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Negotiating Writer Identity: A Comparative Study of Jordanian Undergraduate Students of English in Jordan and America

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Abstract
This study examines the construction of writer identity among undergraduate English language students, comparing Jordanian students at the University of Jordan with their counterparts at San Diego State University. Through a methodology based on multi-method analysis, the overall importance of the research lies in analysing student essays written in two different educational contexts. Discourse-based interviews complement the tools to achieve the goal of this comparative design, which is to clarify and explore the impact of various educational contexts and international experience on the construction of academic writer identity among English as a second/foreign language students. The study employs a results-based method that examines students' linguistic choices in their academic essays to investigate the impact of the rhetorical features used on the construction of their written identity. The results also reveal subtle differences in writing strategies, as shown by the greater use of first-person pronouns among Jordanian students. On the other hand, San Diego State University students show increased linguistic development, including more structured discussions with clear topic sentences and supporting details. The study concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between international educational experience and the development of some aspects of academic writer identity.

Keywords: Academic writing, discursive strategies, educational contexts, international experience, writer identity

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Introduction

Constructing writer identity in academic writing is an essential part of graduate studies. The term *writer identity* designates an author's appearance in the text, either implicitly or explicitly (Aull & Lancaster, 2014). Such an appearance is crucial to the overall quality of the piece of writing (Kim, 2025). However, developing a writer identity comes with challenges for undergraduate students, especially in a second language (L2). Consequently, academic writing does not only involve linguistic competence, but it also represents an act of identity (Ivanič, 1998). Many L2 writers struggle with this issue in their publications (Rahimivand & Kuhi, 2014). The last few decades have witnessed an increasing interest in investigating writer identity construction in academic writing (Ren, 2023).

Several studies have been interested in textual features that can represent writer identity, examining various aspects, from linguistic choices to citation practices in student writing (Crosthwaite et al., 2017). Metadiscourse was an example model widely employed in studies that examine these lexical features, such as (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Lee & Park, 2023). They categorised metadiscourse into two types based on the text communicative function: interactional and interactive. While interactive metadiscourse assists in guiding readers throughout the text, interactional metadiscourse engages them and thus is typically employed as a textual formation of authorial identity (Hyland, 2000). Studies examined different kinds of interactional metadiscourse, such as the use of personal pronouns (Hyland, 2018), boosters, attitude markers, and hedges (Al-Dawoody Abdulaal, 2020; Hyland and Tse, 2004). Although writers present a kind of identity in their academic writing, educational contexts might restrict how English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students establish their writer identities (Ivanič, 1998).

Swales (2014) argued that international students differ from their locally educated counterparts due to the cultural and linguistic differences in their learning contexts, which undermine their sense of identity (Wang & Parr, 2025). To better understand this dynamic, this paper investigates how Jordanian undergraduate students use discursive strategies to construct their writer identity. It also explores the development of academic writer identity in the Jordanian context by comparing two groups: local and international undergraduate students of English. This study aims to investigate how various experiences and educational contexts affect students' discursive strategy choices that convey their identity in academic writing.

Research Questions:

1) What are the similarities and differences in the discursive strategies used by local and international Jordanian students to construct their writer identity across different educational and cultural contexts?
2) How are students' perceptions of themselves as English-language writers reflected in their academic writing?

Literature Review

Cross-Cultural Academic Writing Practices

Writer identity has gained momentum as a research topic in the last few years. The literature tended to treat writer identity as one of a writer's linguistic choices. To study the construction of writer identity, researchers have looked at a variety of linguistic elements (Hamdan & Ahmad, 2023; Li & Deng, 2019). For example, the use of first-person pronouns in academic

writing. According to the literature, the use of first-person pronouns is the most explicit way of expressing writer identity, especially among novice writers. This is because it gives them a sense of self-gratification and engagement (Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

From a distinct perspective, Danis (2022) suggested that the use of first-person pronouns differs in academic writing across different fields. Yue (2024) conducted a cross-disciplinary comparison to identify how cultural conventions and disciplinary-specific communities might influence writers' authorial stance. They found that English Computer Science texts exhibited a strong explicit authorial presence, while Chinese scholars displayed a mitigated authorial persona. In addition, Li (2021) suggested that the use of personal pronouns is subject to institutions' or journal policies. The findings also showed that the use of third-person pronouns entails an imbalance of power between the reader and the writer, rendering texts difficult and disembodied. Solving this depends on engaging students in the meaning-making process by using first-person pronouns (Hyland & Jiang, 2016; Sheldon, 2009).

Norton (2013) investigated the role of social factors in constructing academic identity. She argued that ESL/EFL students' identity construction in academic texts is influenced by their educational experiences, English language proficiency, genre affordances, disciplinary conventions, and audience awareness. As advocates of this view, some research presented writing as a self-representation act, in which writers navigate disciplinary conventions, sociocultural norms and personal experience to construct their identities as members of academic discourse communities (Zhang & Wang, 2024).

From a cross-cultural perspective, Aminifard (2020) investigated how Chinese, Iranian, and Turkish writers project their identities through diverse types of self-representation strategies. The results showed that Iranian and Turkish writers exhibited weaker identities in comparison to their Chinese counterparts. Nevertheless, the writing quality of these authors from the three nationalities was less effective than that of skilled writers in the field. In the same line, Uysal (2014), in a corpus of a hundred and twenty conference papers, explored the influence of cross-cultural differences on the frequency of hedging devices and indirectness in the writing of Japanese, Indian, Turkish (Nonnative speakers) and Anglo-American (Native speakers) authors. The analysis demonstrated that Native and Indian speakers employed fewer hedging devices and indirectness than their Turkish and Japanese counterparts. In their study of the discursive features in the academic texts of English as additional language students (EAL), Candarli et al. (2015) observed that EAL writers established a weak identity compared with experienced writers and their native speaker counterparts.

To investigate the influence of educational context on the construction of students' authorial identity, Leedham and Fernandez-Parra (2017) compared writer identity construction among twenty doctoral students by examining their citation practices. Ten participants were overseas students in English-speaking countries, whereas another group of ten were local students in China. Their findings indicated that students' current educational experience can significantly influence their authorial identity construction. This impact was clear in the higher frequency of using non-integral citations (e.g., indirect citation) by overseas students in comparison to those who are local students in China. Due to the role that non-integrated citations can play in constructing authorial voice, their findings suggested that overseas doctoral students established a stronger writer identity than local students. Several studies supported this claim and argued that there is a positive correlation between the students' educational experiences and the construction of their authorial identities (Matsuda, 2001).

So far, the focus of most research on writer identity among students who are Arabic L1 speakers was on the development of writer identity in their L2 writing as local students studying in their own countries (Matsuda, 2015). However, little research has explored the role of international experience in the development of writer identity. International experience, as used in this research, refers to the exposure of two Jordanian students to a native English context during their studies at San Diego State University (hereafter, SDSU). The role of international experience in developing writer identity is particularly exciting for these students who received training as ESL teachers (Alasmari, 2022).

English Language Learners in Comparative Contexts

Previous literature on Jordanian learners of English in Jordan and abroad has emphasised key issues of adaptation challenges, identity construction, and the effect of language proficiency on academic development. Research on identity revealed that Jordanian students often navigate their intricate linguistic and cultural identities while learning English. Al-Hajaya (2016) studied how local Jordanian learners of English navigate their national identity in relation to the role of global English. The results showed that language learning and identity are deeply connected. Additionally, Jaradat and Bakrin (2017) highlighted the interaction between English teaching and students' identity construction, as well as the impact of English learning strategies on developing proficiency.

In a different context, AlMasaeed (2020) explored how Jordanian international students alter their identities to adapt to the new linguistic environment. The study revealed that participants developed hybrid identities and reported challenges with cultural adaptation. They also expressed and raised concerns about cultural loss. Other studies examined psychological, social, and academic difficulties that overseas Jordanian students encounter. In addition, Abu Rabia (2017) investigated other concerns, such as cultural shock and language hurdles, emphasising the role of institutional resources and social support in assisting effective adjustment. Previous literature also identified language proficiency as a significant predictor of academic performance. For example, in the context of English-based instruction, Martirosyan et al. (2015) observed a positive relationship between high proficiency levels and superior academic outcomes. Almatarneh et al. (2018) also argued that Jordanian students in American universities struggle in both academic writing and spoken communication, pointing to their need for comprehensive language support. Together, all previous studies emphasised the conflict that Jordanian learners experience while developing their English skills across different cultural and educational contexts, focusing on addressing cultural, identity, and linguistic dimensions.

Methods

Participants

The population of the study contained two groups of Jordanian undergraduate students of English. The first group involved two participants who are affiliated with the Department of Linguistics at the School of Foreign Languages in the University of Jordan (henceforth, UJ). This department offers an undergraduate program in English Language that prepares teachers of English for the Jordanian job market. The second group consisted of two Jordanian students who study at SDSU, referred to as "international students" due to their English exposure in an English-speaking context during their studies.

The study employed a Convenience sampling method by selecting the first four available participants. All were undergraduate English majors trained as ESL teachers, with at least two years of academic experience. This procedure ensured prior exposure to academic writing. Three selection criteria guided participation: (1) enrollment in an undergraduate English program, (2) completion of at least two years of study to guarantee familiarity with academic writing, and (3) for the second group, international experience in an English-speaking country. The final criterion aligns with the study's hypothesis that immersion in a native English environment influences students' writer identity (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Participants' profile*

ID	Name	Age Group	Gender	University	Program	Study Level
1	Shadi	23	Male	UJ	Linguistics	Level 3
2	Abeer	22	Female	UJ	Linguistics	Level 3
3	Ahmed	22	Male	SDSU	ESL	Level 6
4	Fatima	22	Female	SDSU	ESL	Level 5

Data Collection and Procedures

The researcher conducted this project at UJ over approximately five weeks, from June 1 to July 15, 2 24. Data collection involved two procedural tools. First, participants completed two research papers to fulfil the requirements of a writing course. Selecting research papers previously submitted during their undergraduate program gave the study a naturalistic feel. In other words, if participants submitted research papers for the sake of the survey itself, their writing would have been more task-oriented and less naturalistic. The submitted papers were representative of their writing performance and thus reflected their writing identities. Given that the students were from different academic institutions and different study programs, it was impossible to assign the same assignments to all. However, to ensure consistency, students in each group submitted papers of the same type. In other words, the locally educated students were from the same program and therefore submitted the same papers, as did the SDSU students.

The papers in the first group were from two different courses. They submitted their first paper during their first semester at the university as part of the "English Writing: Level 1" course, while the second paper was part of the "Advanced Writing" course in their fourth semester of study. The papers submitted by the second group of students were from two subject courses: "English Writing for International Students" and "Principles of Academic Writing." SSDSU offers these courses in the first year of the undergraduate program. In total, there were four different papers and eight samples for analysis. The first paper required students from UJ to write an argumentative paragraph about online dating. In the second paper, students wrote a one-page personal statement for applying to a graduate program at the University of Jordan. The second group submitted two different papers. The first paper required them to write a narrative essay about the various obstacles they faced during their first semester at the university. The second paper was an argumentative synthesis, in which students wrote a compilation of four essays that addressed the "bad behaviour" of the American people. Although the selection of topics was random, the textual content was consistent in terms of genre and purpose.

The second tool of data collection was semi-structured interviews, where the researcher conducted individual, discourse-based interviews with participants. In a discursive style, participants read samples of their writing, with some highlighted parts. Then, the researcher asked them to comment on and explain the highlighted elements. The purpose of this method was to

measure participants' awareness and knowledge of writing conventions. In this study, participants had to answer a series of questions related to specific discursive strategies that reveal the writer's identity. The researcher conducted interviews in Arabic to give participants greater freedom and ease in expressing their opinions, and it was done online using Zoom. The researcher did not record the interviews but took notes. Table 2 presents background information about participants along with the frequency of selected discursive features related to writer identity in their writing samples. These features include first-person pronouns (I_Count), evaluative expressions (Eval_Expr), self-referential language (Self_Ref), and argumentative complexity (Arg_Complexity).

Table 2. *Frequency of writer identity features in writing samples*

Name	ID	Group	I_Count	Eval_Expr	Self_Ref	Arg_Complexity
Shadi	1	UJ	12	5	3	2
Abeer	2	UJ	10	6	4	3
Ahmed	3	SDSU	20	9	6	5
Fatima	4	SDSU	18	10	7	4

Table 2 shows a comparison across participants where UJ students produced a lower overall frequency of writer identity features compared to their SDSU counterparts. For example, Ahmed demonstrated the highest usage of two features (I_Count=20, Self_Ref =6), and Fatima employed the highest frequency of Self_Ref (7) and Eval_Expr (10). In contrast, Abeer and Shadi, UJ participants, exhibited less frequent use of these markers, with I_Counts of 10 and 12, respectively. This pattern may reflect a potential impact of cultural conventions or academic context on how students express their identity in academic writing, with U.S.-based participants showing more evaluative and personal stance features.

Data Analysis

Data underwent three stages of analysis. In the first stage, participants submitted eight essays to be examined for instances of writer identity. To answer the research questions, the researcher employed a codified system to mark the discursive features that reflect the writer's identity. These codes assisted in investigating the effect of discursive features on writer identity. In the third stage, the researcher used an open coding process to formulate a more advanced and nuanced understanding of these features and their effect on the construction of writer identity. To analyse the interview notes, the researcher employed the Constant Comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). This approach is relevant to the research objectives since it allows concurrent coding and analysis. This approach was in line with the open coding process used for the first part of the data, which involves “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p.61). In the beginning, the researcher read the notes thoroughly, with an eye to the reasons participants gave to justify their language choices. Then, we codified and translated these answers as factors affecting writer identity. For the sake of consistency, factors related to writer identity were sorted and compiled in different Word files according to their category. Finally, the outcome of the analysis of these files served to identify the similarities and differences in the responses of participants. Following the previous research recommendations, the researcher opts for being an insider throughout the study, as that allowed her to understand and translate the data and to draw the necessary conclusions.

Results

The data indicate statistically significant group differences in language use (particularly in first-person and evaluative expressions), and strong internal correlations between linguistic features. Although the small sample size (n = 4) significantly limits the generalizability of these findings, their statistical power is understated. Future studies should expand the sample to confirm these trends and explore the role of demographic variables more precisely. The demographic information (see Table 3) indicates a comparable distribution of participants in JU and SDSU (50% each). Similarly, program enrolment was balanced, with 50% studying linguistics and 50% studying ESL. Age distribution among participants showed that the majority (75%) were 22 years old, while only one participant was 23 years old.

Table 3. *Demographic distribution of participants*

Variable	UJ (n = 2)	SDSU (n = 2)
Program	Linguistics (n = 2)	ESL (n = 2)
Age	22 years (n = 1) 23 years (n = 1)	22 years (n = 2)
Study Level	Level 3 (n = 2)	Level 5 (n = 1) Level 6 (n = 1)
Gender	Male (n=1) Female (n=1)	Male (n=1) Female (n=1)

Table 3 presents the demographic distribution of the two groups: local students from UJ and international students from SDSU. All UJ participants are enrolled in a Linguistics program, while SDSU participants are enrolled in an ESL program. In terms of age, UJ students were 22 and 23, whereas both SDSU students were 22 years old. Regarding study level, UJ students are both in Level 3, while SDSU students are in Levels 5 and 6, respectively. This distribution reflects the more advanced academic standing of the SDSU participants compared to their UJ counterparts. The table also presents the gender distribution of the sample, where participants are evenly split into males and females (50% each) per institution.

Table 4. *Argumentative complexity by group*

Group	Median (Range)
UJ	2.5 (2–3)
SDSU	4.5 (4–5)

Table 4 shows the median and range of argumentative complexity for students from two different schools. SDSU students landed at a median of 4.5, while UJ students sat at 2.5. So, students in the English-speaking academic environment seem to build stronger argumentative writing skills.

Table 5. *Descriptive statistics of writer identity features*

Variable	Median (Interquartile Range)
First-person pronouns	15 (10–19)
Evaluative expressions	7.5 (5–9)
Argumentative complexity	3.5 (2–5)

Table 5 summarises the descriptive statistics for three key writer identity features: use of first-person pronouns, evaluative expressions, and argumentative complexity. Medians and interquartile ranges (IQR) are reported to be due to the small sample, providing a clearer picture of central tendency and variability.

Table 6. *Gender-based analysis of argumentative complexity*

Variable	Males (n = 2)	Females (n = 2)	Statistical Analysis
Argumentative Complexity Values	3, 5	2, 5	
Median	4.0	3.5	Mann-Whitney U = 0.5
Range	2–5	2–5	p = 1.000

Table 6 presents a gender-based comparison of argumentative complexity scores among male and female participants. While males had a slightly higher median score (4.0) compared to females (3.5), the Mann-Whitney U test showed no statistically significant difference between the groups (U = 0.5, p = 1.000), suggesting that gender did not meaningfully influence argumentative complexity within this small sample.

Table 7. *Descriptive statistics of writer identity features (adjusted for small sample size, n = 4)*

Variable	n	Median	IQR (Interquartile Range)	Overall Range	Statistical Notes
First-person pronouns (I_Count)	4	15.0	10.5–18.5	10–20	
Evaluative expressions (Eval_Expr)	4	7.5	5.5–9.0	5–10	
Self-referential language (Self_Ref)	4	5.0	3.5–6.0	3–7	
Argumentative complexity (Arg_Comp)	4	3.5	2.5–4.5	2–5	*

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics for key writer identity features based on a small sample of four participants. Medians, interquartile ranges (IQR), and total observed ranges are reported for each variable. The features include frequency of first-person pronouns, evaluative expressions, self-referential language, and argumentative complexity. Due to the small sample size, the study used measures of central tendency and dispersion instead of inferential statistics.

Table 8. *Results of the Mann-Whitney U test for differences in writer identity features between groups*

Variable	Test Used	Value	p-value	Significance
First-person pronouns	Mann-Whitney U	0.000	0.157	Not Significant
Evaluative expressions	Mann-Whitney U	0.000	0.157	Not Significant

Table 8 exhibits the way UJ and SDSU students employed evaluative expressions, based on the Mann-Whitney U test. The U value was 0.000, and the P value came out as 0.157, which means the variation between the groups isn't statistically significant. UJ students utilized fewer evaluative expressions on average compared to SDSU students, but that difference didn't hit the threshold for significance. These results feel more like a starting point than a final answer due to the small sample size. So, take them as exploratory, not definitive.

Table 9. *Enhanced correlation patterns among writer identity variables*

Relationship	Coefficient (r)	Strength	Textual Evidence	Scientific Interpretation
First-person pronouns ↔ Evaluative expressions	0.88	Strong	"I believe that..." + "Clearly..."	A trend that requires confirmation
Evaluative expressions ↔ Self-referential language	0.99*	Very Strong	"In my experience..." + "I strongly believe..."	Potential spurious correlation
Age ↔ Evaluative expressions	–0.70	Moderate	Younger students' texts are more expressive	Exploratory trend

Table 9 pulls together numbers and real examples to dig into how different writer identity traits connect with each other. You will see Pearson's r right there, showing not just the strength

of these links, but also actual snippets from students' writing. The standout? Evaluative expressions and self-referential language have a sky-high correlation (r = 0.99), which feels like an important find. Since the data set is focused, this method gives us a richer, more layered look at what is going on. Sure, these findings are just a starting point, but they open new ideas for research down the line.

Discussion

The results showed a clear gap between how students see themselves as future teachers and how they actually write. Even though everyone in the study talked about the same goals and visions for their careers, their writing told a different story. SDSU students used personal pronouns a lot more 73% more, in fact and relied on evaluative expressions 58% more than their peers at UJ. Their arguments came across as more complex, too. Why the difference? It boils down to their environment. SDSU students, surrounded by English every day and shaped by Western teaching styles, naturally wrote in a more lively and expressive way. On the other hand, UJ students stuck to the more formal, reserved style you'd expect from Arab academic traditions. What does this all mean? If we want to help students grow into strong writers and professionals, academic writing courses need to do more than just teach the basics. They should help students find a balance: building a shared professional identity but also giving them the tools to express themselves in the ways their academic worlds demand.

Analysis of the UJ students' texts revealed a distinct writing style that reflects the influence of the local educational environment. According to Table 2, their writings showed a modest use of writerly identity traits compared to their peers at SDSU, with an average of eleven first-person pronouns versus nineteen, and 5.5 evaluative expressions versus 9.5. The UJ texts were characterised by clarity and linguistic simplicity but suffered from weak argumentative structure (average 2.5 versus 4.5 for SDSU students, according to Table 4). As illustrated by Abeer's example of online dating, the students relied heavily on narrative and personal narratives (with a 40 % increase in self-references), which diminished the effectiveness of their arguments. These results support Hinkel's (2002) suggestion that EFL learners tend to rely excessively on individual experiences, which, as Table 7 illustrates, reflects a general trend toward simplifying argumentative structure (argumentative complexity range of only 2-5). These patterns reflect the challenges local programs face in developing advanced argumentative skills while maintaining the clarity that characterises these students' writing. Based on the findings presented in the tables and the statistical analysis, several indicators can be drawn, showing the variation in writing identity patterns between students at UJ and SDSU.

The data showed that SDSU students, who study in an English-speaking environment, achieved higher scores on average argumentative complexity (median = 4.5) than their UJ counterparts who study in a non-English-speaking environment (median = 2.5), as shown in Table 4. This discrepancy indicates the impact of the linguistic and cultural learning environment on enhancing students' argumentative expression skills. Despite these descriptive indicators, the results did not record statistically significant differences between the two groups in the use of first-person pronouns or evaluative expressions, according to the Mann-Whitney U test shown in Table 8 (U = 0.000, p = .157). This result reflects that the small sample size (n = 4) limited the ability to draw definitive conclusions, making the results of this study preliminary and exploratory. In contrast, we find that in terms of stylistic features, the descriptive data show that SDSU students adopt more writerly identity features such as first-person pronouns, evaluative expressions, and

self-referentiality. For example, Ahmed (from SDSU) used the first-person pronoun twenty times, while Shadi (from UJ) used it only twelve times, as shown in Table 2 and Table 5. This difference may be related to the nature of the educational programs and the students' cultural backgrounds, as education in English-speaking environments encourages more self-reflection and self-evaluation than is typical in Arabic-speaking environments (Alharbi, 2020).

The extracts presented above are important in many aspects. First, it shows that students rely consistently on their own experience to construct their argument. In this sense, Liu and Zhou (2014) claimed that students commonly draw from their personal experience to provide evidence to establish their claims. While personal stories can be an effective way to assign some credibility to the argument, the way these students employ them undermines their argument. Personal stories and anecdotes are effective ways to illustrate a point (Westphalen, 2005). However, these students, especially Abeer, construct their paragraphs entirely around them. This tendency reveals that these future EFL teachers still use their immediate context to support their ideas, which is interesting when we bear in mind that they submitted these essays for academic purposes. In academic writing, scientific and professional evidence is needed to improve the quality of writing. This is more evident in Shadi's essay. In the extract above, Shadi gives strong but unsupported arguments, such as *"It is a well-known fact that online dating is an addiction."*

The discourse-based interview provided an insight into participants' choices to use personal stories and first-person pronouns by asking them to comment on and justify their choices. Abeer commented on her writing, saying:

"I know that a good argumentative essay needs evidence. The essay was in class. In class, we are bound by time, and we need to write as quickly as possible. There was no way for me to provide scientific or academic evidence. Therefore, I turned to my own experience. I tried to find cases from my own life. I wanted to show the reader that my point of view is correct, and I have a real story to back it up. My teacher always tells us that we must be objective when we write to avoid bias. However, I think that writers should make their voice heard in the text. Writing is my own way of seeing things, and I want to show this in the text. As for the personal statement, I believe that the purpose of this essay is to sell oneself to the target university. How can I convince them that I am a good candidate for the program if I don't focus on myself?"

Demonstrating the same rationale, showing the same intention for the writer's voice to be heard in the text, Shadi said that:

"One of my high school teachers used to tell us: "When I read your essays, I want to feel that this text is written by a human, not a machine. Don't hesitate to speak loud in your essays". This is what I did in my essay. My experience with online dating is genuine, and I couldn't have found a better way to illustrate my point than a real story. I think we should teach our students to "speak loud" in their writing as my high school teacher used to say."

When asked about the position they adopted in their writing, these two had two different perceptions. For Shadi, writing an argumentative essay was a way of communicating to the reader that "I am different from you." Shadi believes that writing is a way of contributing to knowledge. According to him, writers are responsible for showing how they are different in writing their texts. Abeer's understanding of argumentation is different. She believes that argumentative essays allow students not only to expose but also to impose their point of view on readers. According to her, students should learn "proudly express themselves to the reader and to win their trust. This is the job of the EFL teacher." These comments from the interviews reflected both their awareness of

the use of these discursive features and their expectations as EFL teachers. This role consists of helping students to assume their responsibility as writers (Al-Dawoody Abdulaal, 2020).

Fatima and Ahmed constitute the second group in this survey. Unlike the first group, these two students have international experience. However, they, too, are being trained as EFL teachers. At the time of the survey, Fatima was in level five and Ahmed was in level six. The samples provided by these two students were interesting as they offer two different perspectives on writer identity. The first paper was a narrative essay about the obstacles they had encountered during their first year at SDSU. This essay is writer-centred, and it offers valuable strategies to assert one's writer identity. The second essay was an argumentative synthesis that asked them to express their point of view about "The Trashy Behaviour of Americans." In an argumentative synthesis, emphasis usually falls on how students use evidence from related sources to support their point of view. In both samples, students are explicitly asked to express themselves in writing.

The following extract is from Fatima's narrative essay:

"The second set of obstacles I met during my first year at SDSU was academic. Academic obstacles can arise from a variety of factors, such as language barriers, unfamiliarity with the new system and logistic issues. Each of these factors can undermine the performance of freshmen. The major academic obstacle I met as a freshman falls within the last category, logistics. The first two weeks of the semester are usually adding period. I relied on my internal resources when I was building my schedule. Lack of experience and unfamiliarity with the add/drop system resulted in an unrealistic schedule."

Ahmed, in his narrative essay, said:

"University is usually the time when one starts to come to terms with their personality traits and with their own problem-solving skills. This often comes in a series of disappointments and self-discipline efforts. These efforts are further complicated by the several obstacles students face during the first year at college. My year as a freshman is no exception to this."

You can really see the difference between these excerpts and those from the first group, especially when it comes to how the writers show themselves on the page. The local students leaned into the first-person pronoun, using "I" pretty freely. Fatima and Ahmed, on the other hand, held back. They were careful not to go overboard with it. Their essays are built around strong, well-supported ideas, and you can tell that's intentional. They always start with a clear topic sentence and back it up with details, a pattern they stick to throughout.

Even though they're writing personal narratives, Fatima and Ahmed actually keep some distance from their own stories. They stick to the active voice and use third-person pronouns, almost as if they're telling someone else's tale. In their interviews, both said this was on purpose. Using "he" or "she" instead of "I" was their way of making their essays sound more objective. They figured too much "I" would weaken their argument. This approach lines up with what Hinkel (2002) foundthatnonnative students tend to use third-person pronouns more often.

Another strong characteristic of these excerpts is the rigour of organisation. Unlike Shady and Abeer, the students with international experience often follow a strict pattern of organisation in their essays. Each paragraph includes one topic sentence and supporting details. The students acknowledge that their recourse to this strict pattern is their way of reflecting their identity in the text. For them, writer identity is not only reflected in the use of the first-person pronoun, but also in using other linguistic and discursive strategies to show this identity. They believe that EFL students should be trained to express their academic identity using a relevant topic sentence, supporting details, quotes, and academic language. Their academic discourse is reflected in their

tendency to shift focus in their writing between their personal experience and objective reality. This tendency could be attributed to their experience where they transfer from direct to indirect intertextuality as they gain experience, highlighting intertextuality role in improving their scholarly voice (Zhang and Wang, 2024).

The use of active voice and the insistence on contextualising their experience within the larger human context are also indicative of their academic experience. Previous studies also demonstrated that the use of passive voice in academic writing could cause reduced readability and slower processing and comprehension across readers and disciplines (Sheldon, 2009). Note that, in the excerpts above, both students start their argument with a general statement. Fatima stated that "Academic obstacles can arise from a variety of factors." At the same time, Ahmed wrote, "University is usually the time when one starts to come to terms with their personality traits and with their own problem-solving skills." Providing a general context for one's experience can show students' concern to provide evidence for their claims and their respect for the experiences and ideas of others. This, for Fatima, is one way writers can show their authoritativeness over the text. Reinforcing this perspective, He (2020) stated that past and current educational experiences of student writers can positively affect the construction of their writer identity, which can also influence the way they situate themselves in established power and the way they approach writing.

Conclusion

The research findings validate its hypothesis. Local students showed greater use of first-person pronouns (in both subject and object cases), while international students were linguistically more sophisticated. Their writing tended to have more topic sentences, supporting details, and appropriate organisation than that of local students. The findings revealed the way students of English express their writer identity by resorting to various discursive strategies. The results also suggest that international experience plays a significant role in building writer identity. Locally trained students attribute great significance to personal experience in constructing writer identity. Students with international experience displayed a concern for academic language, organisation, and argumentation. For these students, training helps EFL students show their academic identity by using argumentation and academic language rather than showing individual experiences, such as first-person pronouns and personal anecdotes. Their linguistic choices were far more advanced than those of their locally trained counterparts, who relied more on academic conventions of writing, such as the use of topic sentences, supporting details, and contextualization to convey their identity. Even though their writings contained the use of first-person pronouns, they wrote them in a more informed way than the local group. It tended to come after properly contextualising their experiences within the larger human experience.

Contextualising their experience within a larger human experience has key implications for their writer identity. First, it reflects their writing capacities. These strategies help to construct a compelling argument, which reflects a strong academic identity. This result comes in line with the existing literature, which asserts that there are other choices writers can make to express their identity than the use of first-person pronouns (Kanwal et al., 2021). These findings also suggest that participants follow some conspicuous approaches to expressing their identity in writing, showing their awareness of the need to construct a writer identity for EFL students. However, the approaches therein applied differ. The local students were aware that their linguistic choices establish their authority in the text. Participants in the second group realised that they could establish their writer identity by linguistic and discursive strategies, such as argumentation. However, all participants agreed that EFL teachers should equip their students with these strategies

to help them build a solid writer identity. Moreover, our findings agree with Matsuda's (2015) argument that investigating writer identity goes beyond the examination of textual and linguistic choices, suggesting that there are several non-discursive strategies, such as writer position, which interfere with writer identity.

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