

## Academic Writing and Issues of Identity: A Focus on Texts and Practices of a Postgraduate Student

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### Keywords

- Academic writing
- Identity
- Academic Literacies Approach
- Higher Education
- Systemic Functional Linguistics

### Abstract

*Writing in English is essential at the higher education level. The present study seeks to find the complexities involved in academic writing at the postgraduate level. The paper aims to explore dominant literacy practices associated with writing and the way writing intersects with identity by focusing not only on the texts but also the perspectives of a postgraduate student. The study demands an in-depth analysis of manifold data collected through different phases; therefore, only one postgraduate student is chosen, and her written narrative, interview, and her academic texts are taken for the study. Academic Literacies Approach and ethnographic method of research are used to look into the studied phenomenon while Systemic Functional Linguistics is used for the linguistic analysis of the academic texts which proves to substantiate the findings. The frequent themes that arose from this research are aspects of identity that the student identify with or reject, and those that she aspires to represent. The findings help to achieve a precise and true understanding of writing at university, the issues of the writer's identity, and those of the issues related to disciplinary and academic conventions. The study reveals the student's concerns about the demands placed upon them by the teachers, disciplines, and institutions broadly which they must conform to as well as the need to adhere to established writing practices and academic conventions in order to succeed.*

## 1. Introduction

Writing is an important component of academic achievement; mastering academic writing can help a student accomplish his or her academic goals, or it can lead to failure. Students earn grades and marks based on their written work, such as written assignments, examinations, academic essays, and academic research, which are used to create their profiles and predict their future academic performance. As a result, writing is an essential component of academic performance. The writing process, on the other hand, is an often-overlooked topic, and the intricacy of its nature is sometimes disregarded since it is viewed as a separate activity rather than being completely interwoven with other elements of a student's academic life.

In Ivanic's tradition, the present article focuses on students' viewpoints, where she highlights the process of writing after collecting student-writers' views and opinions on their writing experiences; and also gets insights into academic traditions that surround their writings (Ivanic, 1998). As a result, it is critical to include the perspectives of key stakeholders like students, who are the active participants in the meaning-making process at universities (Lea & Street, 1998), and to investigate their complex relationship with their institutions' existing literacy practices and discourses when studying academic literacies. Javed, et al. (2018) also stress that students' learning processes must be studied, as well as the impact of the classroom structure on their learning.

The current study explores the phenomenon of writing at university and identity construction as well as student's writing problems by drawing on the Academic Literacies Approach and the methods used within this approach. The paper aims to explore dominant literacy practices associated with writing and the way writing intersects with identity by focusing not only on the texts but also the perspectives of a postgraduate student. In order to take a complete picture the written narrative of the research participant has also been obtained which contains information about her literacy history, which proves much helpful in gaining insights into the phenomenon under study.

The research objectives are listed below.

- i. To investigate how language constructs identity in the writing process, as well as the impact of institutional aims and academic practices in shaping a student's literate identity.
- ii. To examine the student's perceptions on academic writing and its challenges.

## 2. Literature Review

In general, the scholarship on writing employs three major viewpoints to investigate the phenomena of writing in higher education. When it comes to language teaching and learning, the Academic Socialization Model takes an academic language approach. This model focuses on students' assimilation into discipline-based and subject-based discourses and genres. As Lea and Street (2006) argue that in order to succeed students acquire those literacy practices which are associated with their disciplines or subject area community (p. 369). Conversely, in the Study Skills Approach language and literacy are viewed as a set of abilities that should be taught and transmitted to individuals in various situations. It is based on behavioral psychology and sees language acquisition as a cognitive process, with a focus on the language's surface

elements such as spelling and syntax and it emphasizes “the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context” (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 369). A number of studies (Ivanic, 1998; Barton, 2006; 2009; Lea, & Crème, 2008; Lea, 2009; Lillis, 2001; Lillis, & Scott, 2007; Lillis, & Turner, 2010) explore the phenomenon of writing by adopting Academic Literacies Approach. This approach focuses both on texts and practices and emphasizes the need to comprehend the use of academic literacy practices in the learning process and creating knowledge. Lea's (1999) study on academic literacies and learning in higher education address these while focusing on literacy practices and related issues of writing.

Many researchers have explored students' experiences and the role of context in the learning process (Gibbs, 1994; Mortan et al., 1997); however, the role of language in the learning process is an untouched area. Even if it is done, language issues remain isolated and detached as they are not interlinked with individual and social practices and context that might help in the overall improvement of the teaching process (Lea, 1999). Lillis (1999) looked into the difficulties of gaining entry to higher education in the United Kingdom, focusing on non-traditional students and their experiences in higher education in order to get insights into the norms that regulate students' academic writing. Tahir et al. (2017) argue that the spectrum of education has now widened with the need to train the learner according to global trends.

In Pakistan, numerous researches focus on examining scholarly writing with relation to English language education in Pakistani academic institutions, as well as multilingual learners' efficiency (Qadir, 1996; Hussain, 2000; Shah, 2001; Zubair, 2001; Rahman, 2001; Mansoor, 2005; Haider, 2005; Mashori, 2007; Shamim, 2008; Samiullah, 2011; Kulsoom, 2013; Manan et al., 2017; Riaz et al., 2017). The current study is groundbreaking since it is the first to employ an Academic Literacies Approach to investigate the sample student's writing and identity, as well as her opinions on writing issues.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study is exploratory-interpretive in nature, and it is a qualitative ethnographic study based on Street and Lea's (1997, 1998, and 1999) study of student writing in higher education, which they named the Academic Literacies Approach. The study demands an in-depth analysis of manifold data collected through different phases; therefore, only one postgraduate student from a higher education institution is chosen, and her written narrative, interview, and her academic texts are obtained for the study.

In-depth semi-structured interviews that elicit information on literacy history and ‘talk around the text’ are the most common approaches employed in Academic Literacies. The researcher in literacy history obtains autobiographical stories of language and academic literacy acquisition in order to comprehend contemporary practices and determine an individual's life journey in a greater socio-historical context. In semi-structured interviews, participants are encouraged to express their opinions and insights on academic writing in ways that are not pre-determined by the researcher in order to identify students' concerns. ‘Thick participation’ (Sarangi, 2007) helps to gain insights into institutional requirements in terms of forms of representation, discourses, epistemological framings, and particularly their role in shaping students' identities and learning experiences at higher education institutions when used in conjunction with interviews, written narratives, and textual data.

#### a. Systemic Functional Linguistics

The writer's linguistic and functional choices, according to Halliday (1973), reflect the social conditions and their impact on his perspective. The text is not separated from its context of usage since SFL text analysis takes into consideration linguistic resources as well as their social, cultural, and ideological implications. The theoretical framework and analytical techniques are meant to reveal the text-context connection. To examine the texts, we used the three Meta functions of Systemic Functional Linguistics: ideational, interpersonal, and textual Meta functions. We have taken five linguistic features, i.e., verb processes; clause structure; nominalization; tense, mood, and modality; lexis, and applied them to the sample writings.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

Findings are obtained from the written narrative of the research participant as well as from her interview.

##### a. Case History of the Post Graduate Student

Samia brought up took place in Urdu speaking environment and she started studying English from her mother when was three years old. Her mother taught her the Holy Quran after she learnt Urdu and English language. "So the entire language learning experience I had was with my mum", according to her. In class three, she was accepted into a middle-class private English-medium school. She claims that the language reading and writing exercises there did not help her improve her language skills. As a result, "my mother's lessons served as the foundation for my language learning, which I depended on throughout my academic career."

She liked to read popular Urdu children's magazines when she was younger, but she did not devote much time to reading later in life due to her commitment to her academics, since she was a high achiever who needed to keep her job. Her passion for reading led her to choose English Literature as a major in her Bachelor's degree.

She also works at the International Islamic University in Islamabad as a visiting instructor (English Language Teacher). She describes her undergraduate writing experience as follows: "Whenever I have an assignment due, I feel extremely burdened, but that burden does not motivate me to do it early; instead, I am in the habit of completing it at the eleventh hour. With addition, I do seek my teachers' assistance in writing projects, but before doing so, I attempt to read through the relevant material on my own so that I can spot the areas where I may be having difficulties. Conclusion and recommendation sections are, in general, my issue areas. It's quite tough for me to summarize the situation and provide the suggestions. Even if I do a good job when I do it, it is always a challenging work for me."

Her perspective on students' multilingualism and its link to writing is: "When it comes to being multilingual and how much it helps, my experience has been that it inhibits English writing because thinking in my native language and writing in a second language does not help much".

She goes on to say more about writing

"When I first started my degree, I anticipated that reading would be a significant challenge for me, but the issues that I have encountered thus far have all been related to writing, particularly during the examination, when I am expected to write a lot and critically examine things in a short amount of time, which is extremely stressful"

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for me and a significant challenge. By and large, my course work experience has been positive, but what stresses me out the most is this examination, which has less time and requires more writing.”

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Our research participant's narrative displays her academic experience, writing practices, worries, and issues. Multilingualism, according to Samia, is a barrier to successful writing since it makes it difficult to write in English because it is ineffective to think in one's own language and write in a second one. Her case study shows the complexities of academic writing as well as the misunderstanding that exists among student-writers. Samia considers writing in tests to be a tremendous struggle since she is expected to write a lot and critically examine things in a short amount of time. What stresses her out the most is writing in examinations because she has less time and more to write.

## **b. Findings from the Interview**

The following section presents the findings elicited from our research participant's responses.

### **i. Perspectives on writing and identity**

We talk about our participant's perspectives on her writing processes and practices, as well as how her work reflects her sense of self. Certain aspects of her writing she completely owns, while others she does not and wishes to better. Samia not only took complete ownership of the task but also remarked that her "real self" dominated and affected her work automatically, despite how she desired to sound. When we discussed the impression she intended to make with this project, she said:

*Samia: I attempted to present myself as a competent individual, but in the end, my true self emerged, which is to relax and, as a result, not come up with the best of yourself. I would say this assignment accurately portrays me.*

We also discussed academic writing traditions, and she stated that they had become a part of her writing, as well as a part of her learning, allowing her to appear informed.

Me: We observed that you used passive voice sparingly in your project...

*Samia: Exactly, we've always been informed that using personal pronouns in research publications and all things isn't appreciated.*

Me: I can't think of a single time when you've uttered the words "I" or "us."

Samia: I've strictly adhered to that...

Me: Was that something that came naturally to you, or did you try to show off your personality in a more active way?

Samia: It's become second nature to me.

When asked if she opposes it, she says no.

Samia: No, I don't think so. I consider myself to have learned something, therefore I'd say k... I've discovered something]

Her replies occasionally indicate that she has consciously established the persona to which she aspires in her work. Samia answered when asked about the manner she presented herself in this assignment.

*Samia: Whenever I do an assignment, I want to be presented as a knowledgeable person, regardless of what I've contributed in this assignment. Even if I'm not working on an assignment or participating in a class discussion, I always strive to sound knowledgeable, and if I don't have knowledge in a particular subject, I attempt to remain mute. The assignment is the same way, if I ever feel like I'm lacking I just skip that part.*

Samia wants to give the sense of someone who knows a lot about the subject; she doesn't want to come across as a novice, which she has attempted to convey in her writing as well.

Me: So, in terms of your identity as an English linguistics student, could you elaborate?

*Samia: I'd say the same thing again: I want to come across as someone who knows what they're talking about. If I use such terminology, I'd be glad to sound like someone who works in the subject of linguistics, such as an educated linguist writing this.*

Samia communicates a sense of complete ownership of her argument when she asserts that her writing style is not influenced by anybody; rather, it is entirely her own and the result of a lifetime of study.

Me: Have any of your teachers had an impact on the way you write? (in both terms in expression or in content).

*Samia: I won't state that my writing style is not impressed by anyone; since I know that whatever I write, I always begin with a background and a general remark. It also follows the rules, such as beginning with a hook and so on. It is my own way of writing; I might have adapted the style from my previous readings, and it is now my own writing style.*

She mentioned this during the discussion of her written work and the parts of her work which she owns because they reflect her own thoughts and feelings.

*Samia: My subjectivity is present; I have analyzed them subjectively, as if no one were present to inform me that this theory is more suited. I just picked it out at random because I was short on time and had to limit myself to just one movie, so I had to locate the things in it and scrutinized it in subjective manner, it was my own idea that this dialogue would be more appropriate and so..*

Students should not be constrained in their writings, according to Samia, because this will limit their thoughts and prevent them from producing high-quality work. She also highlighted the limitations that prevent them from portraying themselves accurately in writing, as they were unable to project themselves in their writing owing to a variety of disciplinary and academic restrictions. When we were talking about academic writing conventions, she expressed her worry.

*Samia: In some ways, the norms are absolutely suitable; you must be clear and unambiguous in what you're going to do in the initial stages of your writing.... However, we should be given complete freedom in the discussion section, in terms of how we want to conduct our research and how we want to handle our findings. When I was writing my thesis, I believed that if I had been given some freehand, I could have done a better job.*

In response to a question on writing structure and headers, she said,

Samia: *the writing must have the structure, but according to our own unique way; I'm writing in a single paragraph, outlining my goals and significance rather than using subheadings... that my objectives begin here and conclude there, and that the significance begins with the title... Giving headers is childish, but we continue to do so.*

Me: Perhaps that makes it easier for the reader to simply glance at it and...

Samia: *Yeah, simply to make things easier for them, I'm now working in phonology, so I did recordings and transcribed them, as well as prepare tables and other things. I didn't see it was much hard, but it was a two-month process. When I did it my way, I centred tables and analyzed them in a single row, and when I approached my supervisor about it, she advised me to split my tables and split my analysis, which made me think we were still there (hadn't improved).*

Me: When we're writing something, we have to keep the reader in mind at all times.

Samia: *Although we are given the status of scholars, M. Phil scholars, we are not regarded as such. We're still told what lines to go after, and I'm not one of those people who defy norms. But there are times when I wanted myself to be presented rather than conventions taking me over.*

She has a variety of answers; sometimes she joyfully follows academic traditions, while other times she rejects them and prefers to go her own way. As a result, the participant's responses to her own images were nuanced and diverse.

Me: If you were given the opportunity to rewrite that assignment, would you like to modify it.

Samia: *I'd like to modify a few sections of it, but not all of them. I'm happy with the way I analysed it because it was the only way I could think of. I believe that was the greatest part, and since you've asked about the portions that show your identity, I won't change the analysis. However, several sections, such as the literature review... I would add a little more to this section, such as rearranging everything in a more logical order, and changing a few chapters, such as the first two.*

Me: What do you own and what do you disown in this assignment?

Samia: *As I previously stated, I could have done a better job introducing my idea in the introduction section, and I could have done it in a more professional manner. I do not own this completely, but I do own the analysis section. On reading my analysis part I used to utter, yes, I did a good job.*

### **c. Resistance to Readers Expectations**

The interview with Samia exposes her reluctance to meet the expectations of her readers. Her resistance might be shown in her lack of enthusiasm in learning about her teacher and her expectations.

Me: Whenever you're doing academic writing, whether it's for examinations or assignments, and especially for this one. Do you try to address your readers' expectations?

Samia: *I know in some circumstances and don't know in others. In this case, I didn't know.*

Me: And you didn't even bother to learn about...

Samia: *I didn't even attempt because I wasn't particularly interested in the subject, so I never imagined I'd be able to improve; instead, I just assumed I'd have to get through it*

*somehow or another; I'm well aware of some teachers' expectations, and we do meet them.*

Samia had little interest in the course or in earning excellent grades, which led to a chilly demeanour, and she made no attempt to learn about her teacher's expectations. When I questioned Samia how her readers' ideological positions impact her work and if she tries to negotiate her identity in response, she said:

*Samia: Yes, we manipulate it in some way, but in this assignment, I didn't, partially because, as I previously stated, I was not particularly interested in the course. Second, my teacher is a very knowledgeable person; she is much respectful, but I couldn't assess her expectations well, I was also new to the university. However, I did not know the teacher well in this situation; another factor could be because I never received feedback from her.*

She made the following statement when discussing the difference between the instructor and student expectations, as well as students' confusions about how they were being assessed and graded:

*Samia: When I gave a presentation, I didn't receive any feedback; though I'm told about certain points, but I didn't get any meaningful feedback; I did not have any idea about the areas where I lack and how I might grow, especially in this course. Only one B grade was given to me, and it was in this subject.*

#### **d. Disciplinary Conventions in Writing**

When I asked Samia about disciplinary standards in writing, her replies reflected her level of acceptance. She believes that following the standards and achieving success is simple and easy, and that going against the norms that are widespread in our educational system is futile.

Me: You write according to academic traditions because of having no choice?

*Samia: I believe I am a kind of personality who always follows the rules and rarely deviates from them. This is evident in my academic life as well; I choose to study diligently because there are examinations to be taken... I'm sort of following tradition, and the same is true here; I've never considered another choice... because I don't see the necessity. I'm a trend follower rather than a trend maker.*

Me: And, as is the case with our educational system, this ultimately leads to success.

*Samia: Yeah, we have to be like that in this system, not over thinking things and just accepting things as they are.*

Me: We noted in your written narrative that writing in a second language is challenging for a student, did you have any problems with it in the past or now??

*Samia: I don't think it's as difficult as it used to be after all these years of writing. I believe the area in which I need to improve is my ability to write concisely. I believe I have a time limit while taking the exam, the things that I could have stated in one sentence, I usually write in three, and if I don't write that in three, I generally write very long sentences, which irritates me. This is the area where I believe I can improve. I once read somewhere, "I didn't have time to write the short one, so I wrote the long one." So writing briefly is important; it is critical that you are fluent in at least one language so that you can express the same notion in a few words rather than a few paragraphs.*



When it comes to gaining success, Samia believes that expressiveness is more vital than intelligence.

Samia: I think both, having knowledge and expressing the knowledge are important. You must have the knowledge about the course you have passed as well as you must know how to express it.. So I believe it's the 30/70 relationship: 30 for knowledge and 70 for expression.

The interview with the research participant is extremely enlightening as the responses make us aware of the current issues of writing and identity and the students get to know about them only when go through this process of identity formation while writing. It also reveals students' inconsistencies and ambivalences in their adherence to prevalent norms and practices, as well as their resistance to and adaptability to readers' expectations and disciplinary conventions, and their views of academic accomplishment.

#### **e. Linguistic Analysis of Texts**

We selected brief excerpts of about 50-60 words from our study participant's assignment and Mid-Term examinations and employed Halliday's five lexicogrammatical characteristics to determine their placement and connection to academic discourse.

##### **i. Extracts from Samia's Assignment and Exam**

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###### **Extract A (assignment)**

Tannen's Difference Theory was used to analyze cross-sex conversations in Disney's Frozen.

Score: (7/10)

The findings lead us to believe that gendered conversational patterns can accurately portray the gendered identities of anyone conversing with the other gender. Females like to avoid conflict and make concessions on contentious issues, whereas males prefer to show themselves as the superior figure with no faults or weaknesses. (61 words)

(I attempted to include the entire clause, even if it exceeded the 50-word restriction; I was more concerned with including the entire clause than with the word limit.)

###### **Extract B (Exam)**

"Why does the problem of 'pronominal neutralization and sexism' bothers Lackoff (1973) in her examination of linguistic imbalances?"

Score: (7/7.5)

(lines 18-26)

"So, according to Lakoff, this is what causes a language imbalance, and it is again due to the dominant portion of society's employment of sexist words in order to preserve their power. They are consolidating their own control under the pretext of promoting equality via inclusiveness". (51 words)

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**ii. Clauses and verb processes**

The lexical density is calculated by counting the clauses and the number of lexical terms per clause; lexical density of 5 or more is deemed high (Ivanic, 1998). In the examined sentences, the lexical density is 6.3 in extract A, which is fairly high, but it is 4 in extract B, as shown in table 1. Excerpt A is taken from the assignment whereas Excerpt B is taken from exam paper, which leads to the further interpretation that students are more careful in building their identity as academic writers when they have time and resources (they have access to academic scholarship and researches while doing assignments) which is not the case in examinations where they have limited time to pen down their ideas. The high lexical density in excerpt A suggests the student's desire to depict her affiliation to the academic community and her identity as an academic person.

Table 1

**Lexical Density in clauses**

No. of lexical items		No. of clauses		lexical density	
A	B	A	B	A	B
33	24	5	6	6.3	4

Table 2 shows Halliday's categorization of verbs into distinct verb processes.

**Table 2**

**Verb Processes**

Mental	Relational	Verbal	Material
Are inclined	allow, can depict Are, is, has made	----	-----

The findings are noteworthy since the major verb processes identified in these passages are mental and relational, with no occurrence of the material verb, indicating the writer's interest in ideas and mental activity, as well as the abstract link between items.

Extract A: Allow, can depict, are inclined, are,

Extract B: Is, has made, are making

The verbs are mostly in the present tense and are definite. Most verb processes refer to mental and relational processes, indicating that the writer is conveying facts, actual circumstances, and relationships among abstract concepts and entities. Academic discourse features the mental and relational verb processes and by employing them in writing the writer is trying to identify herself with the academic discourse.

**iii. Nouns, Nominalization, and Nominal Groups**

The abstract nouns indicated in these passages are primarily inanimate nouns that relate to ideas, concepts, and hypotheses. The animate nouns are humans, and they mostly relate to writers and theorists. The 'head nouns,' i.e., the principal subjects or objects of the verbs are listed below.

Extract A: The results, styles, identities, conversation, gender, females, conflict, compromises, points, males, status,

Extract B: Lakoff, society, terms, dominance, equality

Another characteristic of academic discourse is the compression of data and the presentation of it in lengthy nominal groupings. A nominal group, according to Halliday, consists of the head noun, any embedded clauses, and anything that changes it (Ivanic, 1998 p. 267). From both extracts, we determined the longest nominal group, as well as the total number of words and the ratio of lexical terms to total words. Academic discourse is also linked with this style of writing in thick sentences. The clauses that have been identified are as follows:

**A:** “Gendered conversational styles can depict the gendered identities of anyone involved in the conversation with the other gender”. (18 words, 61% lexical words)

**B:** “It is again because of the dominant section of society who has made these sexist terms prevail in order to maintain their dominance” (23 words, 47% lexical words)

There are 61 percent lexical words in the clause taken from the assignment and 47 percent in the clause taken from the exam paper in the examined clauses from both extracts, indicating that knowledge is compacted together, as is typical of the academic community.

#### iv. Tense, Mood and Modality

In each of these excerpts, the present tense is evident, indicating eternal truths and the writers' care for communicating those truths. The passages are also in a declarative tone, which is a characteristic of academic speech in which information and facts are assertively delivered. However, there is just one use of the modalized verbs 'can represent,' which relates to a categorical viewpoint. The following is a list of the tense mood and modality:

Excerpt A: The modalized verb are used i.e., Can depict, present tense, declarative sentences, no interrogatives, no imperatives

Excerpt B: declarative sentences, present tense, no interrogatives, no imperatives

#### v. Lexis

Lexis refers to the usage of certain terminologies and lexical terms connected with the academic community. I've selected the vocabulary elements from Samia's excerpts that show her academic affiliation and put them below. She has utilized a variety of lexis related to her subject and discipline.

Extract A: Results, Conclude, gendered conversational styles, depict, gendered identities, inclined, conflicting points,

Extract B: Creates, linguistic imbalance, dominant section, sexist terms, prevail, maintain, dominance, propagating, equality, inclusion, strengthened

The lexis found from the extracts is mostly from the fields of discourse analysis, feminist discourse, and research discourse.

### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Findings from the written narrative of our research participant who is a postgraduate student, her interview and the linguistic analysis of her texts complement each other, but at the same time, they point to the discrepancies found in the writers' sense of their identity, their resistance to academic conventions and their conscious or unconscious adherence to the established norms, which makes more evident the power relationships in academia and what has counted a success in the academic community. Samia has her particular views on being successful in academia therefore, she finds it simple and unproblematic to follow the academic conventions in writing and therefore achieve success, and she claims that defying the rules that govern our educational system is futile. At the same time, she has also raised her concern that students should not be constrained in their writings since this will limit their thoughts and prevent them from producing high-quality work. She has also discussed the constraints which inhibit students' true portrayal in writing as sometimes they could not project themselves in their writing due to varied disciplinary and subject requirements. She has very strongly voiced out that there are times when I wanted myself to be presented and not the conventions taking me over. As a result, the participant's responses to her self-

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representation in writing are complicated and multifaceted; she sometimes joyfully follows academic standards, but she also opposes them and decides to go her own way. The results could not be generalized as the study is ethnographic in nature and demanded an in-depth exploration of data. Hence multiple kinds of data are collected from a single participant. However, the results give deep insights into the phenomenon of writing in higher education and related identity issues.

The data from written narratives and interviews help achieve the research objectives. Our research participant's narrative displays her academic experience, the writing difficulties including the challenges faced due to English being her second language and writing in exams as that involves time limitations and the need to write more. Though she happily follows the disciplinary conventions, her responses indicate her resistance to meet readers' expectations and an ambivalent attitude towards her sense of identity portrayed in writing.

Together with this, the linguistic analysis of her texts demonstrates her sense of identification with the academic community, and her positioning is made obvious by the characteristics of her writing. An important characteristic of academic discourse is high lexical density and the mental and relational verb processes; by employing these features in her writing the writer is trying to portray her identity as an academic person. Another characteristic of academic discourse is the compression of data and the presentation of it in lengthy nominal groupings. Both the excerpts exemplify this as there are 61 per cent lexical words in the clause taken from the assignment and 47 per cent in the clause taken from the exam paper, indicating that knowledge is compacted together, as is typical of the academic community. The study of the nominal groups and the lexico-grammatical features all reflect her affiliation and positioning within the academic community. The nouns in both passages are abstract nouns which are primarily inanimate nouns that relate to ideas, concepts, and hypotheses. The animate nouns are humans, and they mostly relate to writers and theorists. In each of these excerpts, the present tense is evident, indicating eternal truths and the writers' care for communicating those truths. The passages are also in a declarative tone, which is a characteristic of academic speech in which information and facts are assertively delivered. The lexis found from the extracts is mostly from the fields of discourse analysis, feminist discourse, and research discourse which also establish the writer's positioning within the academic community. All in all the linguistic study of academic texts exhibit the writer's identity as a member of the academic community, it also highlights the institutional influence upon academic writers in shaping their identities as well as provide insights into the construction of identity in the process of writing.

The reoccurring themes that arose from this study's findings are concerned with the identity that students identify with or reject, as well as those they desire to represent. The findings help to achieve a precise and true understanding of writing at university, the issues of writers' identity, and those of the issues related to disciplinary and academic conventions. The study reveals students' concerns about the demands placed upon them by the teachers, disciplines, and institutions broadly and that to be effective, they must conform to established writing practices and academic conventions.

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