' of listening, whereas in the process of testing learners must carry out their task without being shown how, after which their performance is evaluated. Thus, Mendelsohn (2006) makes the suggestion that the process of teaching listening may achieve better results if learners are taught to employ specific strategies during listening.

Mendelsohn refers to this as the 'strategy-based approach' and highlights that the 'strategy instruction should be explicit'. He also states that it is important for learners to know what they are supposed to be doing during listening lessons and to understand why. He goes on to say that it is crucial to determine a learner's needs and proficiency level prior to using this approach by carrying out a diagnostic test and needs analysis.

Although Mendelsohn (2001, 2006) suggests that a diagnostic test should be carried out prior to listening, Field (1998) proposes that in order to achieve improved listening instruction a diagnostic approach should take place after listening. As stated by Field (1998), conventional comprehension listening can impact a learner's experiences by not paying attention to their weaknesses, in terms of the problems they have when they listen to a text either with its language or its meaning. Field advises a 'diagnostic approach', whereby the teacher takes more notice of the incorrect answers than the correct answers, so as to identify where understanding was lost and how to regain it. Field recommends that, using this approach, a model lesson would begin with a pre-listening session lasting between three and five minutes in order to highlight the context and to provide motivation for the students. An extended listening session would follow. Lastly, a long post-listening session would take place to identify gaps in the listening skills of the learners and to provide them with the listening exercises they require in order to become more accomplished listeners.

Brown (1986) and Sheerin (1987) also agree

APPENDIX O: THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF PARTICIPANTS' FIRST INTERVIEW

Theme 1: Factors affecting the quality of writing (Aspects that were said to improve or hinder the quality of writing).			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Writing improvements happen mainly in England (N=10)	Remarks describing how the writing significantly and greatly improved while studying in England, and how their learning experiences were helpful and positively affected the quality of their writing.	-	“Practices in Saudi Arabia affected me greatly in a bad way because we did not learn how to write. (...) In the UK, the current practices are quite helpful and I can see that my language skills are in constant improvement” (P5)
Writing improvements in Saudi Arabia too (N=4)	Remarks describing how the writing significantly and greatly improved while studying in Saudi Arabia, and how their learning experiences were helpful and positively affected the quality of their writing.	-	“the first two writing courses were not helpful and I did not improve. In writing 3 and advanced writing, we had a great teacher who helped us learn and improve a lot. We had to write about something every day which helped a lot” (P6)
Practice (N=9)	Remarks about how “ <i>practice</i> ” and “ <i>working</i> ” hard on oneself and on one’s	-	“The more you write and read, the more you will improve and increase your knowledge of the language. Practice is the key.” (P1)

	language skills helps to improve the quality of one's writing.		
Reading (N=10)	Remarks about how "reading" helps to improve one's writing skills, or how lack thereof was one of the main factors behind their writing difficulties.	-	““Reading is the key. If you want to write like a native or being able to write in an academic way, you must read books and journals. This is what I did” (P7)
Being an active, autonomous, and motivated student (N=10)	Remarks about how making an effort, being active, productive, proactive, and holding the knowledge, freedom, and ability to pursue and enrichen one's learning path improved the quality of writing.	-	“As a student, you are expected to do a lot in the United Kingdom, you need to practice. In Saudi Arabia, you are not active as a student” (P4) “You have more responsibility as a student; you are active.” (P6)
Feedback (N=8)	Remarks about how having others (teachers, proof-readers, friends, peers, etc.) review and feedback on their work	-	“We did not receive any feedback from teachers, and no one told us how write. This was the case for learning English in SA” (P9)

	was important for assuring the quality of the output and (thus) improve their writing skills.		
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Theme: **Identity** (Implicit and explicit remarks about who they thought they were as writers. These remarks involve the recognition (“I am”, “I have”) of self-identity and self-image attributes).

Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Culture-bound writer (N10)	Remarks about how they had two or more different culture-related identities, that is, identities associated with specific countries. These included descriptions of themselves as English or Arabic writers and of how particular writing languages involved different expertise levels, knowledge, and	More capable English academic writer, and more capable general Arabic writing (N=8)	“If I am writing for personal or social thing, I prefer Arabic because it my first language and I feel confident writing in it. But I prefer English when writing for my own discipline or for work because I know the rules and how to write. I am used to it” (P3)
		Better English than Arabic writer (N=3)	“I think I am a much better writer in English” (P6)
		Better Arabic than English writer (N=2)	“In Arabic, I think I am a successful as a writer without any problems because it is my first language and I have a strong background” (P8)

	sometimes identities.	Inexistent or difficult to identify culture-bound differences (N=5)	“I am still the person. The presentation of this identity might differ. It might be clearer in Arabic because it is my first language.” (P3)
Work-in-progress (N:9)	Remarks in the present tense about how they were a work in progress, that is, their writing skills, and possibly the way their identity transpired in writing, was still evolving, changing, and improving.	-	“I am still learning and improving” (P7)
Want-to-be-better writer (N=10)	Remarks that show that they aimed at being better writers, needed or wanted to continue to develop their writing skills, and/or achieve a particularly desirable writing proficiency level.	” Excelling, sounding like native (N=4)	“As for the way I project myself, I see myself a student, no-native student who aspires to be able to write like a native speaker of English” (P7)
		No need to be great (N=2)	“However, I am not really working towards improving my writing skills at the moment. I am only focusing on improving my speaking skills. I am an engineer and I need speaking more” (P8)

<p>Under a social role (N=10)</p>	<p>Remarks about they had a particular social work that was expressed through their writings, and how sometimes their writing changed by swapping roles.</p>		<p>“I present myself as an engineer when I write” (P5)</p>
<p>Self-efficacy beliefs (N=10)</p>	<p>Remarks wherein the participants judged, classified or graded his own writing skills.</p>	<p>Being good is a matter of perspective (N=9)</p>	<p>“I don’t think I have a problem in writing. (...) I think I prefer English because I reached a place where writing in English is quite clear and I am conformable in writing” (P4)</p>
		<p>Currently bad writer (N=1)</p>	<p>“I am not happy with myself; I am not satisfied. I need to improve” (P5)</p>
		<p>Difficulties judging (N=4)</p>	<p>“I do not know. In between, I can’t judge myself” (P2)</p>

APPENDIX P: THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF PARTICIPANTS' SECOND INTERVIEW

Theme: Bilingual Academic Writing in Practice (Day-to-day academic English writing experiences, difficulties, and strategies employed by Arabic writers).			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Arabic backgrounds, ambiguity, and off-target answering styles	Utilizing Arabic “thought patterns”, “indirect” writing “style”, “structure”, “form”, “answering styles” during English writing and its negative effects on the quality of English writing.	Directly thinking in English is good practice (N=4)	<p>“I remember that my writing was not direct in dealing with the topic.</p> <p>Sometimes, I find myself writing a lot and going back and forth without really knowing where to go. This is part of the Arabic style as you tend to engage in explanations without a clear direction from the beginning. Whereas in English, you must be direct and straightforward from the beginning.”; (P4)</p> <p>“Negative, when you use Arabic structure or style that does not exist in English.” (P8)</p>
Making way in Arabic	Descriptions of the positive influence of the use of the Arabic language for English writing purposes. This includes overcoming task difficulties.		<p>“Sometimes you are stuck in English, so you need consolidate your Arabic knowledge to help figure out what to do in English.”; (P1)</p> <p>“It can be positive in one case only when you want to understand the topic and its requirements. You probably utilise that when reading as English is not your other tongue and hence helping</p>

			you comprehend the content.” (P7)
Commonly experienced difficulties	Identification of specific problems and difficulties experienced while fulfilling academic writing tasks. The more common codes were: Clarity and self-expression difficulties; Literature review difficulties; Time management difficulties; Novelty effect; Scientific, academic writing difficulties.	Clarity and self-expression difficulties (N=9)	“The most challenging aspect was expressing myself” (P3)
		Literature review difficulties (N=7)	“Also quotation and referencing were challenging for me because they were something new to me. It was essential for me to know them to avoid plagiarism.” (P9)
		Time management difficulties (N=6)	“I had a big problem with time. Sometimes, you need to work on more than task at a time.” (P8)
		Novelty effect (N=6)	“In the second term, things were much easier because I am experienced now and know how deal with emotions. Things were quite clear for me in the second term which made everything easier to deal with.” (10)

		Scientific, academic writing difficulties (N=5)	“The most challenging aspect was the language style for my discipline. Science generally has a particular writing style and you need to use particular scientific vocabulary. I also had problem with grammar as I was instructed to use certain tenses when writing a scientific paper.” (P1)
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Theme: Academic Identities in Writing (Descriptions of the ways via which participants expressed their identity, mostly opinions, in writing).			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Selfless academic writing is good practice	Recommendations or adherence to the practice of avoiding the pronoun “I” and/or manifest their personal opinions or identity in writing.	Selfless enhances objectivity (N=5)	“I did not show it really (...). In my discipline, we are not supposed to use a lot.”; P4: “I was taught not to use the personal pronoun “I” because it is not academic.”; (P1) “With the use of “I” you show biases as a writer and that’s why you should not use it.” (P10)
Academic voices	Descriptions of the particular ways and situations in which the pronoun “I” was	Justified academic Is (N=7)	“If I am asked to express my opinion, I do it without for saying “I think or I believe” (P2) “Mostly when expressing my opinion using

	utilized or their opinions were expressed.	Evidence-based Is (N=3)	“I”. I used to explain the topic and use strong evidence to support the side I lean towards. Finally, I would mention my opinion.” (P7)
		Disguised academic Is (N=3)	“I would say “it is a beautiful car” instead of “I think it is a beautiful car”.” (P10)

Theme: <i>Emotions experienced by participants</i> (Emotion-related commentary).			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Decreasing intensity	Descriptions of how emotions were initially more intense, and tended to decrease in intensity as the year progressed.	Negativity (N=8)	“There was a difference. In the first semester, things were more difficult. Masters here is only one year so everything is packed. In the second semester, I knew how to deal with assignments and my time. I knew how to write them and what I need to get a good grade. My language skills and writing were much better in the second semester. This lowered my emotions level a lot” (P8).

		<p>Novelty effect (N=8)</p>	<p>“In the first semester, things are more intense as it is your first time. It is a new experience for you so things get out of hand sometimes as you become under massive pressure. But as time goes on, you manage to deal with these emotions, whether it is pressure, stress, or anger. The reason I think is experience. Now you know what is expected from you. What you need to do and how to do it.” (P2)</p>
<p>Feedback’s emotional impact</p>	<p>Descriptions of how received “<i>feedback</i>”, “<i>marks</i>”, “<i>grades</i>”, “<i>results</i>” or approval triggered emotional experiences. These were apparently congruent with the valence assigned by</p>	<p>Valence congruency (N=6)</p>	<p>“For example, if I get a bad mark in one assignment, this puts me in a bad state.” (P5)</p>

	participants to such results. This impact apparently affected the emotional facets of motivation and self-confidence.	Facets of motivation and self-confidence (N=6)	“I was pessimistic but the feedback was really good and this changed the whole thing for me. I started to build up confidence (...) (P4)
Effects on motivation	Commentary illustrating the relationship between emotions and the acknowledged willingness and drive (or lack thereof) to pursue certain goals; how emotions impacted upon motivational aspects.	Positivity as source (N=5)	“Negative feedback demotivates me a lot” (P1)
		Negativity as source (N=6)	“Feeling relieved when finishing the task can drive you to work harder on finishing the task. Also receiving a good grade can motivate you to work harder next time.” (P10)
Anxiety-related states	Associating academic experiences with anxiety-related emotions, namely worry, anxiety, stress, pressure, and fear.	-	“Stress was something that I experienced during all my masters. Sometimes, the deadline is near but you have not done much so you became stressed. The same also goes with being worried and stressed that you teachers won’t understand your

			ideas and that my writing is unclear for them.” (P1)
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Theme: *Confidence and other self-assessments* (Explicit commentary depicting participants’ evaluation of themselves, their skills, and/or their performance in terms of success, self-confidence, and writing quality).

Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Quality and success	Answering the question about being a “successful writer” by describing their writing level or quality (implicitly suggesting success and quality were equivalent terms), or by introducing an explicit distinction between quality and success.	Quality is a measure of success (N=6)	“Probably successful is not the word. If we say 5 out of 5 is the level of being successful, I think I might deserve 3.5 to 4 maximum. So not successful, I guess. I am basing my level on the grades and results I received from my assignments for my masters. The feedback I receive from my teachers is an indication of writing level.” (P9)
		Quality is not a measure of success(N=4)	“Not quite sure! Successful probably the not the word. I think of myself as a beginner writer. Yes, I am able to write an assignment and follow the exact requirements but not sure if this qualifies me to be successful.” (P3)

Self-assessments	Subjective evaluations of their own quality, success, or self-confidence, thereby possibly implicitly showing their self-esteem. They considered themselves as: average writers (at some distance from perfection or greatness); relatively good writers (good in certain fields and/or tasks); and quite confident (generally confident or more confident than in the past).	Relatively good (N=10)	“I think I am able to write in good way. Probably a good writer who can follow all requirements of a task and execute that in an acceptable way. Someone who can answer a writing task in a clear way.” (P10)
		Average writer (N=8)	“So overall I can say I am good a writer, probably in the middle.” (P8)
		Quite confident (N=8)	“Before my masters, I was not confident at all. But after finishing my masters, I believe I am confident especially after passing all my courses. I improved a lot and so my confidence in myself.” (P7)
Evidence-based self-assessments	Justifications of their confidence or quality levels, most commonly in terms of dispositions (i.e., I	Dispositions (N=10)	“I am confident because I know how to write. I am familiar with the writing style and structure.” (P1)

	have or think I have the knowledge, skills, or experience), or behaviours (i.e., I fulfil requirements and get results).	Behaviours(N=6)	“Probably a good writer who can follow all requirements of a task and execute that in an acceptable way.” (P10)
Confidence is built	Descriptions of how self-confidence was built upon several factors, such as familiarity, knowledge, and positive results, alongside descriptions of how their self-confidence evolved during their masters. That is, of a longitudinally built confidence and of a personal qualities acknowledgement built confidence.	Longitudinally built confidence (N=5)	“I am quite confident now especially after passing all courses with very good grades.” (P4)
		Familiarity as mediator (N=6)	“I am familiar with everything about it so I feel comfortable when writing in academic way. (...) I am comfortable when I write so I think this makes me confident.” (P6)

APPENDIX Q: THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF PARTICIPANTS' DIARIES

Theme: Emotionality (It includes every subtheme that is concerned to a greater extent with participants' emotions and other subjective states of mind, such as feeling " <i>relaxed</i> ")			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Likes and dislikes have myriads of reasons	It included descriptions of the reasons behind participants' fondness of, or discontentment with certain writing projects.	Familiarity and personal experience (N=9)	"Yes, because it's the thing I experienced. I mean I have struggled with IELTS a lot like all other international students." (P2)
		Novelty (N=5)	"Yes, because it's in my field. It was so interesting to explore the topic and find out the about various techniques teachers use to teach this skill" (P6)
		Own interest, choice, or thesis (N=10)	"Yes, I was quite interested in the topic. It was my own choice. The relationship between speaking and grammar is something that needs to be explored" (P4)
		Success or feedback (N=4)	"I also liked it because I received a positive feedback on it" (P3)
The impact of perceived challenges	It includes references to emotional reactions regarding academic challenges and/or assignments perceived	-	"I do like it although it is demanding. I choose the topic so I am eager to collect data and analyse them so I can understand what is happening in SA regarding cloud computing." (P3)

	as difficult for whatever reason, such as whether these are enjoyed or not. It also includes remarks regarding their emotional reactions to “easy” assignments.		“I did not enjoy much. It is demanding and requires a lot of time do which I do not have. I was rushing to finish.” (P4)
The power of feedback	It includes every remark describing the feedback and/or grade received for some writing project. These remarks could be organized along four different categories: no feedback yet (declared absence of feedback); feedback as objective recommendation; feedback as emotion-trigger; and feedback as identity-shaping value judgements.	No feedback (N=15)	“because we are not supposed to receive any kind of feedback on our assignment unless the actual deadline has passed” (P6)
		As objective recommendation (N=15)	“a friend of mine gave feedback and suggested a way in which the report can be organized better.” (P3)
		As emotionally powerful (N=11)	I struggled with this assignment. I am not happy with myself because I did not get a good grade. So I do not think I am a good writer.” (P3)
		As identity-shaping value judgements (N=20)	“Yes, it was extremely positive. I was more than happy.” (P4)

Emotional “states of mind”	It includes every reference to emotional states and other states of mind, such as being “confused” or “relaxed”. The most frequently mentioned represent a distinct category:	Anxiety and pressure (N=18)	P2: “As international student writing to a native teacher, I feel so stressed and anxious. Maybe because I am expected to write like natives, I was under pressure to do very well.”;
		Disappointment and low arousal discontentment (N=7)	“yes, it was good [the feedback] but disappointed to some extent because I felt that I have covered all the aspects of that assignment” (P2)
		Happiness and joy (N=10)	“I very happy because the topic that I chose was of a great interest to me. ” (P6)
		Mental confusions, misunderstandings, and writers' blocks (N=7)	“writing getting better once my thoughts come easily” (P1) “Sometimes I find myself stuck trying to gather my thoughts.” (P6)

Theme: Identity			
Subthemes	Definition	Codes	Examples
Self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-analysis	It includes remarks depicting participants praising or admiring themselves, their skills, and/or performance (taken as signs of high self-esteem and/or confidence), self-depreciative or self-reprimanding remarks (taken as signs of low self-esteem and/or self-confidence). Or descriptions of how these qualitative judgements were influenced by their past experiences.	High self-esteem, confidence, and praise (N=30)	“I was so happy and writing in confident way cause I understand the report and got my own result which was correct” (P1)
		Low self-esteem, confidence, and depreciation (N=20)	”I spent a lot of time working on this article. I was under pressure during working on it. After receiving the feedback, my confident is a bit shaken up.” (P3)
		Past experience and self-confidence (N=17)	“Competent writer because I was able to finish my thesis. I feel like I did a good job. ” (P2)
Imperfections and works in progress	References to the need or potential to improve themselves, their skills, and/or their output, alongside some acceptance of their		Decent writer with the potential to improve” P2) “I need to work hard to improve the quality of my writing.” (P6)

	current imperfection and desire to achieve higher standards.		
Social selves, problem-solving, and coping strategies	References to whether experienced difficulties were solved autonomously or by soliciting help.	Autonomy (N=10)	“I found difficult somehow because the question was too broad. I wrote what I have read and I added my experience. I did not receive any help.” (P2)
		Social support (N=10)	“I sent my work to my friend to have a look. I feel like I need help.” (P3)

APPENDIX R: THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THINK ALOUD PROTOCOL

Theme: Verbalizing in different languages (Regarding the language explicitly used to verbalize thoughts during writing activity).		
Subthemes	Definition	Examples
Aloud verbalizations (N=36q)	Regarding every sentence which was apparently a verbalization, due to the content of the text	<p><u>“Because kids can acquire the language skills better and like a native speaker.”</u> (P2)</p> <p><i>“Alright! Quite straightforward question! It asks me to discuss two sides:”</i> (P4)</p>
Arabic thoughts (N=20q)	Sentences underlined.	<p><u>“not sure what to say; mastered is not the right word but I will use it anyway”</u> (P2)</p> <p><u>“Ok, now I need to discuss the first side: people who agree with teaching children at primary school.”</u> (P10)</p>
English thoughts (N=15q)	Sentences in italics.	<p><i>“Ok, I should start with an introduction about the topic including a topic sentence. Then talk about people who agree first and then about people who disagree. Finally, a conclusion with my opinion.”</i> (P1)</p> <p><i>“Maybe this the main reason or the defining factor whether people are liberal or conservatives.”</i> (P7)</p>
Bilingual users (N=4p)	Participants utilizing both the Arabic and the English language, as identified with the help of transcripts’ colour use and question 3.	<p><i>“I need to discuss both sides”</i> (P2)</p> <p><u>“I should have planned more before starting”.</u> (P2)</p> <p><i>“Ok, the task asks me to do three things”.</i> (P9)</p> <p><u>“Ok, let me start with something general like...”.</u> (P9)</p>
No	Absence of text	-

verbalizations (N=1; P6)		
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Theme: Verbalized issues (Describing the content of participants' verbalizations).		
Subthemes	Definition	Examples
Emotional interjections (N=18q)	Abrupt remarks or exclamations.	“OK” (P1) “Alright” (P9)
Topics and their order (N=17q)	Regarding how the text should be structured, that is, the topics it should include and their order. They amount to planning activities.	“I will start with a brief introduction explaining the topic of the essay and then moving to write 2 body paragraphs and then ending up with a conclusion with my opinion.” (P4) “Now I will discuss my opinion.” (P7)
Arguments and their explanations (N=21q)	Regarding the participants' viewpoints on the activity topics and their justification.	“The majority of people think teaching a foreign language to children at secondary school is better than teaching them at primary school because children's morals, culture, and mother tongue might be affected at this young age.” (P2) “It is probably a good idea to include the learning theory in this side.” (P8)
Answering behaviour descriptions (N=7q)	Diverse descriptions of behavioural actions or reactions to the activity task.	“Not sure what to say; mastered is not the right word but I will use it anyway”; (P2) “God, I can't hold the pen no longer) ha-ha” (P6)

		“I normally read the question 2 to 3 times making sure I understand what I am supposed to do.” (P8)
Apparent lack of self-confidence (N=12q)	Speech hesitations as highlighted via the use of ellipsis (...) in transcripts and hedging and cautious language such as “ <i>maybe</i> ” and “ <i>I think</i> ”.	“This is the end of task, I think” (P2) “For my opinion, I think that.... Let me discuss it....” (P3)

Theme: Language preference justifications (Language preferences and the reasons behind participants' choices).		
Subthemes	Subthemes	Examples
Spontaneous confident English thoughts (N=10q)	Utilizing the English language whenever the task was easy, they knew what to say, or their thoughts spontaneously sprung in English.	“I know what to say in English and no need to think or say anything in Arabic.” (P1) “I prefer to think and write in English. But sometimes, when I get stuck or can't say something in English, I find myself switching to Arabic.” (P7)
Complicated Arabic thoughts	Utilizing the Arabic language whenever the task was “complicated” or there was a need	“I normally use Arabic at the beginning just like in this task. I use it to plan and gather all ideas I have.” (P2) “Maybe if the topic was complicated, I would have thought in Arabic” (P4)

	to “plan” and brainstorm about what was to be written.	
Translation is used (N=9q)	Utilizing the Arabic language, and then translating into English. This was sometimes implicit to their remarks about the use of the Arabic language.	<p>“Maybe if the topic was complicated, I would have thought in Arabic which is not a good idea because it will take me a lot of time to do that.” (P1)</p> <p>“Using Arabic is quite useful. I use Arabic to think, plan and sort my ideas out. After thinking in Arabic, switching to English can be difficult sometimes in terms of expressing the ideas appropriately in English.” (P10)</p>

Theme: Activity feedback		
Subthemes	Subthemes	Examples
Easy task (N=10q)	Experiencing the task as generally “easy” and straightforward.	<p>“No really, the task is quite straightforward.” (P10)</p> <p>“Alright! Quite straightforward question!” (P5)</p>
Difficult task (N=6q)	Experiencing the task as hard or difficult, both overall and regarding specific tasks involved in fulfilling it.	<p>“It was hard to provide evidence and explanations of the side I disagree with. You need to make up some information and examples in order to complete the task.” (P1)</p> <p>“There were few difficulties. The first one is lack of information on the topic; I was not sure</p>

		about all the arguments I presented in my writing.” (P2)
Failure feelings and self-criticism (N=8q)	References to the fear of, or effective lack of success, inability to reach goals, and/or evaluations.	“I did not plan very well at the beginning.” (P2) “I felt like I am being tested which I do not like.” (P9)
Odd new behaviours (N=4q)	Comments regarding the novelty or strangeness of some of the behaviours they had been requested to perform during the activity.	“Maybe the think aloud technique was a bit of an issue, I do not normally think out loud while working on something. It is definitely a great technique; it helps you focus on your ideas. The task was quite straightforward and I did not have any issues with it.” (P6) “But because I was talking while I was doing the task, I felt at ease because you can do anything you like. I like speaking out loud when I am studying so I liked doing the task.” (P9)
Information facilitates writing (N=7q)	Comments identifying the benefits of having information about the topic one needed to discuss in writing; about how having some knowledge about the topic, via research or personal reflection, facilitated accomplishing the task.	“No really, the task is quite straightforward. But it needs a bit of preparation and research” (P10) “I feel like I needed to read a bit of research before writing this task.” (P2) “It was hard to provide evidence and explanations of the side I disagree with. You need to make up some information and examples in order to complete the task.” (P4)

APPENDIX S: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

	Saudi Arabia					
	School			College		
	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions
Participant 1	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self	-	No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Still no sign of L2 possible self	More practice but not enough to improve
Participant 3	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Still no sign of L2 possible self	More practice but not enough to improve
Participant 5	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Still no sign of L2 possible self	More practice but not enough to improve
Participant 8	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Still no sign of L2 possible self	More practice but not enough to improve
Participant 9	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		No improvement - memorisation and translation were used - No feedback	Still no sign of L2 possible self	More practice but not enough to improve

	United Kingdom					
	English/pre-sessional courses			Master		
	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions
Participant 1	Mostly positive- Significant improvement - Feedback	Signs of L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence –	Significant improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self (competent writer in his field)	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals
Participant 3	Mostly positive- Significant improvement - Feedback	Signs of L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	Significant improvement	no sign of an ideal L2 self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards finishing his degree. No desire to improve writing further
Participant 5	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Signs of L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	no sign of an ideal L2 self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards finishing his degree. No desire to improve writing further
Participant 8	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Signs of L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	no sign of an ideal L2 self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards finishing his degree. No desire to improve writing further
Participant 9	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Signs of L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	no sign of an ideal L2 self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards finishing his degree. No desire to improve writing further

	Saudi Arabia					
	School			College		
	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions
Participant 2	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self	-	improvement - memorisation and translation were used - more feedback	sign of L2 possible self – sign of ought-L2 self	More practice
Participant 4	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		improvement - memorisation and translation were used - more feedback	sign of L2 possible self – sign of ought-L2 self	More practice
Participant 6	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		improvement - memorisation and translation were used - more feedback	sign of L2 possible self – sign of ought-L2 self	More practice
Participant 7	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		improvement - memorisation and translation were used - more feedback	sign of L2 possible self – sign of ought-L2 self	More practice
Participant 10	Mostly negative – memorisation & translation were used to write – No feedback	No development of L2 possible self		improvement - memorisation and translation were used - more feedback	sign of L2 possible self – sign of ought-L2 self	More practice

	United Kingdom					
	English/pre-sessional courses			Master		
	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions	Learning experience	Influence	Actions & reactions
Participant 2	Mostly positive- Significant improvement - Feedback	Authenticate their L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence –	Significant improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals. Desire to improve writing further
Participant 4	Mostly positive- Significant improvement - Feedback	Authenticate their L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	Significant improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self)	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals. Desire to improve writing further
Participant 6	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Authenticate their L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals. Desire to improve writing further
Participant 7	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Authenticate their L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals. Desire to improve writing further
Participant 10	Mostly positive- improvement - Feedback	Authenticate their L2 possible self	Constant practice – high level of motivation – increased self-confidence	More improvement	Sign of an Ideal L2 possible self	Gaining control over emotions – work hard – focus – work towards achieving desired future goals. Desire to improve writing further