THE CONSTRUCTION OF WRITER IDENTITY OF BANGLADESHI L2 STUDENTS IN
THE ENGLISH ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

by

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate how five Bangladeshi L2 graduate students construct and express their writer identities in their L2 academic writing practices in English academic community. The study is based upon feminist poststructuralism, especially Weedon’s (1997) concept of subjectivity portraying the individual as uncertain, contradictory, dynamic, and changing over historical time and social space. I conducted semi-structured interviews and collected writing samples of the participants. Following Ivanič’s (1998) concept of writer identity which bears multiplicity with four interrelated aspects of autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author, and possibilities for self-hood, I analyzed the data thematically to illustrate how participants constructed their writer identities. Findings suggest that the participating Bangladeshi student writers tried to construct their autobiographical selves by drawing on previous literacy practices. However, it was their field of study (science or arts) that allowed or restricted them from expressing their individual interest, experiences, opinions and commitment in their L2 writing. Participants also constructed their discoursal selves through citations practices, linguistics choices, and organization of their papers as they tried to accommodate to the discourses preferred by their field of study or professors. In addition, the science and non-science major students expressed themselves as authors differently by employing either personal or impersonal writing styles and by making claims following different disciplinary conventions. It was clearly the participants’ awareness of the possibilities of self-hood that influenced how they constructed their writer identities. Such identities, as the study illustrate, were multiple, shifted, conflicted, and developed as participants tried to align themselves with the preferred identities or possibilities in the English academic community. The paper concludes with teaching implications for academic writing in a second language.
Preface
This study was approved by the University of British Columbia, Office of Research Service, Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The certificate number of the ethics certificate was H13-01915.
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To my father Saha Hari Bashar & my mother Sandhya Saha
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Many second language (L2) writers experience feelings of confusion and alienation while struggling to acquire academic literacy in English, on which university success mostly depends in the English academic community. For example, Danling Fu (1995), a Chinese English teacher saw herself as “helpless, incapable, and defeated” after coming to the United States for a graduate study (p. 5). Obviously, English as a Second Language students find writing a successful academic paper in English very challenging for it requires them to acquire complex skills along with learning new discourses and mastering entire subject matter in their particular fields of study. This daunting experience in a new academic discourse community also affects these L2 student writers’ identities. They strive to gradually become part of that community by reinventing or reconstructing their identities.

The term *discourse* is presented in this study as ways of saying, valuing, interacting, feeling, thinking, and believing to be socially recognized “as a given kind of person at a specific time and place” (Gee, 2012, p. 152). According to Ivanič (1998), “‘discourse community’ relates to the context of culture, the socio-historically produced norms and conventions of a particular group of people who define themselves among other things, by their discourse practices” (p. 78). Academic discourse community, like any other communities, carries a set of beliefs and actions assisting its members in shaping a particular identity. Academic writing is a social practice that takes place in this community, giving the writers chances of constructing, negotiating and creating identity. In their mission of “inventing the university”, students writing for academic purposes, struggle to appropriate discourses or requirements of conventions acceptable in the academic discourse community (Bartholomae, 1986). This struggle often urges them to take on
new identities to confirm their membership like a chameleon that changes its colour according to the environment.

The identities of newly admitted L2 graduate students in Canadian universities also go through changes and ones’ new images are constructed in a new discourse community. For instance, students with authoritative teacher identities in their home country might construct the identity of ESL students with low confidence upon entering the Canadian society as a result of their lack of knowledge of English academic writing conventions or low language proficiency. They might also find writing academic papers in English in Canadian universities challenging because of their different literacy practices in their home countries. Consequently, they might go through various changes as they take different strategies to adjust their writing in the new discourse community as well as to create new identities for themselves. These strategies might include taking writing courses, discussion with their professors, Canadian friends or experienced students, reliance on books, journals or any other search engines and all these sources contribute to changes to both their L2 writing practices as well as their L2 writer identities. Therefore, it can be understood clearly that the L2 students go through different stages of transition and transformation through multiple interactions or encounters. All these concerns or identity issues are crucial to L2 student writers in academic settings in Canada.

1.2 Personal Interest in the Study

My research interest in identity issues is rooted in my personal experience as an L2 graduate student writer in a Canadian university. My living in Canada for more than two years has provided me with multiple identities such as a landed immigrant, an L2 graduate student, and a friend of many Canadians as well as people of different nationalities. I have always adjusted myself according to the expectations of the culture in each situation. For example, I mainly dress
up like a real Bengali woman and speak my L1 Bangla while attending Bengali events in Canada, whereas I try to follow the Canadian dress code and speak English when I am outside the Bengali community. However, people may not always find it easy playing a new role in a new community. People usually undergo transitions and transformations into new identities to fine-tune themselves in the target society. I have also tried to maintain the preferred discourse practices to fit myself into the Canadian society.

My own experience of transitions and transformations as an L2 student writer would help me reflect on how my views and beliefs were changed since I have started my Master’s program in Canada. I have faced many challenges in writing my assignments because I am expected to take a position, to be direct and logical, and to strictly follow the conventions of citation in my disciplinary discourse community. However, I had never practiced these while writing assignments in Bangladesh. I used to have a very simple view on writing in both my L1 and L2 and I had never thought that I could create an impression of an authoritative academic writer through my writing. I thought that writing grammatically correct sentences was the only thing that mattered in L2 writing. However, after starting my MA in TESL, I felt like a fish out of water because I was less confident and helpless when I realized that I lacked the skills to succeed in English academic writing. In addition to that, I faced acute problems in textual borrowing because I filled my assignments with enormous quotations due to a fear of misinterpreting while paraphrasing. At the same time I felt frustrated for not being able to accurately paraphrase because of my poor citation skills.

Along with transitions, I also experienced some transformations. I struggled to find the appropriate voice while writing my assignments. I started to use the vocabulary and terminology that the professors emphasized. I have never argued against or criticized other scholars’ ideas.
But it is the English academic writing conventions that have urged me to be critical, creative and logical. I started to pay more attention to other scholarly writings, and at the same time, my interaction with my professors and peers have also helped me to gain some confidence. This new and revitalizing experience has encouraged me to become a different person. Nonetheless, my limited English fluency and my social identity as a non-native English speaker (NNES) made me feel uncertain and incapable. My transitions and transformations remind me of the metaphor of “academic writing games” (Casanave, 2002). According to Casanave (2002), the biggest challenge for graduate students is to learn the game of academic writing (p. 139). She describes academic writing as a “writing game” and emphasizes the importance of learning the rules of this game. As there is audience to observe the players’ performance on stage or on stadium, there are also readers to evaluate and observe writers’ performance in their writings.

However, the notion of a writing game suggests possibilities of identity conflicts or multiple identities, especially for newly admitted L2 graduate students in a Canadian academic community. L2 graduate students may come with little writing experience in their native countries and little confidence in claiming authority over their texts. Based on my personal reflection on social identities and my experience in English writing, I have come to realize the existence of my multiple identities and the ways I brought significant changes in my written form. All these have motivated me to further explore how L2 graduate students especially Bangladeshi graduate students in a Canadian academic community construct and express their writer identities in their L2 academic writing practices in order to become legitimate members of this new community.
1.3 Medium of Instruction Policy and Education System in Bangladesh

The participants of this study are Bangladeshi, so I briefly discuss here the medium of instruction policy and general education system in Bangladesh to share a better understanding of their background. There are three types of schools on the basis of medium of instruction and the role of religion in Bangladesh: Bangla-medium schools, where English is taught as a compulsory subject but most classes and informal interaction take place in Bangla; English-medium schools, where Bangla is used for much of the informal social interaction, but English is used for subject-matter instruction; and madrasahs, where the medium of instruction is Bangla but the primary aim is to teach religion and Arabic language (Islam, 2011, p. 51). All the English-medium schools are situated in urban areas and are attended only by children of higher class or upper middle class families (Hossain, & Tollefson, 2007). English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade 1 in the Bangla medium schools in Bangladesh.

The students continuing secondary school can opt for 3-year general degrees in arts, science and commerce and then 4-year honours degrees or 4-year professional degrees in medicine, engineering and agriculture. The one-year Master's Degree courses are offered for holders of an Honours Bachelor's degree, and the two-year courses for holders of a Bachelor's Pass Degree. The medium of instruction in all the private universities, private and public engineering and medical colleges is English; Curricula, syllabi, and materials are in English. Hossain (2004) found that “students who attend Bangla-medium schools and wish to continue their education must eventually enter English-medium instructions where they are at a significant competitive disadvantage compared to students who attend English-medium schools beginning in the elementary level (as cited in Islam, 2011, p. 51). However, there are many public universities in Bangladesh where the medium of instruction varies from department to
department. For instance, in the department of English or Linguistics the medium of instruction is English but in other departments it depends on the availability of course materials in Bangla or English.

1.4  Overview of the Thesis

This dissertation has six chapters. Following this introduction, I present the theoretical framework of the study in Chapter 2. Then I review relevant literature, drawing on some empirical studies focusing on the construction of writer identities in the field of L2 writing in Chapter 3. I look at how the question of identity in L2 writing especially in L2 academic writing has been addressed by the researchers depending on their own or their participants’ experiences of writing as well as the actual texts the participants produced. Chapter 3 ends with a summary of the main findings of the literature, a gap in the literature and my rationale for the research and articulates the research questions. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research methodology including research design, methods, and research settings, selection of participants, ethical issues, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability.

Chapter 5 can be considered as the centre of this study. Drawing on Ivanič’s (1998) four aspects of writer identity, I will present my findings on how the student writers construct their identities in terms of (1) autobiographical self, (2) discoursal self, (3) self as author and (4) possibilities for self-hood in their L2 writing practices. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation. In this chapter I come back to the research question and pull together the main themes arising from the participants’ writing especially academic writing experiences as well as from the discussion of actual texts. I present the limitations of the study, and several implications of the findings for the teachers teaching L2 writing and those who are concerned about L2 writing across
curriculum. In addition, I suggest some directions for future research and I conclude with reflections on my experience of writing the dissertation.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework of Identity and Writing

2.1 Language, Discourse and Socially Constructed Identity

Language, discourse and social practices are actively involved in the construction of a person’s identity in a specific context. According to the social identity theory, people have a tendency to identify themselves with reference to the social groups or categories they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They try to equip the discourse system embedded in a particular community in order to become members of that community as it is the “mediating mechanism” that leads people to choose a particular identity (Ivanič’s, 1998, p. 17). It is believed in traditional humanistic approach in Western philosophy that the question of identity relates to individuals’ personalities, motivation and other distinctive characteristics. This approach has been dominant in the arena of second language acquisition for a long time. However, such an understanding is limited in the sense that it does not pay attention to the fact that these individual characteristics are not static but changeable based on sociocultural or sociopolitical factors. Therefore, I draw on feminist poststructuralism which suggests that writer identities are multiple and they change over time and space to form a conceptual framework for this study. My conceptualization of writer identities is based on Weedon’s (1997) concept of subjectivity and Ivanič’s (1998) four aspects of writer identities: autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author and possibilities for self-hood.

First of all, I draw on Weedon’s idea (1997) of social relation with a feminist point of view because I believe L2 students in Canadian educational institutions can be considered as minorities in the Canadian society. Weedon, a feminist poststructuralist, explains the effectiveness of a theory of subjectivity to understand how social power is practiced and how social relationships of gender, race, and class are transformed in social and institutional contexts.
by consolidating language, experience, and social power. She defined *subjectivity* as “a site of disunity and conflict, central to the process of political change and to preserving the status quo” (p. 21), and described it further as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 32). Norton (1997, p. 410) also defined identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, how people understand their possibilities for the future.” Weedon (1997) portrays the individual as uncertain, contradictory, dynamic, and changing over historical time and social space because of their exposition to a wide range of different societies carrying on discursive practices such as economic, political, and social practices. Therefore, subjectivity is socially constructed through language, and the role of language is noteworthy in the formation of identity since socially specific language use helps construct the individual’s subjectivity or “possible forms of subjectivity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 34). In writing, writers’ subjectivity can also be analyzed with their use of language, such as the devices used to indicate their authorial voice.

In her discussion of social constructivist views of identity, Ivanič (1998) stated that the possibilities for identity are not predetermined and thus “are open to contestation and change” (p. 12). She further argued that people’s identities are influenced by the dominant ideologies and there are possibilities for struggle for alternative identities. She recognized multiplicity as “a positive, dynamic aspect of our identity” (p. 15) and discussed how students juggle “multiple [and] often conflicting identities in their writing” (p. 15). Therefore, the theoretical concept—identity is multiple and socially constructed—rejects the idea that individuals have a unique, fixed, and coherent identity, which suggests that identity or subjectivity is multiple, non-unitary,
and dynamic. When multiple identities are shaped in many different contexts in which particular discourses are preferred, individuals reconstruct their selves in different ways.

Ivanič (1998) points out that, people may face an identity crisis, which is a “mismatch between the social contexts which have constructed their identities in the past and the new social contexts which they are entering” (p. 12). People may find entering a new social group very hard when their values and practices are different from that of the target community. They recognize the existing symbolic or material power (Bourdieu, 1977) and would take action accordingly. The imbalanced power distribution in a social group makes people desire to obtain more power. This can be applied to the case of L2 students who, as Burke (2010, p. 27) puts it, “are positioned as ignorant or inferior, [and would] struggle and take actions to put themselves in stronger subject positions.” For example, in Norton’s case studies (2000), Martina, resisted her subject position as an immigrant woman by developing a counter-discourse and focused her subject position as a mother and a care-giver, rather than an unworthy immigrant. Thus she created opportunities to speak more English and to gain a strong subject position. Eva, positioned as an ignorant immigrant also gained access to a wider social network by using her symbolic power to impress her co-workers by teaching some of her native language to them. The experiences of the female immigrants in Norton’s (2000) study also helps us to illustrate the concept that identity is non-unitary and contradictory. Eva, a female immigrant in Canada, desired to be equally treated with her co-workers, but at the same time, she wanted her difference to be recognized and respected by her Canadian co-workers. Katrina, another participant in Norton’s (2000) study, also showed her contradictory identities. She wanted her daughter to learn English but did not want her daughter’s English language skills to downplay their relationship.
Like the immigrants in Norton’s (2000) study, L2 graduate students might feel themselves as inferior or powerless non-legitimate speakers and writers, but their images of identity can change over time. They may gain powerful subject positions and more confidence like Eva whose “conception of herself as an immigrant with no right to speak changed to a conception of herself as a multicultural citizen” (Norton, 2000, p. 128). A person’s identity is socially constructed, changed, and reformed because one’s identity is “a layer of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other” (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). Similarly, Canagarajah (2002) comments on the social construction of the self through language and discourse:

The self is composed of multiple subjectivities deriving from the heterogeneous codes, registers, and discourses that are found in society. These subjectivities enjoy unequal status and power, deriving differential positioning in socioeconomic terms. Because of these inequalities, there is conflict within and between subjects. In order to find coherence and empowerment, the subject has to negotiate these competing identities and subject positions. Therefore, selves are not immutable or innate—they are reconstructed and reconstituted in relation to changing discursive and material contexts (p. 105).

2.2 Writer Identity

Ivanič (1998) declared a strong connection between writing and a writer’s identity in that “writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally 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” (p. 32). We create our impressions as writers through our language, values, desires and so forth. Entering a new academic discourse community is associated with the development of writer identity because newcomers need to take on the suitable identity to be accepted as members of the community.
The notion of writer identity is complex by its multiple aspects. Ivanič (1998) identified four interrelated aspects of writer identity, namely *autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author* and *possibilities for self-hood*. She labels the first three writer identities under the heading of “aspects of the identity of an actual writer writing a particular text” (p. 23). The first aspect of writer identity *autobiographical self*, is what writers bring into their act of writing and it refers to the writers’ life history—the sense of the writers’ roots that reflects in the text who they are. It is historically constructed and shaped by the past experiences and literacy practices with which they have been familiar. In other words, this self refers to the representation of how writers present their identities in real life including their past life histories, points of view, ways of thinking and ideologies.

The second aspect, *discoursal self* refers to the self-representation or image of a writer that emerges in a specific text. In other words, it is the writer’s voice that is consciously or unconsciously conveyed by the writers in their text. It is “constructed through the discourse characteristics of a text that reflect values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they were written” (p. 25).

The third aspect, *self as author* represents a sense of self-worth or voice of the writer in terms of their position, opinions, and beliefs that enable them to write with authorship and to establish an authorial presence in the text. In academic writing this aspect of writer identity refers to the self that has “something to say” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 184). Ivanič (1998) explained that the importance of this strand of writer identity is also revealed from the fact that writers significantly vary in “how far they claim authorial presence in their writing” (p. 26).

The fourth aspect of writer identity is a more abstract notion of writer identity which is concerned with the “socially available possibilities for self-hood” within sociocultural and
institutional contexts and how they shape and constrain individual acts of writing (Ivanič, 1998, p. 27). Out of these possibilities some are more privileged than others in an institution. Writers’ *discoursal self* and *self as author* can be constructed on the basis of their choice of one type of possibility that is supported by particular sociocultural and institutional contexts where they are writing. Writers may struggle to choose one among many possibilities and ultimately learn to use preferred language over time as they take on a particular discoursal identity. For example, L2 student writers are exposed to many *possibilities for selfhood*, and eventually they work toward becoming legitimate members in a particular discourse community by adopting appropriate and favorable writer identities. From the above discussion, it can be said that Ivanič’s (1998) writer identity theory not only covers writers’ perceptions of their identities but also the various ways they construct their positions by being authoritative or taking a particular discoursal identity according to different writing contexts and express multiple writer identities.

Ivanič (1998) examined how student writers construct identity in their text through their linguistic features using Halliday’s “*Functional Grammar*” which illustrates that “lexico-syntactic forms can be explained in terms of their function in conveying meaning” (p. 39). In her most comprehensive work, *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing* (1998), she looked at the connection between academic writing and discoursal representation of ‘self’ for eight mature native speakers of English who were facing challenges in academic writing while studying at a British university. The challenges they faced included their feelings of alienation, and recognizing and accommodating the impact of their previous “values, beliefs and literacy practices” on their practice of academic writing (p. 5). In conducting a case study discussed in the centre of her book, she first uses material from interviews and less formal conversations and outlines the student writer’s biographical information which is relevant to her
identity as an academic writer. Then to investigate how the writer was positioned by her discourse features, Ivanič analyzed lexical choice, verb tense and aspect, clause and sentence structure, attribution, and punctuation in the student’s essays drawing on Halliday’s “Functional Grammar”. Based on her analysis she explores how the writer’s linguistic or discoursal choices positioned her in different ways such as a member of the academic community, an Applied Social Science student, a person with a sense of humour and as an entertainer and so on and she adopted or resisted these positionings.

I believe Ivanič’s advocacy for the linguistic analysis related to writer positioning has significantly added depth and value to the research on L2 academic writing. Ivanič wonderfully supports her interpretation of linguistic analysis with confirmation of the participants from text-based interviews. I absolutely agree with her when she says, “we would do well to listen to what they have to say about their experiences and about the demands and the dilemmas they face” (p. 115). Ivanič’s (1994, p. 5) also argues that writers’ multiple identities are constructed “not only through what they have said but also through the discourses they have participated in to say it”. Like the L1 students in Ivanič’s study, L2 students may also experience ‘multiple and conflicting identity in writing’ (Ivanič, 1998, p. 6) and may face difficulties to negotiate a suitable academic identity.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter I presented my theoretical framework for the study drawing on Weedon’s (1997) concept of subjectivity and Ivanič’s (1998) concept of writer identity. At first, I discussed how language, discourse and social practices are engaged in the construction of identity, then I presented the characteristics of identity as multiple and socially constructed. Finally, I focused
on how writer identities can be constructed in the community as well as in the text in terms of different aspects of writer identity proposed by Ivanič (1998).
Chapter 3: Literature Review of L2 Writers’ Identities in Research

This study is designed to add to the body of knowledge on writer identity and how it is formed through language. The issues of writer identity explored by Ivanič involve both L1 writers (Ivanič & Simpson, 1992; Ivanič, 1995; Ivanič, 1998) and L2 writers (Ivanič & Camps, 2001). There are also other studies focusing on L2 writers’ identities and their experiences (Abasi, Akbari, & Graves, 2006; Canagarajah, 2003; Casanave, 2002; Fox, 1994; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Jarratt, Losh, & Puente, 2006; Kramsch & Lam, 1999; Lu, 1987; Shen, 1989; Starfield, 2002). At the same time, the number of PhD or MA thesis on the same issue is also increasing (e.g., Burke, 2010, Reid, 2009). In this chapter, I review relevant studies in two groups: one group focusing on L2 writers’ identity based on their self reflections on their L2 writing experiences; and the other group exploring how L2 writers actually construct their identities in their L2 writing.

3.1 Writer Identity Based on L2 Writers’ Self Reflections

L2 writing research focusing on student writers’ writing experiences in English academic community comprises autobiographical accounts as well as researchers’ accounts of their participants’ writing experiences.

3.1.1 Autobiographical Accounts

An early autobiographical study is Shen’s (1989) narrative accounts of his Chinese and English writing experience. Shen explained that he had to redefine both his ideological and logical identities in L1 and L2 writing to learn English academic writing at an American university. Due to his Chinese background favouring an ideology of collectivism, Shen had to struggle to create an English self favouring the ideology of individualism and “be that self” (Shen, 1989, p. 461) to succeed in English composition. He was asked to replace We with a
powerful and assertive I and follow American style of organization. Shen described how he was able to devise strategies to be successful in reconciling both the identities and observed that he returned to his old identity whenever he wrote in Chinese following Chinese composition rules. (Shen, 1989). Commenting on Shen’s experience of L1/L2 writing experience, Li (1996) called it “a process of acculturation” (p. 127). Based on his experience of learning L1 and L2 writing, Shen came to a conclusion that writing was about gaining an appropriate identity:

Looking back, I realize that the process of learning to write in English is in fact a process of creating and defining a new identity and balancing it with the old identity. The process of learning English composition would have been easier if I had realized this earlier and consciously sought to compare the two different identities required by the two writing systems from two different cultures (p. 466).

Fujieda (2010), in his narrative account exploring his history with academic writing in English, reflected on his difficulties in writing as a graduate student in TESOL in the United States. Because of his familiarity with a different rhetoric of writing in Japanese, he faced troubles not only in reconstructing his “newborn identity to pass as an L2 graduate learner” (Fujieda, 2010, p. 164) but also “as a researcher in the disciplinary world” (p. 164). He expressed his bewilderment saying, “I just wondered how I should immerse myself in the disciplinary area and whether I should adopt my embedded cultural beliefs, values and attitudes” (p. 164). However, his readings in TESOL courses as well as the instructors’ continuous feedback helped him to discover the sources of his tension and gain his confidence as an academic writer in English.

3.1.2 Researchers’ Accounts of Participants’ Experiences

Some studies have highlighted the confusion, conflict and anxiety of L2 writers regarding their writer identity in new academic contexts. For example, Cadman (1997) discussed some of the issues faced by international postgraduate students due to their L1 discourse and identities being different from the ones required in their disciplines. Cadman’s study not only examined
the textual difficulties faced by the postgraduate students but also their perception about their discipline-specific writing experience. Cadman found that the cultural and educational difference of these L2 students not only caused identity crisis due to their failure to represent themselves in their text but also brought broader ramifications for their approaches and attitudes towards their work.

Moreover, in her 3-year longitudinal study, Spack (1997a) observed a Japanese student named Yuko, who had a hard time at the beginning of her ESL composition course because of the differences between Japanese and English rhetoric. The study showed a tension between Yuko’s Japanese language self and English language self because of the different writing styles. For example, she did not have to explain all the points in details in Japanese writing but had to do so in English essays. Jun and Long, two Chinese students in Yang’s (2006) study, also recognized the impact of the Chinese rhetoric on their English composition as in Chinese they did not have to put their ideas in a direct way that they had to do in English. Yuko, however, was able to create a new writer identity for her through enormous and effective academic literacy practices in English. Eventually, like Fujieda (2010), her reception of significant input from numerous classroom experiences and the guidance of the instructors paved the way for her to become a mature reader and writer in her L2.

Hirvela and Belcher (2001) conducted case studies of three NNS graduate students with successful professional writer identities in their L1 context to explore their voices or identities related experiences in an L2 context. The authors collected data through interviews and analysis of writing samples. Findings of the study imply that most of the time the voice or strong identity that NNS students come with is not recognized in the dominant discourse community of the West, unless it matches with the dominant voice. For example, one student did not have much
problem in writing because scientific papers written in two languages were almost similar. However, another student, being in Arts and Humanities field, had to struggle to project her voice in L2 academic writing because it was different from her voice in her L1. The authors conclude that writing instructors should not ignore the voice or identity with which the NNS students enter into the English academe.

3.2 The Construction of Writer Identity in L2 Academic Papers

In this section I will review some empirical studies that concentrated on the construction of writer identity of L2 writers through textual analysis. These studies are distinct from above mentioned studies because of their concern about the writer identities constructed in the texts of the L2 writers. Researchers also supplemented the data emerging from the analysis of the textual features with the text-based interview with the research participants.

The study of Ivanič and Camp (2001) explored how L2 academic writers represent themselves as writers by ‘lexical, syntactic, organizational and even the material aspects of writing’ (p. 3). They drew on Halliday’s macrofunctions of language and identified ideational, interpersonal and textual positioning taken by L2 writers, to understand how each student constructed various types of voice in their papers. Ideational positioning refers to writers having certain values, beliefs and interests; interpersonal positioning refers to writers’ sense of their authority and certainty and their relationship with their readers; and textual positioning refers to writers’ views on the construction of their texts or their perspectives on reality. The authors of this qualitative study analyzed writing samples of six Mexican graduate students studying in British universities. The participants were also interviewed to comment on different aspects of their writing. Findings indicate that the students ideationally position themselves by using particular lexis to sound like a member of the academic community; voices constructed by their
roles as researchers, receiver of knowledge or writers of assignments point out different interpersonal positioning; and writers project different types of voice such as “I write-like-I-speak, committed-to-plain-English” voice or a “reader-considerate” voice depending on the degrees of authoritativeness and a certain relationship with readers (p. 28-29). Although the structure of this research is different from the 1998 study of Ivanič, the findings convey the same theme: “Writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer” (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 3).

Based on social constructionism and discourse theory, Burke (2010) explored how Korean students in a U. S. university construct their writer identities depending on their life histories, use of metadiscourse and L1 (Korean) discourse. In this qualitative case study she collected data from interviews, students’ academic papers, process logs, and maps of social influences. Burke interviewed the students to reveal their views of writing and writer. Drawing on Hyland’s model of metadiscourse (textual and interpersonal), Burke also conducted metadiscourse analysis to determine how they position themselves in relation to the readers in text, and analyzed textual identity to show what discourse, rhetorical structure and conventions they prefer to use. Findings suggest that their multiple identities are changed, conflicted and developed by different factors such as their previous L1 writing, current L2 writing practice, privileged discourse pattern, their attitudes and so on. For example, some participants tried to adopt privileged discourse pattern by choosing vocabularies and phrases used by their professors though some participants showed resistance and continued to write in their own way. Furthermore, from textual analysis it was evident that their use of metadiscourse dimensions such as textual and interpersonal (engagement and evaluative markers) was highly determined by their knowledge of academic writing, level of
study, department preferred discourses. For example, some students restrained from using reader or writer oriented marker *I* or *We* because of the instruction given by their professors.

Ivanič (1998) has strongly influenced the latter studies on writer identity. Following Ivanič’s four aspects of writer identity, Kim, Baba, and Cumming’s (2006) study explored how three East Asian L2 students (two Korean and one Japanese student) expressed their *autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author* and *possibilities for selfhood* in their writing. The authors analyzed different linguistic features such as lexical, syntactic and rhetorical choices in the writing samples of the participants from their pre university as well as their academic courses in the university in Canada. They also interviewed the participants to understand how their long-term goals, motivations and life histories contributed to their construction of writer identities. The findings suggest that personal beliefs and values have an effect on the students’ decision to express themselves in their writings. For example, one participant believed that personal interest should not be presented in academic writing. For another student, writing in English was not a way to express selves but a way to achieve good grades. Moreover, the degree programs control the students’ desire to express their opinions in their writings. For instance, though one of the participants could express her opinions using personal pronouns in her essays in ESL class, her major in Economics did not allow her to do the same.

Reid (2009) also conducted a qualitative case study using Halliday’s idea and four aspects of writer identity (Ivanič, 1998) to understand the experience, interest, and values ESL writers brought with them. Exploring how an *autobiographical self* influenced *discourse self, self as author* and *possibilities for selfhood* in their academic writing, Reid collected and analyzed data from semi-structured interviews with four international undergraduate students studying in a
university in New Zealand and their writing samples. The researcher examined the discourse features of student writing to understand how those features position the writers and their voices in actual texts. For example, one student showed her lack of confidence in her L2 by heavily relying on directly quoted material. The student could not take the risk of paraphrasing or summarizing the source texts when she was not sure about the meaning. The participants were reported to use different ways to represent themselves as authors of their own texts. For instance, in order to construct a strong authorial voice, a student used the expressions like *I believe, what I have found, I argue, I think* in her Anthropology assignment to express her subjectivity as a writer. The student also wrote her thesis statement in bold type to make it look obvious. The researcher concluded that both student writers and their instructors need to be more conscious about how identity is connected to the ways students write.

Based on a sociocultural view on academic literacy and the perspective of writer and identity, Abasi, Akbari, & Graves (2006) investigated what textual identities ESL student writers construct through their textual borrowing or discourse appropriation. Drawing on Ivanič’s (1998) notions of *autobiographical self* and *self as author*, the researchers tried to explore textual identities constructed by the participants in their writing. They carried out naturalistic multiple case studies of five ESL graduate students at the writing centre of a major Canadian university. The data collected included drafts and final papers written by the participants along with instructors’ written comments, semi-structured interviews and text-based interviews with the participants. The findings indicate that the students having rich academic literacy experience were more conscious about the readers’ expectations. These students embodied themselves in particular ways through rhetorical use of other’s concepts and words. For example, they cited many texts to create an identity of an author who was intertextually knowledgeable about the
topic they wrote about. Moreover, they cited from certain sources that they believed would help them align with their professors’ research interests and thus create for themselves a privileged position in the academia. In contrast, participating students with no academic experience in Canada failed to claim authorship in their papers due to their lack of knowledge of the conventions of referencing and citation. This insightful study helps us understand the complex issues of textual borrowing, an act that positions a writer in a particular way in the academia.

In another thought-provoking study, Starfield (2002) interviewed and analyzed two essays, one by an L1 and the other by an L2 student, written for a Sociology course in a South African university using systemic grammar. Findings of the study demonstrate that the L1 student succeeded because of his potential to construct a powerful authoritative textual and discoursal identity both in and outside the text. However, the L2 student failed due to the fact that he was incapable to construct an authoritative self as author. Unable to manage without borrowing words, the L2 student was viewed as a “plagiarizer”. Starfield argued that autobiographical self based on “prior life histories, socially structured opportunities, and the more or less privileged discourses they [the student writers] had access to” (Starfield, 2002, p. 138) played an important role in their construction of authoritative identity in their writing.

Hyland (2002) also conducted a study based on textual analysis to explore the concept of identity in L2 writing by analyzing the use of first person pronouns (such as I, me, my, we, us, and our) in a corpus of 64 project reports (PR) written by L2 undergraduates in a Hong Kong university. The results were compared with a large corpus of published research articles “to explore areas of non-native like behavior” (p. 1096). Hyland also interviewed L1 English supervisors and organized small focus group interviews of the students. These student writers were interviewed to elicit their “understandings of the meanings and effectiveness of first person
use, and to uncover their own discoursal practices” (p. 1097). Findings indicate that the L1 literacy practices of ESL students may hinder them from acquiring an authoritative writer identity. For example, these ESL students were reluctant to use I, connotative of authority and subjectivity, in order to avoid making personal claims or arguments. Hyland opines that Asian culture is one of the factors responsible for their reluctance as their culture prefers collective identity. According to Fox (1994), an Asian culture values “strong traditions of communicating indirectly and holistically, learning by absorption, valuing the wisdom of the past, and downplaying the individual in favor of the group” (p. xiii). Therefore, many ESL students lacked an individual voice or authoritative writer identity despite the fact that this is the expectation of the English academic discourse. They may not be aware that “academic writing is not passive expression of a world-view, it involves a deployment of rhetorical strategies that express a theory of experience in conventionally coherent ways” (Hyland, 2004, p.116).

Also focusing on the use of first person pronouns, Tang and John (1999) conducted another insightful study to understand the different kinds of writer identity constructed in the academic essays written by 27 first-year undergraduate students at the National University of Singapore. Drawing on Ivanic’s (1998) continuum of ‘I’ associated with different degrees of authorial identity, they set up a typology of six different identities behind the first person pronouns in academic writing by analyzing students’ essays and a sample of published academic articles and books in Linguistics. Six types of identities were identified including ‘I as the representative, ‘I’ as the guide through the essay, ‘I’ as the architect of the essay, ‘I’ as the recounter of the research process, ‘I’ as the opinion holder, and ‘I’ as the originator. The study indicates that the role of ‘I’ as representative is the least powerful, as it is mostly replaced with ‘we’ ensuring their membership in a particular linguistic discourse community. It is also
noticeable that very few students use ‘I’ to play the role of an opinion holder and originator which may be due to the students’ insecure feelings to align themselves with the scholars. The researchers conclude that students need to be aware of their right to have authority in their writing and their writer identity is constructed by their language use.

3.3 Bangladesh L2 Writers’ Experience in English Academy

There is no single research focusing on how Bangladeshi L2 graduate students construct their academic writer identity in an English academic community. However, there are a few studies (Dong, 2010; Wilson, Collins, Couchman, & Li, 2011) in which some Bangladeshi L2 students/learners participated and expressed the challenges they faced in the new academic community. From the findings of these studies, we can very well comprehend the identity crisis faced by this group of students. I will review two studies (Wilson, Collins, Couchman; & Li, 2011 & Dong, 2010) to make a connection between some of the themes discussed above and the writing experiences of Bangladeshi students studying in Western universities.

In a naturalistic case study by Wilson et al. (2011), a Bangladeshi Master of Professional Accountancy student, Mahni, took part in a one-to-one literacy session with her academic literacy advisor to seek his advice on how to tackle an academic essay topic. Based on the analysis of conference, it was clear that Mahni initially had no idea of how to write an academic paper with critical evaluation. She was very concerned and felt the necessity to develop “structuring her work, paragraphing and other ‘technical’ literacy skills” (p.151). She also needed “encouragement to appropriate the language of her discipline and to develop a confident academic voice in her target discourse community” (p. 151). However, she developed confidence through a one-to-one interaction with her advisor. The study indicates that this Bangladeshi
student had difficulty in creating a powerful voice in academic writing because of her unfamiliarity with the academic writing skills accepted in her disciplinary discourse.

In another study, Dong (2010), investigated the challenges of ESL writers in writing argumentative essays and the roots of these challenges. Dong interviewed a Bangladeshi ESL student, one of the participants, who could not pass the Writing Assessment Test (WAT) given by The City University of New York. The Bangladeshi student found it difficult to take a position expected in academic writing. The student stated that in his home culture he was taught to “argue for both sides without explicitly telling which side he favors” (p. 98). Later the student was able to stick to one side of the argument but still found it difficult to clarify his position in writing. Given his unfamiliarity with the American writing style expecting the writer to make every point clear, this Bangladeshi student did not pass the writing test. The study highlights the importance of “contrastive rhetoric research on organizational patterns such as the variation of introductions and the reader’s expectations” (p. 109). It suggests that non-native English speaking students come with various ways of writing styles, so the impact of their educational backgrounds cannot be ignored.

Although none of the above two studies discuss the challenges of the participants in terms of writer identity construction, they imply further research on the writing experiences of the Bangladeshi students in English academic community in light of an identity theory. Like Shen (1989) and Yuko in Spack (1997a), these Bangladeshi participants had difficulties in academic writing due to a different cultural, educational and linguistic background. However, based on the literature on personal narratives as well as researchers’ accounts of participants’ writing experiences, it is clear that the L2 writers obviously become aware of the dominant discourse that works better for their target audience. They will then adjust their strategies or get help from
others. I believe that research should be done to focus on Bangladeshi L2 graduate students to shed light on their construction of writer identity and their process of becoming members of the English academic discourse community through their act of writing.

Several key themes have emerged from the above review of literature to inform my research interest. First, academic writing in L2 is influenced by the students’ cultural, educational and linguistic background in their L1 as well as their social and writer identities. Second, academic writing in English is challenging and requires L2 graduate students to take on new identities for writing in various contexts. Third, discoursal features such as discourse appropriation and citation use position the writers in different ways, either positive or negative. Finally, it is important to involve Bangladeshi L2 students as no study has focused on how Bangladeshi students construct and express their writer identities to become legitimate members of English academic community. It is important to fill in the research gap because Bangladeshi graduate students, having spent almost sixteen years in learning English (including English medium education in their undergrad), may still find themselves completely alien in the English academic community when writing L2 academic papers. Keeping that in mind, I designed my research to answer the following research question:

How do the participating Bangladeshi L2 graduate students construct and express their writer identity in terms of (1) autobiographical self, (2) discoursal self, (3) self as author, and (4) possibilities for self-hood as proposed by Ivanič (1998) in their L2 academic writing practices in English academic community?
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, I outline the methodology of this study. First, I present the research design and rationale for this study. I then describe the research context including the research setting, the participants, and the researcher (with my background and bias), followed by the methods of data collection. Then I describe data analysis for the research question. Finally, I provide a brief discussion of how I ensured validity and reliability that strengthen the qualitative case study.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Qualitative Case Study

The objective of my study is to understand how Bangladeshi L2 graduate students construct and express different types of writer identities in terms of autobiographical self, discoursal self, authorial self and possibilities for self-hood in their L2 academic writing practices. With a view to fulfilling this objective, my approach is qualitative as qualitative research has the following characteristics: (1) It is conducted in a natural setting where the researcher collects data; (2) There is a focus on participants’ views about their world and experiences; (3) Data collection and data analysis aim to convey a rich description of the process rather than product (Bryman, Bell & Teevan, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002). According to Denzin and Lincon (1994),

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual
texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual’s lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hopping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand (p. 2).

There are some rationales for using qualitative approach for the present study. First, my goal is to understand the social, cultural and political contexts where the act of writing takes place, and how the participants make sense of the contexts. Importantly, qualitative research seeks the understanding of the “participants’ perspective” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30), allowing the researcher to be an interpreter and presenter of those perspectives. Second, a very significant phenomenon like writer identity in L2 writing of student writers can well be explored with consideration of all contexts and influences using qualitative research as it seeks “understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30). Third, I intend to study the student writers’ expression of writer identity in a natural setting. Finally, a qualitative approach is suitable for my study as it explores the complex nature of an issue encompassing “reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47).

I particularly follow the case study approach to investigate how the individual student writers construct their writer identities as “case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reason in handling multiple data sources” (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). A case study, according to Casanave (2002), can create opportunities to build a rapport between the researcher and the participants, which seems essential for discussing identity issues. For this reason, many previous studies exploring student writers’ experiences have employed qualitative case study approach (Abasi, et al. 2006; Burke, 2010; Ivanič, 1998; Kim, Baba, & Cumming, 2006; Reid, 2009; Spack, 1997a).
4.3 The Context of the Study

4.3.1 Research Setting

The present study took place in a Canadian university. I recruited participants through the Bangladeshi Student Association (BSA) of which I was an active member. Any Bangladeshi student studying in Canadian universities can be a member, a volunteer, or an associate of this student association. BSA organizes meetings, celebrates Bangla New Year, the Bangladeshi Independence Day, International Mother Language day, and so on. The association also provides information and helps new students and their families finding housing, making arrangements for rides, and adjusting to Canadian life.

4.3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were five Bangladeshi L2 graduate students whom I recruited through BSA. They were born in Bangladesh, grew up and completed their Bachelor’s degree in Bangladesh, and have been living in Canada for a year or more. They came to Canada with student visa for the purpose of studying for a graduate degree. Their first language is Bangla (Bengali) but they can all speak and write in English comfortably in academic and social settings. The five participants were among a small number of students who expressed interest in participating in my research. I sent the informed consent form (Appendix A) to the participants explaining my research after my proposal had been accepted by the Research Ethics Board. Not all the students who showed initial interest participated in the end probably for pragmatic considerations of time and availability. Table 1 summarizes the profiles of the five Bangladeshi participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants’ identity.
Table 1: Participants for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender/Age</th>
<th>Pursuing Degree</th>
<th>Length of stay in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surjo</td>
<td>M/26</td>
<td>MSc in the Faculty of Applied Science</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakib</td>
<td>M/23</td>
<td>MSc in the Faculty of Applied Science</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayed</td>
<td>M/34</td>
<td>PhD in the Faculty of Applied Science</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pritha</td>
<td>F/27</td>
<td>MSc in the Faculty of Medicine</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>F/28</td>
<td>MA in Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the participants of this study were from Bangla-medium schools and all of them opted for 3 year general degree in Science. However they did their BSc (Hons) in English-medium universities. In their secondary and higher secondary level they mainly learned English grammar and did such practices as translation, reading comprehension and learned to write different genres such as letters, application and essays in English by memorizing sample letters, application, paragraphs and essays. They were all taught English as a subject from grade 1 in a grammar-translation oriented class and in a teacher-centred environment “that discourages individual thought and creativity” (Hasan, 1995, p.29).

4.3.3 My Role as the Researcher

As a Bangladeshi student and researcher, I found it advantageous for me to conduct the study with Bangladeshi students. First, since I share the same linguistic, ethnic, cultural and educational background, there was a higher possibility to develop a good rapport with my research participants. Second, being a Bangladeshi graduate student in TESL at a Canadian university with experiences in teaching writing to ESL students at university level in Bangladesh, I understand participants’ L2 writing practices. Finally, since we share the same L1, the participants could switch between Bangla and English to express their ideas.
However, I am cautious about my biases that might have an effect on the study. For example, because of sharing the same cultural and educational background, I have a preconception that Bangladeshi student writers face challenges in academic writing in Canada due to their little or having no knowledge of the standard of academic writing in English in Canada. I tried to follow the desired skills of case study researchers suggested by Yin (2009) including the ability to ask good questions, be good listeners, and not be trapped by their own ideologies or preconceptions to reduce the effect of my potential biases. Nevertheless, I believe that researcher’s subjectivity or “their tacit knowledge, their knowledge about their field and their project” (Angélil-Carter, 1997, p. 271) can also be a positive feature of the research. After all, a good interpretive study relies on the researcher’s retention of transparency and reflexivity (Atkinson, 2005).

4.3.4 Ethical Issues

On the basis of ethical concern, I assure privacy and confidentiality of my participants by using pseudonyms as the prime safeguard. I confirmed that my informants fully understood the purpose of my study and clarified any confusion they had. For example, two of my participants were confused about the term ESL students. They thought it meant those students taking ESL courses due to their limited proficiency in English. I not only clarified the term to them but also replaced the word ESL with L2. Moreover, I ensured that they were comfortable in participating in the study and that I would keep their written materials and recorded interviews confidential. Professional etiquette was carefully followed so that no participants would face harm or embarrassment as a result of their participation in my study (Christians, 2008).
4.4 Data Collection

Multiple data were collected for the study, including semi-structured interviews, participants’ writing samples, and their email correspondences with me. I interviewed my participants in August and September 2013. Initially I intended to interview them in two sessions (1 hour each) but my participants preferred to have just one session (90-110 minutes). However, I could not finish the interview with two of them as they were busy, so I arranged a second interview for them. Interviewing is a highly effective technique to explore the beliefs, attitudes, previous and current experiences, and historical information, and with the help of interviewing the researchers can control “the line of questioning” (Burke, 2010, p. 104). In the first half of the interview I attempted to gather background information about the student writers’ experiences and their perceptions of themselves as L1 or L2 academic writers. I therefore concentrated on the “autobiographic aspect of writer identity” that exposes their life history connected to their writing experiences (Ivanič, 1998) as well as the possibilities they constructed for their self-hoods in the English academic community. Semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix B) were used in which “responses are guided by the interviewer’s questions” (Roulston, 2010, p.14). I communicated with them via email after the interview to clarify some information they provided during the interview.

In the second half of the interview, I conducted text-based interviews to understand how they expressed their autobiographical selves, discursal selves, authorial selves and possibilities for self-hoods (Ivanič, 1998) through their writing an actual text by asking the participants to comment on different aspects of their writing. Unlike the previous researchers (Burke, 2010; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Reid, 2009) who selected extracts of the participants’ texts and did linguistic analysis of those extracts and asked them to comment, I gave my participants the
freedom of choosing extracts or features of their own texts to comment on. I did some linguistic analysis of their papers on the basis of my knowledge gained from previous research in case they failed to answer any question about their textual features. For instance, they had no idea how a writer could show their academic voice in their writing. Therefore, I supported them by giving examples of different ways of showing academic voice such as the use of personal pronouns, attributing to other authors and so on. However, I restrained myself as much as possible from influencing them with my analysis. I mostly wanted them to identify extracts or features and comment on them. Given the fact that most of the participants were from science background, I had to familiarize myself a little about the writing conventions in the field of science. I did it with an intention of supporting my participants in the text-based interview because sometimes I had to give them examples of what I meant by textual or linguistic features. This text-based interview allowed me to explore how the discoursal features of their texts convey various impressions of their selves as L2 writers. Table 2 shows the type of writing samples participants brought:

**Table 2: Types of Participants’ Writing Samples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Type of Writing</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surjo</td>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakib</td>
<td>Term Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Commentary or Response paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pritha</td>
<td>Term Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayed</td>
<td>Term Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the interviews were recorded with permission. Since some of my participants used Bangla in the interviews, I first transcribed the data in Bangla and then translated them into English. Even with two participants who chose to speak in English, I tried to ask the interview questions in both Bangla and English as I noticed they sometimes misunderstood the questions. In my data representation which appears in Chapter 5, I use the following transcription symbols:

- *Italics* translated extracts of interview
- (….) student’s words omitted if not necessary to that part of the interview
- (_ Underline_) extracts from students’ texts

I did not correct any grammatical mistakes or change any word unless the meaning was hampered by the mistake or by the original word. I also tried to ignore false start and repetitions unless I found them meaningful.

4.5 Data Analysis

The present project was designed not only to explore the “text related experiences” (Casanave, 2005, p. 21) of the participants as revealed by what they said about becoming L2 academic writers, but also to pay attention to the actual texts produced by them. Participants’ writing samples written for their graduate courses provided a good platform for generating a discussion of their representation of themselves in their L2 academic writing. I present my analysis in respect to Ivanič’s (1998) analytic framework of the four aspects of writer identity as (1) autobiographical self, (2) discoursal self, (3) self as author, and (4) possibilities for selfhood while recognizing these aspects “tend to overlap and interact, providing indications, rather than absolute definitions, of selfhood as it appears in a sample of discourses” (Kim et al., 2006, p. 127). To analyze the interview data, I used thematic analysis which “examines what is said rather than how it is said” (Bryman et al., 2012, p. 267) to explore the aspects of autobiographical
identity expressed by them and what possibilities they created for themselves in the English academic community. I coded the students’ text-based interview data identifying the four aspects of writer identities in the textual features or extracts of their writing samples selected and commented on by the participants. While coding the text-based interview data, I also relied on the examples of previous research that used the same framework (Abasi et al, 2006; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič and Camp, 2001; Kim, et al., 2006; Reid, 2009; Starfield, 2002). Moreover, I checked inter rater reliability with the help of another graduate student in Language and Literacy Education while coding the text-based interview data to find out how they expressed their different identities in their texts. I gave him the text in which Ivanič’s (1998) aspects of writer identities were discussed and also explained him my understanding of the four aspects of writer identity. As part of our training, we coded one text-based interview data together. Then we did the second one separately and compared our answers. We had 86% agreement on our coding and we both identified 22 instances that correlate with four categories of writer identity. Out of 22 we had 3 instances of different answers and while discussing about those differences, he accepted two answers of mine and I accepted his interpretation for the remaining one. Based on my understanding about the four aspects expressed in the students’ texts from the discussion with my inter rater, I coded the rest of the text-based interview data. Table 3 shows the themes and sub-themes emerged from the interview and text-based interview data:
Table 3: Themes and Sub-themes

| Autobiographical Self | • Previous literacy practices  
|                       | • Autobiographical self in L2 Writing by Science students  
|                       | • Autobiographical self in L2 Writing by the non-Science student  
| Discoursal Self       | • Citation and referencing  
|                       | • Language and vocabulary  
|                       | • Organization, use of equations and graphics  
| Self as Author        | • Science major students’ expression of self as author in L2 papers (n=4)  
|                       | • The non-science major student’s expression of self as author in L2 papers (n=1)  
| Possibilities for Self-hood | • Multiple writer identities shifted, conflicted, negotiated and developed  
|                           | • Multiple possibilities as writers in L2 academic writing  

4.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure credibility of my study I adopted some strategies highlighted by Merriam (2002) for qualitative researchers. First, I adopted multiple data collection method of triangulation by including interview as well as document analysis as data sources. Second, I involved a peer as inter rater to code some of the text-based interview data to make the findings more reasonable. Finally, I was reflexive clarifying my position that “allows the reader to better
understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 26).
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, the findings from the study will be presented. In order to report the findings clearly and comprehensively, I have divided the chapter into four sections to answer my research question: How do the participating Bangladeshi L2 graduate students construct and express their writer identities in terms of (1) autobiographical self, (2) discoursal self, (3) self as author and (4) possibilities for self-hood as proposed by Ivanič (1998) in their L2 academic writing practices in the English academic community? I present the findings from both the interview on their L2 writing experience and the interview based on their papers written for different courses. The findings are interpreted and discussed in reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 and the theoretical assumption that writer identities are multiple and socially constructed.

5.2 Autobiographical self

In this section, I present how the students constructed their writer identities in terms of autobiographical self drawing on their previous literacy practices, as well as their identification of autobiographical self in their L2 writing in an English academic community.

5.2.1 Autobiographical self based on Previous Writing Practices

L2 academic writer identities are constructed based on their previous writing practices. As Ivanič (1998, p. 183) argued, “People bring with them from their past experience a set of familiar practices, including literacy practices, on which they will draw during a new act of writing.” While writing in L2 in a Canadian university, the participating Bangladeshi student writers tended to look back at what they had done before and applied their previously learned writing skills and beliefs about writing to their current L2 writing especially academic writing.
Relying on previous beliefs about writing and writing practices had either a positive or negative effect on the L2 graduate student writers’ identities depending on how well their previous writing skills were accepted and if their previous beliefs about writing benefitted them in the new academic community.

L2 writers who find their previous writing skills advantageous can construct a positive writer identity. For instance, Sakib and Pritha said that it was easy for them to use third person pronouns and the passive voice they learnt in scientific writing at home. Like Fernando, in Hirvela and Belcher’ (2001) study, who had less difficulty in establishing a strong voice because of the similarities of scientific writing between his L1 and L2. Sakib felt that his learning of summary writing in L1 in grade 8 helped him write his conclusion by summarizing the whole report in four or five lines. However, Shurjo, Bobby and Zayed did not comment on any such skills that benefitted them in the present English academic community. The Bangladeshi students whose writing skills were well accepted in the new academy could form a positive writer identity as they did not to face any challenges because of those skills.

However, relying on some of their previous writing practices or writing styles and previous understanding to write L2 academic papers in the new academic community sometimes made academic writing challenging for these Bangladeshi graduate students. First, some participants were familiar with different practices in terms of using other sources in their writing but they had to change those practices as they faced negative experiences in their Canadian university. For example, Sakib’s marks were decreased at the beginning of his first semester because he did not cite in the text even though he gave a reference list at the end. He said, “When I was an undergrad student, I randomly used references to the sources I used but did not cite in the text. I did not have the practice of doing it. I did not know we have to do it here”. Zayed also
had hard time initially and he said, “I thought that plagiarism means if I am just copying everything from one [paper]. But if I am just copying few lines and throwing my idea in between, I thought that that’s my own writing”. Both Sakib and Zayed came to know that they were not even allowed to directly quote from source text even with citation in their departments in Canada. Bobby’s instructors used to call her at the beginning of her Master’s program and asked her to be careful about her citation practice as she failed to cite correctly. She said, “I did not know much about it. I just knew that if I quote something, I have to cite. Nobody has ever told me that I have to cite any idea that I use from other sources”. Shurjo also said that he could collect materials from the Internet and put them in his assignments without citing the sources, but in Canada he found that the professors did not allow this. They realized soon that their previous ideas and practice of citation were not accepted in the new academic community in Canada. Thus these students constructed a depressing writer identity while relying on their previous practice of citing sources.

In addition, they understood that their previous supervisors at home were not very serious about the citation issue because they were writing for course purposes, but the expectations of their new audience were different. For instance, when Pritha was writing her undergraduate thesis in her Bangladeshi university, she paraphrased source information only by replacing some words of the source texts with synonyms. She was happy as long as it looked different from the original text because she knew her supervisor was not very strict about that. However, after coming to Canada, she paid much attention to citation-related matters and went to her lab colleagues to discuss if she paraphrased correctly from the source texts. She said, “It was terrible the way I cited from the source text. Now I am concerned about that … I never revised it even though the information was not clear.” While talking about her undergraduate thesis, Bobby
said, “I am pretty sure those [the sources] were not properly cited because our teachers were not much concerned about that. They were more concerned about my design. They were happy as long as they saw I have a reference list.” Similarly, Sakib also realized the difference in Canadian professors’ requirements for citation. He said that his Canadian professors wanted them to follow the standard of citation practice while writing any project reports or course assignments to prepare them to write for publications. He said, “These rules are strictly followed because graduate education in Canada is based on publications but publication was not very important in Bangladesh”. Thus these L2 graduate students realized that the attitude of their undergraduate instructors towards citation practice was totally different from their Canadian graduate professors who were highly serious about the students’ practice of citation and referencing.

Paraphrasing and summarizing are intimidating tasks for L1 writers (Reid, 2009), which create more pressure on the L2 writers who need to avoid the “capital crime” of plagiarism (Starfield, 2002, p. 137). However, Pennycook (1996) has warned us not to view plagiarism as a simple black-and-white issue without understanding the complex relationships between text, memory and learning. Ouellette (2008) has argued to view the issue of plagiarism from a developmental perspective and Currie (1998) emphasized the awareness of L2 educators about different cultural attitudes toward textual ownership and textual borrowing. The negative experiences of the participants regarding their use of sources caused intimidation in them to become plagiarizer and caused them to rethink about their ways of using sources in their writing. And eventually these L2 writers learned to adjust their strategies through their enormous practice of citing sources.
Second, some of the participating students had problems in organizing a paragraph with a topic sentence followed by supporting details or in making a strong claim with appropriate supporting ideas in their writing as they did not have to do that in both their previous L1 and L2 writing in Bangladesh. This is a common feature that many Asian students rely on and eventually stumble in the English academic community (Burke, 2010; Fujieda, 2010, Reid 2009; Spack, 1997a). While writing in Canada, Shurjo found it difficult to follow up his topic sentences with supporting details or to organize a paragraph coherently. Bobby always thought that every paper was like a response paper where she could write the way she liked. She was very subjective in her writing from her elementary to undergraduate studies in both L1 and L2. Therefore, while writing in her Canadian university, she just wrote what she thought but never provided logical evidence or supporting details until her Canadian supervisor asked her to do so. She said, “Now I understand that academic writing is not always about what I think. It’s also about why I think so. So that’s the part I miss always.” Her unawareness of how to write an academic paper in English affected her academic writer identity and made her think that she was not a good academic writer in English. Consequently, these students’ reliance on their previous writing style in terms of the logical aspects made them feel less confident as L2 academic writers.

Third, their previous understanding of writing in English shaped by their previous instructors’ attitudes also influenced their writing as well as their writer identities. In their undergraduate studies in Bangladesh, they were mainly marked for the content of their assignments, lab reports or their thesis rather than for their writing styles or writing skills; therefore, they believed that they should be more concerned about the content of their papers. Bobby said that there was no mark for her writing style of her undergraduate thesis, so she mainly focused on the content. When she started writing in Canada with the same understanding,
she focused more on gathering information but later realized that she should have given equal importance to her writing style as well because her course instructors were highly concerned about her writing styles as well as skills. Sakib also realized after coming to Canada that he had to be careful about grammar and academic writing style because the Canadian professors value those students with high proficiency in academic writing skills. Pritha said that the expectation of her previous instructors and her current instructors were different. She said, “Here my supervisor asks me to fix some minor mistakes such as grammatical mistakes or sentence organization…. In Bangladesh their [instructors] main concern was to check whether the information was correct or not. My grammar was not a primary concern there… Therefore, we did not focus much on grammar rather we just tried to know information”. Drawing on their previous belief of writing an L2 academic paper, these students could not construct a strong writer identity in the English academic community, but their new writing experience changed their belief of writing which was also shaped by what was accepted by their professors in the new community.

The participating L2 student writers tend to rely on their previous writing experiences and believed that their previous writing skills, styles, and understandings could be transferred into new L2 academic writing practices and writer identities. This reliance or belief has helped them construct the same autobiographical identity that they had in Bangladesh when their previous writing practices or styles are accepted and their approach to writing benefit them in the new environment. Otherwise it might lead to challenges in their academic writing practices that sometimes negatively influence their writer identities (Cadman, 1997).

5.2.2 Autobiographical self in L2 Writing by Science vs. Non-science Students

A writer’s expression of some aspects of autobiographical self such as the writer’s interests, ideas and opinions depends “on the type of writing and on the context in which it is
being done” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 184). Ivanič (1998) noted that “a writer may write something that they are interested or they may write because it is in their interest to write a particular piece of paper” (p. 184). Some academic fields of studies encourage students to express their identities, especially their autobiographical selves whereas others might discourage self-expressions.

The participating graduate students with science major backgrounds demonstrated their commitment to the academic convention of writing a technical or scientific paper by avoiding expressing their identities, particularly the aspects of autobiographical self in their L2 writing. Shurjo, Sakib, Pritha and Zayed’s motivation for writing their papers came from their academic goal of fulfilling their course requirements and their professors’ interests rather than from their desire for self-expression. The experiences of the present participants resemble that of Rihoko in Kim et al. (2006) who restrained herself from expressing herself because she was not sure if, as a student writer, she was allowed to make strong claims and there was also no space for her to express her personal identity in her science papers. Similarly, Zayed explained the reason for not including his opinion in his term paper in the following way,

My thought or my idea don’t have any value as long as I don’t have any data supporting that one, so as a person my belief or my value don’t have anything to do with scientific article. That’s why we always say that data show data support that we never say my experience shows that.

However, they had different attitude towards expressing their identities in their writing. For instance, Shujo did not want his reader to know his social or ethnical identity but Zayed said that he had the desire to make his audience aware of his Bangladeshi identity but he could not do that as he was not given the opportunity to do that in his academic writing.

Though the participants with science background did not include their autobiographical selves in their writing but reported different purposes for writing their sample papers and
expressed different writer identities which are not directly included in their writing. For instance, Sakib intended to create an impression of a hard-working graduate student. He said,

My target was to let the reader know that I did a lot of things in my projects. …. I wrote about a novel work that I did in my project though my professor did not emphasize on writing something novel. ….I have generated a lot of data to show that I worked a lot and have used optimization which is another study to show how the data vary and which one is the best for this study to create the most positive impression.

Differing from Sakib, Pritha wanted to create the impression of a scientist who was interested in innovation and said,

I wanted to represent my lab and also the technique that I am comfortable to work with in my paper. I got the idea from a literature. But what they did in the paper was different from what I discussed. For example, they experimented with one part of the body but my idea was to experiment with another part of the body using the same technique which is not known yet, so I tried to find something totally novel.

Zayed, on the other hand, seemed to have created an impression of a serious as well as capable L2 student writer to his reader. While commenting on the purpose of writing his term paper, Zayed said that apart from getting good marks, he wanted to show that he “thoroughly studied the subject and [he] picked the right points to discuss”. Thus it is evident that these science major students unconsciously or consciously wanted to create different identities even though they did not include their autobiographical aspects in their L2 academic writing.

In contrast to the science major students, Bobby, a non-science major student, explicitly expressed her autobiographical self such as her ideas, opinion and interests in her 3-page commentary on a weekly reading. There were several readings for her to write weekly commentaries but she chose to write commentary on that reading because she thought she would be able to connect the theory with her Bangladeshi context. She had a deep consciousness of being a Bangladeshi or a Bengali Muslim, so whenever possible, she drew on her examples from Bangladeshi contexts. The following example is taken from her commentary:
Recently, one of the Islamic TV channel in Bangladesh has made it mandatory for their female news readers to wear hijab while reading news on screen. The court soon asked the TV channel to withdraw that practice. There were many Muslim Bangladeshi girls living in North-America and Europe who drew a parallel between the court order and the French government. But the reaction of girls residing in Bangladesh was quite different.

She said that she brought her own experience while talking about her subjectivity in her writing and also identified the following extract of her writing,

The hijab or dress of the Muslim women is a great example in this respect. A fraction of the Bengali Muslim women in the British-India and Pakistan period, used to wear black burkha covering the whole body. Now the young generation of Muslim women abroad wears a head-scarf that resembles the culture of Iranian’s. They don’t wear burkha, as that shows a different class status of poor people.

Commenting on the above text, Bobby said,

It’s not I am reading a book or for example, when I am comparing the immigrant Muslims’ experience here, I am just giving my experience and things that I have seen around. It’s not that I have read a paper on Burkha or hijab and then I am writing it.

Bobby also expressed her intent to shape her identity, particularly her autobiographical self, in her writing through a firm commitment to her professors who wanted to know about her ideas or opinions in her term papers as well as the weekly response papers. To this end, she used first person “I” to state her opinion that I will discuss in the Self as Author section. Moreover, Bobby’s self-expression can also be attributed to her personality as well. Bobby believed that all her identities such as her ‘coloured identity’ or her being a Bengali Muslim made her writing unique because as she said, “your opinion is created by all those identities that you have”. She further said that it was very important for a reader to know the writer’s background to understand better from what context the writer had written something. These features of Bobby’s writing as well as the interview data clearly show that she was highly self-expressive not only because it was required by her field of study but also because of her personal belief about writing in the new English academic community.
However, it was Bobby’s shift from science to non-science major that gave her the scope of expressing her autobiographical aspects in her writing. When Bobby was a science student in Bangladesh, she did not have to give her opinion in her writing but as a non-science student in Canada she understood the academic value of her self-expression. The case of Bobby could be compared with that of a participant (Jina) in Kim et al. (2006) whose free expression of her autobiographical self in her ESL course essays disappeared when she wrote for her Economics major. Jina stopped expressing her identity due to her “academic goal of adhering to the academic conventions required in her major” (Kim et al., 2006, p. 136). Similarly, Bobby transferred herself to a writer expressing her identity or aspects of her autobiographical self because it was a convention followed in Bobby’s non-science field of study. This instance also resembles with Evodia in Ivanič and Camp (2001) who was asked to avoid the use of “I” while writing for her Biology major but was encouraged to do so while writing her assignments for MED in Adult Education Studies. Therefore, it was quite obvious that it was Bobby’s new field of study in Canada that contributed to the change of her writer identity.

To sum up, the participants’ desire or reluctance for self-expression can be mainly attributed to their commitment to the writing convention of their major. The student writers with science major backgrounds demonstrated their firm commitment to English academic writing conventions specific to their field of study by not including their autobiographical aspects such as their interests, ideas and opinions but expressed different identities or impressions such as scientists, serious and capable graduate students and hard-working graduate students in the interview while explaining their purposes for writing their sample papers. However, the non-science major student writer took the opportunity to express her autobiographical self in her writing as she was a student of a subjectivity oriented field of study. She also personally believed
that the readers in the new academic context needed to know her background to better understand what she had written.

5.3 Discoursal Self

Studying in Canadian universities, the participating Bangladeshi graduate students realized the power of academic writing and also tried to employ English academic writing styles. They were involved in an “accommodation” process “by which students learn to accept conventions without necessarily questioning how those conventions privilege some forms of knowledge at the expense of others (Chase, 1988, p. 14). Like previous participating L2 students who have been reported to construct their writer identities by understanding the privileged discourse and power relationship (Abasi et al., 2006; Burke, 2010), the present participants were conscious of their professors’ preferences or ‘highly valued convention’ (Ivanič, 1998, p. 48) of academic writing in their field of study. As a result, their expression of their discoursal self depended on their audience, genre and their desire to present themselves as a member of the academic discourse community. In this section, I illustrate how the participants constructed and expressed their textual identities by the use of referencing and citation, various linguistic choices, organization and the use of pictures and figures in their papers.

5.3.1 Discoursal Self Based on the Use of Citation and Referencing

Writers can construct their discoursal selves as they cite from different sources. The Bangladeshi graduate students that cited constructed different textual identities with regard to their use of citations and referencing. Their use of citation also depended on the genre, audience and their purpose for writing those papers.

First, despite their struggle in rewriting source information, most of the Bangladeshi participants constructed their writer identities as “intertextually knowledgeable” (Abasi et al.,
by referring to a good number of sources. Sakib, Pritha and Zayed followed the academic convention of writing by citing from various sources. In their choice of various references, the participants expressed different discoursal identities. For instance, Sakib expressed an identity of a reader-concerned writer as well as an independent writer by exercising his autonomy in selecting the references for his literature review in his term paper. He believed that another student writer would have chosen different references to write on the same topic. He said, “I did it in my own way. In this case I have my individuality”. When asked why he relied on these sources, Sakib said,

*Because I could learn something from their work. There are other authors whose papers are also related with my study but I found that these papers are well written ….I refer to those papers that are most suitable to my work as well as simply organized so that my instructor or reader does not need to read other papers to understand my paper. They can get a prior idea reading the references that I give.*

Compared with Sakib, Zayed expressed the identity of a reliable and an ideal engineer by depending on those guidelines that he considered more reliable and had almost all the necessary information that an engineer must know. He also cited journal papers that were well cited in his field of study and were directly in line with those practical aspects of the problem that he wrote about in his term paper. He said,

*… as it is a very scientific paper about a specific technique. Environmental protection agency both in US and Canada is one of biggest authorized guidelines … so I use their reference a lot because there is the most authentic [reliable] reference. Normally publishing paper then it goes to the book and then Environmental protection agency take those as guidelines, so these are the most to my eyes at least most scrutinized information, …because for the scientific information, guidelines are the optimum thing. … if any engineer is designing something, they have to fulfill the guidelines…. and also normally if you go to the guidelines they are the most condensed information together, so you don’t have to read a lot to find separate information like all the necessary information together.*

*To sum up, these L2 graduate students seem to have constructed different discoursal identities such as an intertextually knowledgeable researcher, an ideal engineer, a reliable writer,*
a reader-concerned writer and so on not only by the number of sources they referred to in their writing but also in the ways of selecting the references for their writings.

Second, the participants understood that plagiarism was not accepted in the academy and believed that they were supposed to present “knowledge” specific to their field of study. Sakib, Pritha and Zayed followed their professors’ instructions or their departments’ expectations to write the source information in their own language. However, they demonstrated different attitudes towards rewriting the source information. For example, when I asked Pritha if her professor’s instruction was the only reason that she avoided quotations, she said, “It has to be written in my own language as I am the writer of this paper …I personally also do not like to use quotation all the time. I want to write something of my own.” In contrast to Pritha, Zayed expressed his resistant writer identity saying that he believed that rewriting a definition was a “waste of time” for a non-native speaker of English and said, “I think double quotation should be accepted more easily like profs want me to write the definition in my own words and it takes time.” Thereby, the textual identities constructed in the texts of the participating students as they followed their professors’ instruction of rewriting the source information may not always be similar with the identities they express as they comment on their textual features.

Bobby expressed her identity as a respectful writer to her professor rather than an academic writer as she had a different purpose for citation in her writing. She quoted twice from the reading on which she wrote her commentary but did not follow academic convention of citing sources as her professor was flexible about citation for that commentary. Following is an example of how she cited,
According to Goldberg the demographic heterogeneity means “equally the multiplicitous making of each group, the mixed making up, influences upon, sources of inspiration and expression, the multi-factored generation within each group.” (349)

Here is her response:

I thought instead of paraphrasing I should use his words because that’s how I could express it in a very short way. If I had to paraphrase this whole thing, maybe this paragraph would become two paragraphs because there was limitation I had to write it in three pages and he has a big chapter, so it’s really hard for me to, so that’s why I think I use the quotations.

This instance reminds me of one participant in Reid (2009) who used the words verbatim sometimes for extension of her words. It shows that sometimes L2 student writer may cite for other reasons rather than just wishing to appear as academic writers who follow academic convention of writing.

Third, of all the participants Shurjo was the only student who constructed a different discoursal self by not following the academic convention of citation and referencing. He said that he did not find any significant sources to cite for his proposal and his professor only wanted a very short proposal and did not emphasize much on citation and referencing. Moreover, his main purpose was to let his professor know what technology he wanted to innovate. It seems that he was mainly concerned about his scientist identity rather than an academic writer identity.

Thus the graduate students expressed and constructed multiple writer identities or discoursal selves such as respectful writer, scientist, conflicted writer identity in terms of their use of citation and referencing based on the genres, audience and purpose of writing.
5.3.2 Discoursal Self Based on Various Linguistic Features

Participants’ construction of different discoursal selves became obvious by different aspects of their language use in their writing samples such as vocabulary, use of personal pronouns and active/passive voices, and simple sentences.

Some students constructed their discoursal selves drawing on the discourses of their field of study as they are familiar to their instructors too. For example, Shurjo’s discoursal self as a specialist was created by his use of technical words or phrases (e.g., WCF, SQL, ASP sharpener dot net) specific to his area of study. He believed that he was a ‘technical guy’ writing for another ‘technical guy’. He said,

You can probably make an elaboration of these terms but you are writing these terms because the audience of this paper [is] in the same background so he will understand this thing. That is the reason that you are using technical term [for a] technical guy. But when you write the paper for broader audience, then you make a combination of both. You will also combine the technical terms with the normal sentences so that everyone can understand what you meant.

Bobby also used words or phrases (e.g., racial evaporation, racial denials) specific to her field of study. She said,

It depends on who is actually reading the text because if you have read enough post colonial or anti-colonial or other kind of studies you will find that word a lot and I knew actually who my reader is…. she is a expert on post-colonialism.

From their use of words or phrases specific to their field of study that were familiar to their professors and their comments, it seemed that these students constructed a discoursal self by aligning themselves with the discourses accepted in their area of study or by their professors.

Participants also used active/passive voice and personal pronouns to construct their discoursal self. Both Shurjo and Pritha used both active and passive voices though they knew that personal pronoun or active voice was not part of academic convention in Applied Science or
Life Science. Shurio said that he did not follow the academic convention in writing his proposal as he did not write that for publications or for any other formal occasion. Pritha explained that her professor told them that they could use both passive and active voices. Pritha followed the advice of her professor though she said that active voice is actually less common than passive voice in her discipline:

*Because that is how things are written in the literature of Life Science research. Nobody writes in active voice. Sentences like “I did this”, “he did this” or “we did this” are very rarely used. They write sentence like “this was done by this”.*

Differing from Surjo and Pritha, Sakib, Zayed relied completely on the convention of academic writing that says “write your paper with a third-person voice” (Lester, 1993, p. 144) and used passive voice. Sakib and Zayed employed the strategy of passivisation that allowed them to “remove themselves as the agent of any actions performed” without letting the writers realize their role as “architects of their writing” (Tang & John, 1999, p. S32) in writing science papers. Sakib said that he was always asked not to use ‘I’ or ‘We’ while writing in Bangladesh; therefore, he stopped using these personal pronouns and said, “I … kept writing using third person even after coming to Canada. Since no one said anything about that, I did not change it”. He also had seen in most of the published papers using third person and passive voice. Therefore, he followed that and this can be attributed to his personal goal that he was eager to publish papers. When I asked if there was any rule of using ‘I’ or ‘We’ in his department, he just said that sometimes reviewers ask the authors to use third person. This suggests that Sakib was creating the identity of an emerging scholar who followed the academic convention very strictly.

Some participants in previous studies were also reported to use passive voice in their disciplinary writing. For example, Evodia in Ivanič and Camp (2001) used passive verb in order to be impersonal and Sarah in Ivanič (1998) was involved in “passive mental processes with no
mention of humans doing the thinking” (p. 294). On the other hand, Bobby took a strategy to make her discoursal self prominent using the phrase “I find” as she had seen established authors in postcolonial studies had used personal pronouns. While Sakib and Zayed constructed their discoursal self following the academic convention of impersonal writing, Bobby followed the personal style of writing accepted in her department.

The practice of using passive voice or of impersonal writing by Sakib, Zayed and Pritha might be considered as a strategy that expresses an empiricist ideology suggesting that the outcomes of a study will be the same regardless of the researcher. Hyland (2001, p. 215-216) found that a writer in hard science tend to “downplay his or her personal role in the research” and by choosing to use a less personal style “writers strengthen the objectivity of their interpretations and subordinate their own voice to that of unmediated nature”. Sakib and Zayed absolutely projected an objective tone in their writing by using passive voice. However, Pritha believed that using active voice could be a more direct way to communicate with her readers so, when she was given options to choose, she took the advantage of using active voice and conveyed an impression that the writers presenting the information are equally important. It is evident that these participants aligned themselves with the empiricist ideology of hard science unless they were given an option to choose between impersonal and personal style of writing.

In addition, Shurjo, Sakib, Pritha and Zayed adopted a strategy of using of simple sentence for different reasons and conveyed different impressions of themselves. Shurjo seemed to possess the voice of a scientist and believed that his professor was mainly interested in his innovation and simple sentences were the best ways to convey his message. He gave an example of his simple and lucid sentences from his introduction:
Health clinics are becoming integral part of modern cities. Clinics provide several health care services to patients. Very few clinics use automated health clinic management software.

He explained that,

Complex sentences are good only for good literature writing. But if you want to get a notification, identification or a good comment from a general audience, then you have to convince him in smoother English sentences like it should be lucid and simple sentence. So you have to [be] picky one.

Sakib seemed to consider himself as a researcher who believed that results and discussions are the centre of any research; therefore, he also mainly used simple sentences in these parts of his writing (e.g., Conjugate heat transfer module is used in this study and all the CFD simulations are carried out for Re_D = 100 to 350.). He explained,

*I think results and discussion are the main sections of a paper..... other than the common complex sentences having as, because I have tried to use simple sentences as much as possible so that my readers understand my explanation easily.*

Pritha showed respect to her professor and told me that she tried to provide information in short sentences as she knew that her professor did not like long sentences. She also believed that long sentences hinder the readers’ understanding of the text. Similarly, Zayed demonstrated his respect to authority writing in a simple language as he was given a guideline to write in that way. He said that for him simple sentences could explain something simply like the way we did in speaking. Here I find him possessing a “I-write-like-I-speak, committed-to-plain-English” voice (Ivanič and Camp, 2001). He also personally believed that he could convey his messages clearly when writing in a simple language. To conclude, using simple sentences or simple language, the participants constructed a textual identity that demonstrates that they were committed writers who fulfilled the expectations of their professors or their departments. Their belief about writing in simple sentences also aligned them with the privileged discourses without causing any dilemma or conflict.
5.3.3 Discoursal Self Expressed by Organization, Use of Equations and Graphics

These L2 graduate students also constructed their discourse selves while adopting other strategies of organizing their papers and using equations and pictures/figures following the convention of academic writing specific to their field of study.

First, some participants demonstrated their commitment to academic convention or their professors’ expectations of organizing a paper. Sakib, Pritha and Zayed said that they followed journal papers to organize their papers. Pritha followed the usual sequence of organization of a paper including background, design, methods, anticipated results, anticipated problems and references. As required by her professor, Pritha had a few deviations such as writing research and experimental hypotheses separately. In addition, she also presented some information in bullet points instead of writing them in paragraph because she could give the message more easily. Shurjo divided his whole papers into several parts such as a cover page, introduction, proposed methodology, extended work and conclusion. Zayed also followed the standard of organizing a scientific paper in his field of study and tried to convey an impression of belonging to the academic community. He included headings, subheadings, tables, and figures. Of all the participants, Zayed was the only one who had a table of contents at the beginning of his paper.

Second, some participants also followed academic convention of using graphics or equations as required by their field of study. Sakib, Pritha and Zayed all had figures or graphics in their papers. Pritha said that she used graphics because she noticed them in published journals and wanted to create an impression of a reader-concerned writer as she believed that graphics helped readers comprehend meaning. Pritha’s comment reminds us of writers like Yamile and German in Ivanič and Camp (2001) who identified “themselves as people who like to
communicate through visual as well as verbal modes” (p.29). The following is a comment from Pritha:

*I wanted my reader to understand that I made things clear to him so that he does not need to make more efforts to understand what I mean. If I give a picture along with describing how a drug works in our brain after getting injected in our body, my reader will understand it in a few seconds easily whereas he would have to imagine to understand what I mean if there was no picture and it might be a bit difficult to get a clear idea of I am saying….. Another reason is he is not very familiar with our lab.*

Being graduate students of engineering departments, both Sakib and Zayed used lots of equations in their papers. Zayed commented on his use of this feature in his text. He said that he used equations because “this is also another convention that you have to mention, the important equations. Reader[s] don’t have to go to their book and find those equations.” Including graphics and equations either to fulfill the requirements of their professors and their departments or to convey the messages more clearly is one of the ways of constructing discourse self by these L2 graduate students.

Drawing on discourses acceptable either by their field of study or by their professors, these L2 graduate student writers expressed their discoursal selves in their writings with their use of vocabulary, simple sentences, graphics and their ways of organization, which conveyed different images of them such as committed academic writers, reader-concerned writers, etc. These identities or selves might not reflect their social identities but are related to the norms and expectations of written genres and their audience in specific academic contexts.

5.4 Self as Author

In this section, I discuss how the participating L2 graduate students expressed their writer identities in terms of self as author, another important aspect of writer identity. They were mainly guided by the convention of their field of study or their professors’ expectations that
decided whether and how the students should express their selves as authors. Moreover, science and non-science students appeared as authors of their texts in different ways such as referring established authors or themselves as the authors of the contents of their texts, using personal pronouns, rhetorical questions and so on.

5.4.1 Self as Author Expressed by Science Major Students (N=4)

The students from science majors expressed their authorial selves either by following the convention of citation to established authorities or not. Shurjo claimed authorship by relying on his own imagination to write his paper and by presenting his content without citations to established authorities. On the other hand, Sakib, Pritha and Zayed appeared as authors appealing to authority by citation to established authorities or sources. However, Sakib did not cite for some equations he took from the Internet as he believed those were very common and anyone could use them without attributing to the sources. Sakib seemed to claim authorship based on his belief that certain knowledge is a common property though his instructor later asked him to refer to the sources.

Some students expressed their authorial selves using first person pronoun even though that is not the academic convention of writing in a science major. Shurjo’s use of “I” (e.g., “In this project, I will build a web application in order to automate a health clinic …. In order to remove unnecessary messaging with WCF, I will also use ASP.NET validation controls.”) gives an impression of an authorial self explaining his process. Shurjo said he was not very careful about his use of first person as he did not write his proposal for publications. Pritha also used “we” to express her research process (“We will wait 2hrs to confirm that the inflammation is present in the animals”) that may be an indication that she was positioning herself alongside her potential reader but she explained,
Actually in my lab or any other lab one person generates the idea but others are also involved in working that out. I am a graduate student and there are two more students in my lab. I am sure I need their help. It’s not necessary that I will do everything myself and in our lab people do not always work alone. Even when a paper is published, there are 1st, 2nd or 3rd authors because other people have contributions to the research, so I keep that in my mind. My lab does not only represent myself, my supervisor is also involved there. Therefore, I have written ‘we’.

Thus Pritha was aligning herself with other members belonging to the same academic discourse community although she did not say anything about her alignment with her reader/marker of her paper. However, Tang and John (1999) point out that it is totally context-dependent to what extent reference to first person originally establishes authorship of the writer. They argue that using first person pronouns to explain research process is not a very powerful way of expressing authorial presence compared to “I” used as an “opinion holder”. Hyland (2002) argues that using first person pronoun in stating a purpose or explaining a procedure ensures a harmless position for the writers preventing them from threat of criticism or rejection from their powerful audience. Therefore, Shurjo and Pritha used first person pronoun in such a way that “rarely shades into explicit claim-making” (Hyland, 2002, p. 1101) and presented their authorial selves in an innocent way.

Pritha also expressed herself as author sometimes with a non-discursive feature of her text. An interesting non-discursive feature of her paper is that she wrote the phrase “research hypothesis” and her experimental hypothesis in bold type just like Juliet in Reid (2009) who wrote her thesis statement in bold type:

Therefore the research hypothesis is – ‘Inflammatory pain is associated with increased NMDA receptor activity in the VPL; 2 hrs after intradermal injection of formalin (5 mg/ml) in the rat paw, the level of phospho- NR1 protein will be increased, compared to control.

She thought her professor might have liked it as he did not comment anything on this feature of her writing. When I asked Pritha about this she said that this is how her research hypothesis
could easily draw her reader’s attention and she wanted her experimental hypothesis to be obvious as it was the most important part of her whole paper. By applying this strategy, Pritha seemed to have exercised her authorial power in her text.

### 5.4.2 Self as Author Expressed by Non-Science Major Student (N=1)

Hyland (2002) and Tang and John (1999) found that personal pronouns are used to uphold the impression of authorship, especially in the humanities and social sciences in contrast to the hard sciences and engineering. Compared with the participants from hard sciences and engineering, Bobby was more self-expressive as an author. As observed above, she used first person singular pronoun to give her opinions just like Juliet in Reid (2009). The following is an example from her writing:

> I find the history of formation of Bengali identity from late nineteenth century to present very relevant here. The Bengalis of Bangladesh who were mostly Muslims, fought along with the Muslims of West Pakistanis in 1947 against the British colonial regime, to have a sovereign Muslim state named Pakistan, where they mainly saw the caste based Hindu as their enemy. Right after the partition, when West Pakistan started to impose different culture, language and started exploiting the Bengalis like their colony, the Bengalis began to construct a secular Bengali identity, having a root mainly in the Hindu culture. After having a sovereign nation of their own, named Bangladesh, the Bengali Muslims, are again becoming conscious about their Muslim identity while trying to have solidarity with the global Islamic movement.

Ivanič and Camp (2001) state that “references to the first person position reflect the writer as asserting the right to have a voice…the writer is claiming authority both as an act of self assurance and as a statement of belief that knowledge and understanding are subjective” (p. 25). Bobby started her sentence with “I find” which illustrated the relative power of authorial presence by using ‘I’ as the opinion-holder (Tang & John, 1999) like Emilia who started her sentence with “I believe” in Ivanič and Camp (2001). It surely presents Bobby as self-assured author playing a role in creating knowledge and taking responsibility for her own position. By
justifying her statement with supporting details, Bobby established herself as the author of the content of her text and said,

…it’s totally my idea, that’s why I think I didn’t cite anything here because I was talking from my experience what I have seen as a child or as a Bengali, as a Muslim… It is actually based on my knowledge, right? I am mainly talking about Muslim identity and how the identity of Bangladeshi Muslim gradually changed over time. I was trying to show the timeline.

Ivanič and Camps (2001, p. 26) argued that, at the interpersonal level, the use of the first person plural can be a ‘potential marker of equality between writer and reader’. (See also Tang & John, 1999; Hyland 2002; Starfield, 2002, p. 129). Like a participant in Kim et al. (2006), Bobby used the personal pronoun ‘We’ in her sentence (“But how we can describe the same situation in a Muslim majority country like Bangladesh?”) implying that as an author she was “positioning herself alongside her potential readers and trying to draw them into her arguments” (Kim et al., 2006, p. 132). However, when I asked Bobby why she used ‘We’, she said she was trying to involve other members of the academy. She noted, “Here ‘We’ means that it can be anyone; … I am also involving the writer [the author of the book] … why didn’t us the group of people who are taking that course not questioning that.” Bobby seemed to have also involved her reader in her use of ‘We’, which may indicate a potential marker of equality between the reader and the writer. The following is another example of how Bobby influenced her potential readers by asking rhetorical questions:

But my question is, don’t the Muslims also do that to themselves to make themselves connected to a stronger society and to create a homogenous identity? Though they come from different background, once they are immigrants in the foreign land, don’t they intend to stay in a group with less diversities?

It is apparent that Bobby expressed her authorial self sometimes by becoming an opinion holder or sometimes positioning herself aligned with her readers. However, all these features of Bobby’
text combine to construct a discoursal identity that presents a claim, has a strong authorial voice and seems to share a common ground with the reader.

In conclusion, I have illustrated how and to what degree the participants with science and non-science major backgrounds expressed their authorial selves based on how they claimed authorship by citing other authors or not, and by their use of personal pronouns and rhetoric questions. Their selves as author mainly depended on their purpose for writing, their respect for the convention as well as their instructors’ policies that might not match with the academic conventions. Moreover, it is also evident that the extent to which these students established themselves as authors and the way they did that varied from person to person.

5.5 Possibilities for Selfhood

The English academic discourse community has its own values, assumptions and practices that urge the individual student writers seeking membership in that community to negotiate their identities within the privileged or acceptable possibilities for self-hood. The academic community provides limited possibilities and these L2 writers in their act of academic writing had to choose possibilities out of these limited possibilities to construct identities that are valued in their areas of study or by their professors. These identities may also vary with the change of context, audience or genre.

5.5.1 Multiple Writer Identities Shifted, Conflicted and Developed

The participating Bangladeshi graduate students’ writer identities were shifted, conflicted and developed through the social practice of academic writing in the English academic discourse community. The socially constructed possibilities for self-hood in that community influenced these writers’ life experiences as well as their hopes, fear, disappointments, beliefs, values, self-confidence, anxieties, desires, tensions and contradictions (Ivanič, 1998).
The participants’ challenges and negative experiences in a Canadian university made their writer identities shift and conflict with one another. They came to Canada with positive L2 writer identities but their belief of themselves as good L2 writers was shattered because of their negative experiences and challenges in Canadian universities. As a result, their previous identity conflicted with their new identities constructed by those negative experiences which caused fear, disappointments and tensions in them. Zayed believed that he was a “good story teller” but when he started writing English academic papers, he constructed a poor writer identity and said, “I was so much focused on language and mistakes. I just forgot that I am a good story teller. To be honest I lost my confidence.” In his first semester, Zayed submitted a term paper to a professor who was a very strict marker. He got 86 out of 100 but 0 out of 10 for grammar. This experience affected his L2 writer identity and he said, “I can cover the scientific part but grammarwise [writing] I am poor, so getting zero.” He met great challenges in rewriting source information and writing introduction, conclusion and abstract of a paper in L2, which made him believe that he was not a good academic writer in his department.

Like Zayed, Sakib and Pritha also lost confidence and their identities as L2 writers shifted and conflicted. Sakib did not take an English course in his Bangladeshi university as he said that he believed his writing in L2 was good enough. However, he had difficulties in writing a project paper following Canadian standard of academic writing within a limited time. For example, when he had to write a project report within two weeks, he found almost impossible to read all the source materials in English, work on it and finally write it down within the time limit. As a result of that experience, he constructed a dissatisfied writer identity and said, “I could have written a 20 or 30 page reports but I had to finish it within 8 to 10 pages due to limited time to write something novel”. After coming to Canada, Sakib felt that he should have taken an English
writing course. Similarly, Pritha had thought that her knowledge in English grammar was one of her strengths in her L2 writing, but after coming to Canada she lost her confidence because of her grammatical mistakes. These challenges made the participants feel disappointed, scared and tensed in the new English academy.

Receiving negative comments from a professor can also cause disappointments for a writer in a new discourse community. For instance, one of Bobby’s professors was harsh to her for her ignorance of how to cite properly. This not only affected her writer identity but also made her lose her confidence. She said,

I lost all my confidence after coming to graduate school because before that I had this idea that I am not bad in English. I will do good wherever I go because [my] English is not that bad. I know how to speak, how to talk, how to write but after having some bad experiences now it seems to me that I don’t know English at all, which is very bad. (laughs)

Her laughing following the statement echoed that of Isaac in Reid (2009) who laughed after saying that he did not have any strength in L2 writing. Like Reid who believed that there was a false modesty in his statement, I felt that Bobby did not really believe that she did not know English at all because later she agreed that her only problem was that she was not familiar with the Western academic writing convention. Her difficulties in citing properly and the negative feedback she received from her professor created a fear inside her about writing her thesis and she said, “It’s actually making me procrastinate my thesis because I am just thinking it’s not good enough. It has become a psychological issue with me as well because … I was so bad in writing”. Bobby’s experiences resembles that of Yeonhee in Burke (2010) who also came with a positive writer identity but lost all confidence because of her ignorance of the features of different kinds of writing in English. Thus the professors’ negative comments affected Bobby’s academic writer identity in L2.
The participants tried to negotiate for better writer identities by making efforts to align themselves with the possibilities privileged or tolerated in the English academic community. Bobby took a writing course to learn the guidelines for citation use as she noticed that her grade was being affected by her inappropriate citation and she was also not satisfied with her own academic writing. After having a terrible experience of Master’s thesis writing, Zayed took three different writing courses at the beginning of his PhD program. Although Sakib, Shurjo and Pritha did not take any writing courses, they also worked hard to construct a strong writer identity. Pritha asked help from her lab colleagues and their feedback helped her gain her confidence back. Sakib used all possible resources to improve his writing as he did not want any instructors to complain about his writing skills. He knew that the Canadian professors like students having publications as first authors, so he wanted to publish and he would feel proud as a Bangladeshi student if his papers were published and cited in Canada and other countries. All the participants heavily relied on their resources including journal articles, sample writings, notes from class and their instructors’ feedback on their writing. They tried to demonstrate their “text knowledge” (Lee, 2009, p. 123) or knowledge about the writing task and the requirements to complete it.

These L2 graduate students developed new writer identities with their efforts and use of all available resources. They became more confident as they were putting enormous efforts to learn the new writing process and writing convention. As Sakib commented,

At the beginning I remained confused most of the time. I could not understand whether I was violating copyright rules or not unknowingly or unintentionally. But now I am much more determined and I write more confidently. Now if someone says that I have violated copyright, I try to defend myself logically. But I did not do that earlier rather I accepted it without trying to provide with my logic.

Similarly, Pritha said, “I think now my writing has a nice flow that I could not bring earlier but now I can. For example, now I understand which information I should write next to another information so that they complement each other and it becomes easier for the reader to
understand”. Zayed said he helped a Canadian Master’s student to write NHSR research application including “a multi page research proposal”. With a confident tone Zayed articulated, “He relied on my expertise.” Zayed was also involved with young professional committee who write for general people. He helped them in choosing topic and writing their storyline. This suggests that simultaneously these student writers had multiple writer identities and constantly negotiated for better writer identities throughout their writing practices and experiences.

These L2 writers came with an impression that their writing styles that were accepted in Bangladeshi context may well be accepted in Canada but what they did not know was that their writing styles will lose their validity once they go beyond their familiar context. They came with full confidence as L2 writers but lost their self-confidence when their previous discourses and identities did not match with the socially constructed possibilities in the new discourse community. However, they knew the value of academic writing in English academic community, therefore, they utilized all the ways to improve their writing process to negotiate and develop their writer identities.

5.5.2 Multiple Possibilities for Self-hood in L2 Academic Writing

Participants’ multiple writer identities depend on their fields of study and the expectations from their instructors. Some students expressed contradictory identities drawing on both academic discourses as well as discourses preferred by their professors. For example, Pritha tried to create possibilities for herself following academic conventions but it was her concern for her instructor’s preferences that she failed to follow some rules of academic writing. Her writing bore the signature of the discrepancies between academic conventions of not using active voice and her reader/marker’s personal policies regarding the use of both active and passive voices. Kazuko in Kim et al. (2006) also faced this inconsistency in terms of her use of personal pronoun
in her writing. Pritha knew that she could not write in active voice if she wrote for publications. Moreover, she was asked by her professor to write research hypothesis and experimental hypothesis separately which she said was also not an academic convention in her field of study. Pritha’s high concern for her professor as a reader/marker made her writing bear other different features such as making her research hypothesis in bold. She even wrote a part in bullet points in the method section of her paper and explained,

Course papers are different from journal papers and it varies from course to course or instructor to instructor. But in the scientific paper published in journals …we cannot write in bullet points. But I know what my instructor prefers as he has taught us a course. He wants information to be clearly and neatly presented. …..I think he gave us options of either writing in paragraphs or in points. I felt points are better.

However, Zayed sometimes positioned himself as a writer by not aligning with his professor’s expectations regarding his citation use. Even though he was instructed to avoid direct quotation, it appears that it was his social identity as an L2 writer that influenced his decision on resisting this practice. For instance, there was the following example of a direct quotation in Zayed’s paper in which he presented a definition verbatim from the source,

According to United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.EPA, 1993) "Volatile organic compounds (VOC) means any compound of carbon, excluding carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, carbonic acid, metallic carbides or carbonates, and ammonium carbonate, which participates in atmospheric photochemical reactions”.

When I asked why he did that, he said the following:

Because to my understanding if I rearrange the name of the compounds it’s not adding any new information or any style. It’s not like that I have to match it with my style or I am not putting any new information so I just thought that the effort I have to give to rewrite things it’s not worthy and also actually I am advocating in this department for long time that professors should accept double quotation more because that will take big pressure out from the nonnative speaker as long as they are not compromising with their information or storyline.
It also indicates a discrepancy between the academic convention of citation and the policies of faculty members in a specific discipline because according to academic writing convention direct quotation with citation is not a violation of academic rule of citation. Thus it is obvious that “individual writers often shift identity within a single piece of writing” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 295). Zayed, Shurjo, Pritha and Bobby all drew on different discourses such as academic, non-academic or discourses preferred by their professors.

These students seem to have been aware of what possibilities they were creating for their self-hood as they wrote their papers with their particular discourse choices. Shurjo commented on some features of his writing assignment that he would have done differently if he had written it for publications or for conference. For instance, he did not cite any sources in his proposal but would have cited sources if it was for any formal occasions. Moreover, he had written his methodology part in bullet points which was also not the convention of academic writing in hard science because he believed that writing that assignment was less important. Compared with Shurjo, Bobby cited but did not follow APA format of citation because her supervisor was not very strict about citation for her commentaries. However, she would have followed APA format or cited more sources if she had written her term papers. Nevertheless, Bobby tried to align herself with the possibilities tolerated in the academic community by citing, making claim with supporting details, drawing on her own experiences, ensuring authorial presence by using first person pronoun as required in her field of study. Likewise, Sakib, Zayed and Pritha aligned themselves with privileged possibilities by citing sources, adopting an impersonal writing style, following academic convention of organizing a paper and including graphics as accepted in their field of study. All the participants became aware of the identities or possibilities well accepted, therefore, drawing on those possibilities they were becoming legitimate members of the English
academic community. However, it was really difficult for me to understand how far they met the expectations of their professors as I could not see their instructors’ feedback. Interestingly all of them said they achieved good marks for the papers they commented on.

To conclude, these students’ consciousness of the genres of paper they wrote, the academic writing convention of their field of study and their professors’ expectations made them construct different or contradictory identities as writers. All the students were aware of the possibilities for their particular social context of writing and chose those identities that aligned them with academic discourses or with the possibilities created by their professors.

5.6 Summary

This chapter focused on how five Bangladeshi L2 graduate students constructed and expressed their multiple writer identities based on their autobiographical selves, discoursal selves, selves as authors, and possibilities for self-hood in their L2 academic writing practices. My theoretical assumption that writer identities are versatile, changing over time and socially constructed and the four aspects of writer identities guided my analyses of the interview data. All participants more or less expressed their autobiographical self in the interview drawing on different aspects of their previous writing practices. They also constructed different writer identities based on how their previous writing styles or skills were accepted or if their past understanding about writing helped them in the English academic community. However, while writing their L2 academic papers, the students with science major backgrounds restrained from expressing their autobiographical aspects such as ideas, opinions, interests and commitments. They tried to align themselves with the privileged discourses that support the view that academic writing especially in science “tend to be objective, as written in the third person, as distanced from personal feelings and experiences” (Casanave & Vandrick, 2003, p. 2). Nevertheless, they
expressed different identities such as hard working graduate students, respectful academic writers or scientists while explaining their purposes for writing in their chosen style. However, the non-science major (Arts major) student expressed her autobiographical self not only because she liked to express her identities but also because her field of study and her audience were also interested in her autobiographical self. The participants also expressed their discoursal selves conveying different voice types or identities by drawing on academic, non-academic discourses or discourses preferred by their professors such as vocabulary, linguistic features, organization, graphics as well as citation and referencing. These students’ expressed their authorial selves by citing or not citing established authors, using personal pronouns, rhetorical questions and so on. The degrees to which the students claimed their authorial presence differed at personal level depending on the genre, their audience or their fields of study. Finally, in terms of possibilities for self hood, it was evident that these student writers’ identities were shifted, conflicted, negotiated and developed. These students demonstrated that they had enhanced knowledge in writing skills and genres, became aware of their writing contexts, and regained the lost confidence. Finally, I found that the Bangladeshi graduate students learned certain ways of writing, valuing, interacting, feeling, thinking, and believing in order to be accepted as legitimate members of the targeted discourse community. My study also supported prior research that has found characteristics of writer identities to be changing, conflicting and negotiating (Abasi et al., 2006; Burke, 2010, Kim et al., 2006).
Chapter 6: Limitations and Implications and Future Research

6.1 Overview

In this dissertation, I set out to explore how Bangladeshi graduate students constructed their multiple writer identities both socio-academically as well as textually in the English academic discourse community. At first, I present my arguments and conclusions about how the research question and the findings explain the features of the construction of L2 writer identities. Then I discuss the limitations of the study followed by implications for the teaching of writing and future research. Finally, I write my reflections on my experience of writing the thesis.

6.2 Summary of Findings and Discussion

First of all, the present study demonstrates that multiple writer identities are constructed within socio academic contexts of writing. These multiple writer identities also sometimes conflict with each other within an individual. They might construct positive writer identity by relying on their previous writing style when that style is accepted in the new academy, but individuals may also have negative experience for relying on their past writing practices when those practices are not well accepted in their new community. They might come with confident L2 writer identity in Canada but their challenges in L2 academic writing might change that identity into poor academic writer identities.

Second, a writing sample and the interview data may convey multiple impressions of a student writer depending on how he/she expresses different aspects of writer identity. A writer can construct identities as an authoritative academic writer and a less powerful writer concurrently. For instance, Zayed constructed academic writer identities following conventions of academic writing but at the same time he expressed a resistant writer identity by using double quotation by not aligning with his instructor’s expectations. An individual graduate student
usually ends up exercising power “to take elements from different voice types and blend them into a unique, heterogeneous voice according to their own interests, motivations, allegiances, and preferences” (Ivanic & Camp 2001, p. 21) out of some fixed and limited conventions and expectations in the academic discourse community. Some features of their writing convey their image as a humble academic writer but they might create an authoritative writer identity by employing some non-discursive features. Thus the student writers constructed multiple writer identities in terms of expressing different aspects of writer identities such as autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author and possibilities for self-hood.

Third, interestingly, sometimes real writer identities of L2 student writers in their socio-academic communities may not match with their textual identities constructed with their linguistic features in their papers due to factors such as the occasion for writing, flexibility of the instructors, purpose of writing and so on. Ivanič (1998) argues that the textual identities expressed by the writers may not be the same as their ‘desired self’. For instance, Zayed felt that he could not express his identity because of the social pressure of his field of study but if he was given a chance he would love to make people aware of his Bangladeshi identity. Even Pritha was mainly trying to accommodate to her instructor’s expectations by breaking some academic conventions. Ivanič (1998) therefore suggests that student writers actually try to accommodate and resist “what they perceive to be the expectations of individual reader-assessors” (p. 244). This accommodation or resistance totally depends on how well they know their readers/markers but they usually tend to follow dominant discourses when they are not sure about their instructors’ preferences. This knowledge about their reader/markers makes them sacrifice their desired identity and they present the aspired identity to accommodate to the English academic community.
Therefore, I argue that L2 students’ writer identity should not be viewed or dealt with within a single context or within just one aspect of writing because of its multiple and constantly shifting and contradictory nature. Any general or stereotypical understanding might mislead us to view the real and changeable phenomena of writer identity construction. We need to realize that these identities are shaped by several socio-cultural factors, language skills, personal goals and discourse knowledge of the students coming to the new academic discourse community.

In addition, I also argue that it is hard to generalize a complex process like construction of writer identities especially of the L2 student writers because this process engages various strategies such as accommodation, opposition, and resistance. The participating Bangladeshi graduate student writers’ various writer identities and their various approaches in creating a particular identity influence the process and the consequences as well. Writer identities are contextually and vigorously constructed as a result of their making a choice between multiple conflicting ideas, identities, and so on. Sometimes it is not easy for the graduate students to take a new desired role, as they may be led to different directions by their writing practices where they construct diverse writer identities.

Cumming (2006) declared that L2 writers’ personal goals, motivations, and actions play active roles in the construction of writer identity and socialization in the academic community. Their desire to be accepted as legitimate members in their disciplines directs them to acquire a new voice as writers. The study I conducted showed the importance of factors like personal goals and taking actions to develop the graduate students’ writing skills and writer identities. Some of these actions include finding available resources, following convention in journal papers, and seeking assistance from classmates, friends, faculty, websites, or dictionaries for writing improvement (Zhou, Busch, Gentil, Eouanzoui, & Cumming, 2006). Therefore, I argue that
students’ attitudes and actions to fulfill their personal and disciplinary goals are highly vital factors to create more promising writer identities. Students can draw more on disciplinary discourse practices to become more legitimate members of their disciplines (Casanave & Li, 2008). Bangladeshi graduate students in my study attempted to accept the academic discourse, imitated it, and finally internalized the privileged ways of writing, for example, as future engineering researchers. Thus, academic writing practices help the L2 graduate students both to develop their writing skills and to construct a new academic persona.

Finally, I argue that it is very important for individuals to figure out what actions they should take based on what disciplinary goals they have, as the expression of writer identities is complex in nature. Moreover, they should understand what impressions are expressed based on their discourse choices and what possibilities are available for them in the English academic community. Students are required to perform certain identities in both papers and academic social contexts (Goffman, 1990). As a result, students have to learn the rules of “writing games” and to be the skillful players in higher education (Casanave, 2002).

6.3 Limitation of the Study

This qualitative case study is limited in generalization because of a small number of participants involved. Since students’ writing styles are not easy to be grouped by culture and everyone has their own experiences of previous literacy practices, I need to restrain myself from oversimplifying the sharing of traits by students belonging to the same culture with “distinctive, culturally based writing styles” (Fox, 1994, p. xx). Despite the limitation, I hope this qualitative study provides an in-depth understanding of each participant’s construction and expression of identity as an L2 writer in their writing practices in their graduate program.
6.4 Implications for the Teaching of L2 Writing

In carrying out this study I have had the intention of adding to the current pedagogy to teaching and learning of writing in a second language by illustrating how writing educators or concerned content teachers could be reminded of the causes of positive or negative writing outcomes and what they could do to make both their students’ learning experiences and learning environment better so that they can construct and express their writer identities positively and effectively.

First, we need to enhance the awareness of students’ autobiographical aspects such as their previous literacy practices, because differences between their previous and current writing practices may cause struggle for them. We need to be sensitive to these differences these students may encounter. At the beginning of the semester there can be an open discussion about English academic writing and teachers might inform them of the discourses accepted in the new community. Teachers also can help them consciously to draw on the differences but while doing that they can also understand what previous discourse they can rely on to construct a positive writer identity.

Second, despite the fact that different fields of study accept different academic writing conventions, there are some components of academic writing that must be taught very explicitly in every discipline. For instance, logical aspects of organizing an academic paper and paraphrasing and summarizing source information must be taught as early as possible. Students need practices to learn these aspects of academic writing and it also takes significant amount of time. Teachers should think of better ways to help students to avoid plagiarism and to make them feel confident in their citation practice. Faculty members need to carefully guide their
international supervisees without just letting them learn these aspects of writing all by themselves.

Third, I argue that a critical awareness is needed to be developed among the L2 student writers about their multiple writer identities’ changing in different writing contexts and also with different possibilities that are privileged over others. Put it differently, they should be given the opportunities to understand that their different discourse choices may position them in various ways. For instance, by presenting source information in paraphrase rather than verbatim, they can create an impression of themselves as writers. Similarly, appealing to authority or not has something to do with their claiming authority of the contents of their texts. They should be made conscious about the fact that academic writing is not just about having a formal and impersonal voice. For instance, the science major students should be given the idea that “the scientific attitude is not achieved by either the use or the avoidance of a particular pronoun. Rather, it is achieved through the qualities mentioned earlier: honesty, care in handling facts, dignity, and restraint in manner” (Mills and Water, 1986, p. 32–33). Once they are conscious of those choices as well as the impressions provided by them, students can be confident as academic writers and feel more comfortable to construct their desired identity in their writings. Hence, teachers could encourage the students to contemplate how they want to sound in their various texts, how this might vary from context to context, and how they might create particular impressions using specific linguistic features.

Finally, we, the L2 writing educators should be very compassionate to the student writers in supporting the L2 writers to deal with the challenges and to reinvent their confident writer identity. Sometimes the university faculty members or L2 writing instructors fail to understand the cost the L2 writers pay in order to accommodate them with the demands of a new academic
discourse community. We have to realize that negative identities constructed from negative writing experiences result in poor performances in L2 students’ writing as well as in their failure to become legitimate members of the English academic discourse community. As a matter of fact, student writers highly appreciate their instructors’ recognition, patience, tolerance, and support (Zamel, 1995).

6.5 Areas for Future Research

Future research can be done using different naturalistic inquiries, including a longitudinal case study or an intensive ethnographic observation starting from the very beginning of the semester and continue over one year (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003; Cumming, 2006). Using multi-method qualitative inquiry and methods, such as observing the participants in classes and interviewing the participants as well as their instructors may provide rich data with different perspectives on L2 writers’ construction of identities. For example, an in-depth longitudinal case study will allow L2 writing researchers to understand student writers’ trajectories to grow and develop personally and academically through their multiple interactions with texts, classrooms, and professors.

Second, in my study the textual data comprised only one writing sample from each student. Future research with multiple writing samples written for different audience or in different contexts would provide a more comprehensive picture of writer identities constructed in the text (Kim, et al., 2006; Burke, 2010). Moreover, all four graduate students in my study had hard science major and the only MA student also did her BSc with science major. Future study could engage graduate students from different majors as well as with those Bangladeshi students that did not study in English medium universities in Bangladesh.
Finally, more qualitative studies on student writers’ identity construction could be carried out according to student nationality, discipline, age, gender, goals, and cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Such studies can help us verify features of L2 writer identities, better understand how L2 student writers approach different literacy practices, and identify ways to help students become confident academic writers.

6.6 Final Reflections

I would like to end my dissertation with my two reflections on my experience of writing this paper both in terms of working with the students I interviewed as well as my expression of my autobiographical self, discoursal self, self as author and possibilities for self-hood. First, while interviewing the graduate students, I noticed that my academic writer identity has also shifted, conflicted and negotiated since I started my Master’s program facing the same challenges as they did. I remember I would hardly ask any of my native peers to review my papers. I always had a feeling of inferiority that they write thousand times better than me. However, now I view myself as a multilingual writer. Second, while analyzing and writing the findings of how the graduate students expressed different aspects of writer identities, I became very careful in choosing my words and using citations because now I know all the discourses I choose convey an identity of me in a particular way. Earlier I used the expression like “I believe” without knowing that this is how I was positioning myself as the author of my text. To sum up, I have become highly concerned about writing and organizing this dissertation to create multiple possibilities or identities that are appreciated in the English academic community.
References


Canagarajah, S. (2003). Multiple writers and the struggle for voice in academic discourse. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 266-289). New York: Multilingual matters.


Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

The Construction of Writer Identity of Bangladeshi ESL Students in the English Academic Community

Principal Investigator:
- Dr. Ling Shi, Department of Language and Literacy Education,

Co-Investigator:
- Suma Saha, MA student, Department of Language and Literacy Education

Dear student,

I am inviting you to participate in the research entitled “The Construction of Writer Identity of Bangladeshi ESL Students in the English Academic Community”. The study is a part of my Master’s thesis and aims at understanding Bangladeshi graduate students’ academic writing experiences in Canadian universities and intends to explore how they represent themselves in English academic writing.

Purpose:

You are being invited to take part in this research study because of the fact that you are a Bangladeshi ESL graduate student in a Canadian university and have already gathered experience of academic writing in English. Moreover, you are now familiar with the Western conventions of academic writing.

Study Procedures:

If you choose to become involved in this study, you will participate in two interview sessions. In the first interview, you will talk about your writing experiences both in your own country as well as in Canadian context. You will also talk about your view of yourself as an academic writer in a Canadian university. The second interview will be conducted on the basis of an academic writing sample of yours. You will be asked to bring a sample of your academic writing for the second interview. The sample may include any of your class assignments, review or critique of an article, any publication of yours. Your assignments may or may not include instructor’s comments or marks. Your writing sample will be required to understand how you write to create a strong position for yourself in English academic context. In other words, in the interview, you will be asked to give examples from your writing sample to support your answer. The interviews will be audio recorded.
**Amount of time required:**

Each interview will take about an hour. The second interview may be conducted after 2 or 3 days as per your convenience. However, if you prefer, I can arrange the second interview to follow immediately after the first one. The interview will be conducted at UBC campus.

**Study Results:**

The findings of the study will be reported in a graduate thesis and might also be presented and published in professional and academic conferences and journals. Excerpts of your written words or your instructor’s comments may be incorporated into those presentations and publications. If you do not want your data to be included in further analysis, you may contact Dr. Ling Shi. Moreover, if you are interested in the report of the findings, please include your email in the consent form.

**Risks:**

I do not think there is anything in this research that can harm you or be bad for you. Some questions inquiring about your difficulties in writing English academic papers or assignments in a Canadian university might give you some discomfort. Therefore, during the interview you can refuse to answer any of the questions. Moreover, you may feel embarrassed to share your writing sample with poor marks or negative feedback. In that case you can bring an assignment which does not show the comments or marks.

**Benefits:**

By participating in this study, you will be able to reflect on your academic writing experiences both in Canada and Bangladesh.

**Your rights not to participate:**

Your participation will be entirely voluntary, and you have every right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will not be disclosed because we will use pseudonyms in our final report. If needed, some of your identifying characteristics will be changed to help protect your confidentiality. The researchers will be the only people having access to information that can identify you (your course instructors will not have any access to the information you provide). Your writing samples will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet and the audio recordings and computerized files will be stored in a password protected computer. All the data you provide will be destroyed after five years.
Contact for information about the study:

If you are willing to participate in the study, contact Suma Saha.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the UBC Office of Research Services at (+1) 604-822-8581, or send emails to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca

Please sign on the next page of the consent form if you are willing to participate and return a copy of that page to Suma Saha, the co-investigator. You are advised to keep this page for your future reference.

Thank you in advance for participating in the study.

Sincerely,

Suma Saha

Co-investigator

MA student

Language and Literacy Education Department, UBC
Consent form for the project “The Construction of Writer Identity of Bangladeshi ESL Students in the English Academic Community”

Dear researchers,

I have read the consent form and understood that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the course of the study without consequence. I also understand that my identity will be kept strictly confidential. I realize that I may ask for further information about this study at any time if I need to do so.

I am willing to participate in your study by participating in the interviews.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. I agree to participate in this study.

I acknowledge having received a copy of the consent form.

Name (print) ______________________

Signature___________________

Date_________________

Email_______________________ (If you want a final report)
Appendix B: Interview Questions

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND BANGLA AND ENGLISH WRITING PRACTICES IN BANGLADESH

1. Tell me your name, age, major, family background.
2. What language was used as a medium of instruction in your elementary, secondary and tertiary education?
3. What kind of writing activities did you do in your school, colleges and university in Bangladesh? (Translation, essays, paragraphs, letters)
4. How did you attempt to improve your writing in Bangla/English? What tools (e.g., dictionaries, books) and who (e.g., private tutor) helped you to improve your writing skill in Bangla/English in Bangladesh? How and why?

ENGLISH WRITING PRACTICES IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITY

1. How long have you been living in Canada? What are you studying at present and what is your plan after graduation?
2. What kinds of writing have you done in Canada?
3. What sources do you rely on to gather information for your writing? (e.g., your own ideas, experiences, other people, books, etc.)? Why?
4. What steps do you take in writing assignments/academic papers in Canada (Planning, outlining, revising, editing)? Did you follow the same steps for writing assignments in Bangladesh?

CONSTRUCTION OF WRITER IDENTITY IN THE ENGLISH ACADEMIC DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

1. What do you think of yourself as a writer in your first language?
2. What do you think of yourself as a second language writer? Has the impression changed during the period that you have been studying in Canada? How?
3. Do you find academic writing in English challenging in Canada? Why or why not? What aspects do you find most challenging? What efforts do you make to overcome the challenges?
4. Do you think you have succeeded in overcoming the challenges? Why or why not?
5. Do you think your writing skills are constantly changing over time? If so, what are the factors that are making the differences?
6. What are your strengths as an academic writer in English? What makes you believe so?
7. Do you have a particular identity that you desire to present while writing English academic papers in Canada? Does your academic writing in English in Canada reflect who you are (personally, socially or ethnically)? Is this identity different from your identity when you write in Bangla or wrote in English in Bangladesh?

THE TEXT-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was your purpose for this academic paper/assignment? What did you try to achieve? Did you fulfill your purpose? How? Or why not?
2. What impression did you want to create of yourself while writing this academic paper? Explain with examples in the text.
3. What efforts did you make to show your academic voice in your paper? Can you comment on the content, linguistic, and textual features you used to fulfill your target? Explain with examples in the text.

4. How did the academic writing conventions or characteristics in your discipline influence you to write this paper/assignment? Show examples in the text.

5. What are some factors/sources that helped you to shape your writing? Explain with examples in the text.