PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING BY SOME

SAUDI GRADUATE STUDENTS STUDYING IN

AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

By

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BY SOME SAUDI GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract: The increasing number of the Saudi students who want to study in American universities has generated a need to explore their perceptions of academic writing for writing researchers and instructors to help them to be successful academically. The study reported in this dissertation explored some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism. The results, collected from interviewing 12 Saudi graduate students enrolling in various programs in different American universities, show that the participants might have a limited understanding of the meanings and of the purpose of academic writing. One of the causes for such a limited understanding might be that most of the participants, for example, did not practice academic writing skills beyond their academic assignments. The second possible cause for the limited understanding of academic writing by the participants could be that they were receiving more feedback at the micro level in comparison with the macro level feedback. The findings also show that non-nativeness in English is perceived as a liability and as having a negative impact on academic writing. Additionally, the findings indicate that the academic writing difficulties might not be at the sentence level as some of the participants claim. The findings also show that some students sometimes misunderstand the connection between academic writing and the requirements of various fields of study. The possible sources for the participants' perceptions are: the perceived effects of the participants' professors, the perceived effects of their fields of study/occupations, the perceived effects of their peers, and the perceived effects of the Saudi culture/educational culture. The effects of educational culture can be seen on the participants' perceptions of plagiarism, on the role of professor, an on the role of the writing center.
The research study has various implications. These include increasing students' awareness about the importance of academic writing even after receiving their graduate degrees, educating students about the importance of a new understanding of the writing center, and informing professors about how to influence their students' academic writing skills positively.

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ABBREVIATION

ABBREVIATION	DESCRIPTION
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELI	English Language Institute
ETS	Educational Testing Service
GPA	Grade Point Average
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IMRaD	Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion
IRB	Institutional Review Board
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NNS	Non-native Speakers of English
NS	Native Speakers of English
SABIC	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation

TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
The TOEFL iBT	The TOEFL internet-based test
The TOEFL PBT	The TOEFL paper-based test
TOEFL	Test Of English as a Foreign Language
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an orientation to my dissertation project. I will first discuss the importance of academic writing for international students and for graduate students in universities in English-speaking countries and in universities that use English as the primary medium of instruction. I will then talk about the reason that made me focus on students' perceptions of academic writing.

I will also highlight the importance of being familiar with the perceptions of students of academic writing to improve their academic writing skills. In addition, the research gap in the literature that this dissertation attempts to fill will be addressed. Moreover, I will discuss the significance of this study. Furthermore, the research questions and the method employed to answer them will be discussed. Finally, I will provide an outline of each chapter in this dissertation.

1.2. Problem statement

During the last 25 years, the number of international students enrolling in various programs at American, Canadian, British, and Australian universities is steadily

increasing (Devereux, Macken-Horarik, Trimingham-Jack, & Wilson, 2006; Institute of International Education, 2014). The proliferation of English as the primary language of scholarly communication in academia has been well established (Flowerdew, 2013). As a result, researchers started to focus on second language writing of graduate students, who are aspiring members of various academic communities (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008).

The previous experience of international students in academic writing has an impact on their writing development and practices (Gee, 1996). Hence, some researchers (for example, Matsuda, 1998) encouraged researchers to explore the writing skills of international students and investigate the effects of these students' cultural and educational backgrounds on their writing skills.

Many international graduate students are found to lack the ability to write academic papers in English before they start their programs in English-speaking countries and universities (Rose & McClafferty, 2001). Moreover, some of these students have been noted as having perceptions of academic writing that may not be consistent with those held by their instructors or professors (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001). One of the goals of higher education is to improve the academic writing skills of these students (Eyres, Hatch, Turner, & West, 2001). As a result, many Masters and Doctoral programs encourage students to take part in academic writing classes and activities. In fact, some researchers have argued that international students should not only write term papers, theses, and/or dissertations, but also attempt to publish academic professional papers in order to contribute to their fields (Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Lovitts, 2001). Pageadams, Cheng, Gogineni, & Shen (1995) claim that publications will increase the chances for the

students to compete in the job market. In addition, they continue, the published papers will improve the university's reputation.

Even with such high expectations from academic researchers and instructors regarding students' academic writing skills, many studies revealed problems and difficulties encountered by the students (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Torrance & Thomas, 1994; Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992). According to Torrance *et al.* (1992), such problems and difficulties may lead students to quit their programs. Academic writing in every graduate program is considered to be a challenge even for students whose English is their mother tongue (Casanave, 2003), and it is considered to be even more challenging for nonnative-English-speaking students who have different levels of academic experience.

Because international students tend to bring with them certain rhetorical and academic strategies related to their culture which may be different from those followed in the countries they want to pursue their studies in (Connor, 2002), a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of those students toward academic writing would be important to help them overcome any problem they might encounter while writing their academic papers.

1.3. Why study perception?

I decided to explore students' perceptions rather than their awareness because perceptions are created based on their knowledge and backgrounds (Landauer & Rowlands, 2001). Awareness, on the other hand, is based on the facts and information a

person has about a certain topic. Therefore, perception, I believe, comes first and has an influence on shaping what comes after that.

1.4. Statement of purpose

Second language (L2) students -who are working on their graduate degrees- usually encounter difficulties in generating the required type of writing needed at this stage (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Casanave, 2002). Students' points of view regarding their writing strategies and writing processes, however, have not been explored extensively in the literature. These points of view, or perceptions, are very important because they have an effect on how the writing skill should be taught and learned (Johns, 1997). In fact, Hyland (2000) points out that "a major task of EAP [English for Academic Purposes] teaching is therefore to address the perceptions and practices of writing that students may bring with them" (p.145).

Researchers have found that there is a connection between the beliefs held by students about academic writing and the writing students produce (Lavelle & Guarino, 2003). However, Boscolo, Arfe, & Quarisa (2007) indicate that there have been only a limited number of studies that dealt with the students' beliefs about, or perceptions of, writing during the last two decades. The limited literature on students' beliefs about writing is problematic because international students' understanding of and challenges they face in producing academic writing need to be explored further (Larsen, 2003; Ochieng, 2005). Because of the differences in their linguistic, cultural, and educational traditions, L2 students may have different perceptions of what is valued in writing by

professors at English as the medium universities (Cadman, 1997; Canagarajah, 1996; Nagata, 1999; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992).

Regarding Saudi students' perceptions of academic writing, some studies have explored the perceptions by Saudi undergraduate students of academic writing (for example, Fageeh, 2003). Since the perceptions of the graduate students towards their academic writing skills might impact their future, either negatively or positively, the current study attempted to investigate the perceptions by some Saudi graduate students enrolled in different majors in American universities of academic writing in order to increase their own and their instructors' awareness of their weaknesses and strengths and to develop the appropriate kind of assistance they might need to improve their academic writing skills.

Plagiarism is one of the main concerns of international students enrolled in universities in English-speaking countries. The penalties that students receive for committing such an act vary: they will lose some points or marks or, more seriously, fail a course, depending on university policies. Therefore, it is important to shed some light on the perceptions of Saudi graduate students regarding this issue and how they perceive it.

1.5. Justification of the dissertation project

Understanding graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and plagiarism is very crucial because it will demonstrate how they interpret academic writing and the difficulties they encounter in the writing process. In addition, being familiar with students' perceptions will help academic writing instructors to give their students the type

of assistance and courses their students need to improve their academic writing skills. However, only a limited number of existing studies have tackled graduate students' pereptions of academic writing and plagiarism (for example, Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Cai, 2013; Dennis, 2005; Yeh, 2010). Such studies, however, lack some important information about this topic. First, these studies did not look at the perceptions by some Saudi graduate students from different majors of academic writing and of plagiarism. Second, these studies did not highlight the sources of such perceptions.

1.6. Research questions

The study aims to answer these questions:

1- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive different aspects of academic writing?

2- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive plagiarism?

3- What might the sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism be?

1.7. Chapter outlines

My dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter II covers how English in general and writing skill in particular are taught in the primary education, middle school, and high school systems of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I will then talk about the writing scores of Saudi students in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) to get a sense of the limitations of their writing skill according to writing experts. Furthermore, I will list some of the

difficulties faced by L2 students in academic writing. Finally, I will review previous studies that looked at graduate students' perceptions of academic writing in general and according to their disciplines, their countries, and genres in particular.

Chapter III reports on the interview method used in this study. I will first refer to the usefulness of this method in comparison with other methods (for example, questionnaires). After that, I will shed some light on the interview questions. The piloting of the interviews and the procedures of coding are described as well. Next, I will give some information about the interviewees. I will also talk about the data-collection procedure. Finally, I will address the trustworthiness, researcher bias, and some ethical considerations.

Chapter IV includes some of the findings from interviewing the twelve Saudi graduate students (six males and six females) who were enrolled in different majors in different universities in the United States of America. I have provided a profile for each participant, drawn from their answers in the interviews.

Chapter V covers the findings of this study. I will first report on the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing. This section includes four main subsections: simplistic understanding of definition of academic writing, viewing academic writing as important for academic survival only, perceived approaches to learn academic writing, and academic writing difficulties are at the formal level only.

After that, I will talk about some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of plagiarism. This section includes the agents behind raising awareness of plagiarism and importance of the knowledge of plagiarism for academic survival.

I will also identify the perceived sources of acquiring such perceptions. This section includes the perceived effects of the participants' professors, the perceived effects of the participants' fields of study/occupations, the perceived effects of participants' peers, and the perceived effects of participants' national culture on their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism.

Chapter VI attempts to discuss the findings of this study. This chapter has three main sections. The first one is about the misunderstanding academic writing by the participants. The second section is about the misunderstanding the role of the writing center. The last section is about the problematic sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing.

Chapter VII is the conclusion where I will try to provide a summary of some of the major findings in this study. I will also talk about the limitations of this study. In addition, I will address the significance of the study and I will provide some suggestions for future research.

1.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I provided an orientation to my dissertation project. I first discussed the importance of academic writing for international students and for graduate students in universities in English-speaking countries and in universities that use English as the primary medium of instruction. After that, I talked about the reason that made me focus on students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism.

I then highlighted the importance of being familiar with the perceptions of students towards academic writing to improve their academic writing skills. I also

pointed out the research gap in the literature that this dissertation attempts to fill. In

addition, I discussed the significance of this study. Moreover, I listed the research

questions and the method employed to answer them. Finally, I talked about each chapter

in this dissertation.

In the following chapter, I will provide a detailed literature review related to the

topic of the dissertation project.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1. Introduction

Many international students enroll annually in American, Canadian, British, and Australian universities, and the number of those students is steadily increasing (Devereux, Macken-Horarik, Trimingham-Jack, & Wilson, 2006; Institute of International Education, 2014). Those students come from different educational backgrounds (Devereux *et al.*, 2006). Because they enroll in universities where English is the medium of learning, those students are required to use English when they write their academic papers (for example, term papers, exams, reports, theses, and dissertations). Writing in English is difficult for many non-native speakers of English (NNSE) because they need to learn the language as well as the academic conventions among other factors (Casanave, 2003; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Crow & Peterson, 1995; Thesen, 1997).

Since writing is a complex activity that requires paying attention to different areas (vocabulary, sentences, grammar, paragraphs, ideas, academic conventions, and expectations of audience) (Biggs, 1988), the academic writing ability of NNSE students

has been under investigation in order to have it improved. Researchers have found that various factors affect the academic writing skills of L2 students. One of these factors is their perceptions of these skills. McDonough (1999), for example, states that L2 writing is affected by theories related tofirst language writing. Such theories could be others' theories about writing in one's first language or theories that a person develops oneself based on one's learning of first language writing.

Since it is important to understand students' difficulties in order to provide them with the help they need (Calderhead, 1987) and there are studies that point out that Saudi Arabian students encounter difficulties with academic writing (e.g., Fageeh, 2003; Hellmann, 2013), this study intends to explore Saudi graduate students' perceptions of English academic writing, especially their understanding of academic writing and of plagiarism. The reason behind exploring their perceptions of plagiarism as well is that it seems to be a widespread practice (Furedi, 2003). In fact, some have found that more than 80 % of students plagiarize (Burkill & Abbey, 2004).

In the rest of this chapter, I will first review the status of English in Saudi Arabia. A review on this topic is important because it will shed some light on the status of English in general and writing in English in particular in the Saudi educational system (for example, the role of English, history of English teaching, and approaches to teaching writing) which, hopefully, will lead to some explanations regarding Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing. I will then talk about the writing scores of Saudi students in TOEFL (Test Of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System). TOEFL and IELTS are international tests used to measure students' abilities to use and understand English at the university

level. Looking at their TOEFL and IELTS scores that reflect their writing skill scores will enable me to understand the features of their writing skill according to writing experts (features here means problems in their writing skills). This step will help me to compare and contrast such features with the perceptions of the participants regarding the difficulties they encounter in their writing their term papers.

After that, I will show how academic writing is perceived by some experts from the field of academic writing. Additionally, I will explain the difficulties encountered by L2 students in academic writing. One of the purposes for talking about such points is to highlight the effects of first language (L1) writing theories on second language (L2) writing style.

Since this dissertation is about graduate students' perceptions of academic writing, I will talk about the purpose of academic writing for graduate students and I will refer to the type of academic writing expected from students who are at the graduate level. Because some researchers (for example, Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Ivanic & Camps, 2001) consider the presence of voice in students' English writing as a sign of how strong that writing is, it is important to define it and to talk about why students fail to attempt to show their voices in their writing as mentioned by some studies in the literature.

Because one of the important skills a graduate student has to acquire is audience awareness (Kakh & Mansor, 2014), it is important to talk about it and its effects on some students based on findings from different studies. I will also illustrate the importance of writing centers for graduate students because they "need additional support to master both the content of their subjects and the writing conventions of their disciplines"

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(Snively, Freeman, & Prentice, 2006, 154) and the writing centers could be a venue where such additional support can be provided. I will also cite some studies that identified some of the reasons that make students do not go there.

Next, I will talk about what the literature has said about graduate students' perceptions of academic writing in general and their perceptions based on their disciplines, on their countries, and on genres in particular. I will also refer to the studies that address the perceived sources of some of the students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. Since plagiarism is an important topic in academic writing, I will highlight some of the studies that talked about plagiarism in general and students' perceptions of plagiarism in particular. I will then talk about some of the perceived sources for the student's perception. Finally, I will present the research questions that the current study attempts to find answers to.

2.2. The status of English in Saudi Arabia

It is important to talk about English in Saudi Arabia because it will make us understand the history, the status, the role of English in general and English writing in particular, and how they (English in general and English writing skill in particular) are taught to students in Saudi Arabia.

2.2.1. The educational system in Saudi Arabia

When oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1933, King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, started to put heavy emphasis on education for Saudi citizens (Al-Saloom, 1995). Before that, the Saudis were only memorizing the Holy Quran and learning to read and to write basic Arabic with the help of Imams (usually religious

persons). Since 1933, the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aimed to achieve two goals. The first one is eliminating illiteracy. The second one is meeting the social, economic, and religious needs of the country. Al-Saloom (1995), for example, notices the crucial role of religion in education:

> Islam is the very soul of its [the Saudi educational system] curriculum and may best be illustrated by the number of periods per week devoted to the study of Qur'an, Islamic tradition, jurisprudence, and theology from the first level of kindergarten to the last level of higher education. (p.19)

Since 1933, the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed major changes for the purpose of providing the Saudi citizens with a high-quality education.

Currently, the educational system in Saudi Arabia consists of five stages: kindergarten (one-two years) for children at five and/or six years old, elementary school (six years) for students who are between seven -12 years old, intermediate school (three years) for students who are 13-15 years old, secondary school (three years) for students who are 16-18 years old, and university (four -six years depending on the major) for students who are 19-24 years old. With the exception of kindergarten, schools are segregated by gender. Education is free for Saudi citizens and residents; however, the residents are asked to pay tuition if they want to study in Saudi universities.

2.2.2. Foreign language policy and the role of English in Saudi Arabia

English has become a very important language in the world, especially in terms of international relations and scientific-technological advancement in every country. As a

result, English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi Arabia and students start learning English from grade four (10-year-old students) . However, English in Saudi Arabia is not considered a second language but a foreign language, which makes Saudi Arabia an expanding-circle country (Kachru, 1992). This status of English means that English is not an official language in the country, and it is not used as a means of communication in the country. It is only learned and practiced by Saudi students in classroom settings.

In the wider society, English is often useful. For example, applicants to private sector jobs (for example, hospitals, hotels, clinics, factories, and media) are expected to know how to communicate in English. With more than nine million people from various nationalities in Saudi Arabia in 2012 (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2013), English is the common language used for communication among 9 million people and between them and the Saudis, as well. English media are also available. For example, one of the channels of Saudi TV broadcasts in English and two newspapers are published daily completely in English.

2.2.3. The history of English teaching in Saudi Arabia

Although the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has never been colonized by a European country, English was introduced to the Saudis for political, economic, and religious reasons. The unification of Saudi Arabia took place from 1902 until 1932. During that time (1902-1932), the government realized the need for Saudi citizens to be able to interact in English with different people from different countries in the world. Needing to

run a new country, the Saudi government needed to develop relations with many countries and English was the language of some of these countries.

When oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia, many American and British companies, experts, and employees were recruited to help, and many Saudis who worked in those companies were asked to learn English to facilitate the communication between them and English-speaking experts and employees (Alam, 1986). Moreover, the country needed to create an infrastructure (for instance, electricity, health, water, and telecommunication) where many workers from different countries share English as a common language. Saudi citizens were taught English to interact with these workers. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has the two holiest mosques in Islam where millions of Muslims around the world visit to perform Umra and Haj (religious rites). As a result, it was important for the Saudis to learn English in order to be able to interact with those visitors who speak English.

The decision makers in the newly unified country fully understood the importance of English for the country; therefore, they decided that English should be included in the educational system of the country. The Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia initiated the teaching of English as a foreign language in 1927 (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). The educational policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia revealed that the purpose of teaching English in the country is:

> Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in
> addition to their original language, to enable them acquire knowledge, arts
> and useful inventions, transmit our knowledge and sciences to other

communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity. (Ministry of Education, 1974: 13)

The Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia revealed the following points as the general aims and objectives of teaching English to the students (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013, 114):

"1- To enable the student to acquire basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

2- To develop student's awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication.

3- To develop the student's positive attitudes towards learning English.

4- To enable the student to acquire the necessary linguistic competence required in various life situations.

5- To enable the student to acquire the linguistic competence required in different professions.

6- To develop student's awareness about the cultural, economic, and social issues of his society and prepare him to participate in their solutions.

7- To develop the linguistic competence that enables the student, in the future, to present and to explain the Islamic concepts and issues, and to participate in spreading Islam.

8- To enable the student linguistically to present the culture and civilization of his nation.

9- To enable the student linguistically to benefit from English-speaking nations, that would enhance the concepts of international cooperation that would develop understanding and respect of the cultural difference between nations.

10- To provide the student with the linguistic basis that would enable him to participate in transferring other nations' scientific and technological advances that can enhance the progress of his nation."

The general aims and objectives of teaching English in Saudi Arabia for the elementary, intermediate, and secondary stages can be found in Appendix A.

In 1929, English was taught at the elementary level; however, English instruction was terminated in 1948 for no obvious reasons (Al Hajailan, 2003). Teaching English began at the secondary level first in 1927 with the establishment of the first secondary school. Later on, it became a subject at the intermediate level in 1953 (Jan, 1984). English was taught again to students at the elementary level in 2004, but it was taught to students in the sixth grade only. In 2011, it was introduced to students in the fourth level, and it was introduced to the fifth graders in 2012.

2.2.4. English as a subject in the Saudi educational system

English is the only foreign language taught in public schools in Saudi Arabia. It is, sometimes, taught along with French in some private schools. English is taught at all

universities whether as a major or as an elective subject. In some departments at universities (for example, medicine, science, engineering, dentistry, pharmacy), English is used as the medium of instruction.

In elementary, intermediate, and secondary public schools, textbooks for all subjects, with the exception of English textbooks, are written in Arabic. English is taught by Arab teachers (mostly Saudis nowadays). This phenomenon is considered by some researchers (for example, Schweer, 1999) as an advantage because the teachers are able to interact with their students in their native language which supposedly leads to the better teaching of English.

The textbooks used to teach English to students in Saudi Arabia in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools used to be developed locally in order to reflect the culture of the country and to describe the events that took place in the country, as well. The developers of the books were asked to make sure not to include topics which are not related to the culture or to the religion embraced by the Saudi people. Dating and drinking wine, for example, are not included in such books because they are not allowed in the country. However, in recent years, the Saudi Ministry of Education started to use books for teaching English published by foreign companies. These companies include: EF education first, Oxford, and MM publications. Such companies were asked to be selective regarding the topics included in the books.

2.2.5. Approaches to teaching English writing in Saudi Arabia

It is important to explore how English writing is taught to students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because this knowledge might help in understanding Saudi

graduate students' perception of academic writing. Unlike teaching English writing in universities where it is different from university to university and from department to department, teaching English writing in Saudi Arabia at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools level is similar because the students are studying the same books (except in international schools where the books vary from school to school).

2.2.5.1. English writing instruction at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools level

Except in elementary schools where it is taught only twice a week, English is taught four times a week in intermediate and in secondary schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. English is taught for forty five minutes in each session for students enrolled in elementary, in intermediate, and in secondary schools. In order for the students to pass, they are required to get only 28 out of a total score of 100. Unfortunately, it is considered a very low score to prove that the student is qualified to pass. In other words, it is expected that all students will pass since it is very easy to get such a low score.

Although English is taught for 9 years before a student can enroll in a university (from grade 4 to grade 12 according to the American educational system), most writing textbooks focus on grammar (for example, the use of comma, apostrophe, spelling) rather than writing itself (for example, structure, process, strategies, genres, voice). The most common exercise in the writing textbooks is that an essay (usually contains 2-3 paragraphs) is provided to the students where there is a mistake in every line (the mistake could be something related to spelling, punctuation, tenses, and pronouns) and the

students have to identify the mistakes and correct them. Another common exercise is copying a written essay where the students are going to change only a limited number of words; for example, in the writing textbook for 12 graders, there is an essay about *The Planet Venus* and the students are asked to write about *The Planet Mars*. The students are provided with a table that shows some information about the two planets (for example, the distance between the planet and the sun, its diameter, the number of days, and average temperature). Using the information in the table, the students write an essay similar to the one that they just read.

In elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, there are no specific classes for writing *per se*. Although students are introduced to topic sentences, supporting paragraphs, and conclusions, they are asked to write only 1-2 short paragraphs or very short essays during the whole semester. Writing ability is neglected by teachers of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Students, for example, are usually asked to memorize 1-3 essays from the textbook before the final exams and they will be asked to write only one of those essays with the help of a table that contains some information about the topic. In this kind of writing test, Saudi students do not use critical thinking or even express their own opinions in their essays. Alnofal (2004) points out that

> Students are puzzled if they are asked to write about a topic they did not memorize in advance. Students are not trained to write about new topics. They are trained to write what they read, changing particular structural features like tense or subject. Generally speaking, the writing assignments are used to improve and test the mastery of grammatical structure. (p.20)

In short, most of the Saudi students finish elementary, intermediate, and secondary stages and their writing ability in English is very poor.

2.2.5.2. English writing instruction at the university level

Although qualified native speakers (NS) of English are preferred to teach English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, very few of them can be seen in Saudi universities and colleges. One of the reasons for this shortage in the number of qualified NSs is the high salary they demand. As a result, it is rare, if any, to find a qualified NS of English who holds a Ph.D. in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) or related fields and teaches in one of the Saudi universities and colleges. Some of the NSs hold a master's degree, and most of them hold only a bachelor's degree. In addition, not all the NSs who teach English in Saudi Arabia have experience in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) students and have a degree in TESL or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or even in a relevant field (for instance, literature, translation,or linguistics), but they are recruited by their employers to teach just because they are native speakers of English.

Most of the professors who teach English at the university level are Arabs (for example, Saudis, Egyptians, Syrians, and Sudanese). Many of these professors received their graduate degrees from universities in their countries. There are some Saudi and Arab professors who received their graduate degrees from English-speaking countries (for instance, U.S.A., U.K., Canada, or Australia). Unfortunately, there is a tendency among Saudis not to teach in the universities. Instead, they prefer to take administrative jobs whether in the universities or in any other place.

At the university level, the number of English classes depends on the departments the students are enrolled in. In English departments, for example, the students take classes about the four skills and other areas (for instance, literature, translation, linguistics, sociolinguistics, testing) more than their non-English-major counterparts enrolled in other departments who take only one class (a three-hour class) per week. Students pursuing a bachelor's degree from the English department at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia, for example, will have to take four courses in writing (i.e., Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, and Essay). Students enrolled in departments other than English will take only one course about English and it is mainly about reading and/or grammar.

In writing classes, for English majors, the instructions are given in written form by the teachers and the assignments are completed in class or at home (Al-Hazmi & Scholfield, 2007). The writing classes, according to Al-Hazmi and Scholfield (2007), start with a brainstorming session and a discussion regarding the topic(s) of the assignment. Students, in contrast to the students enrolled in American universities, are not required to produce drafts of their works (Al-Hazmi & Scholfield, 2007). Not asking the students to revise and to produce drafts of their works could be attributed to the large number of students in a class (40 students at least in one class) which does not allow professors to provide them with some feedback. Professors and teaching assistants are usually required to teach 4-5 classes (which means 160 students at least) in addition to academic research and administrative work they are sometimes asked to do. Having such heavy workloads (teaching 160 students at least, doing academic research, and administrative work) does not allow professors and teaching assistants to read more than one draft for each student. As a result, only the highly motivated students will revise and

work on several drafts of their works and give them back to their professors who, if they have time, will correct those drafts. Although making the students rely on themselves could be considered a positive matter since it helps them to be independent, one could aargue that it does not assist them in improving their academic writing skills.

2.3. Saudi students' TOEFL and IELTS writing scores

Admission committees at universities in English-speaking countries use standardized test scores (for example, TOEFL and IELTS) to assess the English language proficiency of non-native speakers of English. International students are required to take such tests and to get a specific score in order to be admitted. Here, I will talk about Saudi students in the United States because they are the participants in this study. Additionally, I will talk about the Saudi students' writing scores in both IELTS and TOEFL. Knowing such scores will enable us to understand what may be the problems in the essays written by the Saudi students according to the IELTS and TOEFL examiners. Such knowledge may be useful when we explore Saudi students' perceptions of academic writing to compare and contrast what the participants perceive as difficult in academic writing with what may be the problems in their TOEFL and IELTs essay.

2.3.1. Saudi students in the U.S.

The government of Saudi Arabia started a program called the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) in 2005. The purpose of this program is to help the Saudis to study abroad at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In the 2010-2011 academic year, there were more than 140,000 Saudi students supported by this program in 22 countries (Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, 2013b). The number of Saudi

students in the United States has reached 128,014 in 2013 (Ministry of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia, 2014).

Saudi students in the United States can be categorized into two groups:

1) Those who work in Saudi organizations (for example, universities and ministries). They are supported by their organizations. In general, they are only allowed to do master's and doctoral degrees.

2) Those who do not work in organizations such as universities and ministries and wish to study abroad can apply to KASP and they can receive a scholarship for the degree that they want to study (bachelor, masters, or PhDs) if the requirements are met.

2.3.2. TOEFL results for Saudi students

One of the tests used by many English-speaking colleges and universities as an admission requirement for non-native speakers of English (NNS) is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The test is administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS). The test aims to confirm that the NNSs' level of academic English meets the requirements of the English-speaking colleges and universities. TOEFL is now used by numerous agencies and programs that provide scholarships. The score of the TOEFL tests is valid only for two years. After that, it is expired.

According to ETS (The agency that administers the TOEFL), there are two formats of the TOEFL test. The first format is the TOEFL internet-based test (iBT) and the scores of this test range from 0 to 120. The second format is the TOEFL paper-based

test (PBT) and the scores of this test range from 310 to 677. Because most students nowadays take the TOEFL iBT (TOEFL, 2013), I will mainly discuss it below.

The TOEFL iBT consists of four sections (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) and lasts for almost 4.5 hours. Table 1 provides more information about the test.

TABLE 1

Some information about the TOEFL iBT

	No. of passages and tasks	No. of questions	Time	Score
READING	Three to five passages	12–14 questions for each passage	60 - 100 min.	0 - 30
LISTENING	Six to nine passages	5 – 6 questions for each passage	60 – 90 min.	0 - 30
SPEAKING	Six tasks		20 min.	0 - 30
WRITING	Two tasks		50 min.	0 - 30
TOTAL				0 - 120

As can be seen from Table 1, the score for the writing section in the TOEFL iBT ranges from 0 to 30. According to the official website of TOEFL, if a student gets scores between 24 and 30, his/her academic writing ability is "Good", if s/he gets scores

between 17 and 23, this means his/her academic writing ability is "Fair", and if s/he gets scores between 1 and 16, this means his/her academic writing ability is "Limited".

The writing section in the TOEFL iBT consists of two tasks. The first task is the integrated task. In this task, the test-takers read an academic passage and then listen to a speaker discussing the same topic. The test-taker is required to write a summary of the listening passage highlighting the essential points and then try to make a connection between the listening passage and the reading passage. The number of words for the essay in this task ranges from 150 to 225 words in 20 minutes. The second task is the independent passage. In this task, the test-takers are required to state and support their opinions on a certain topic. The number of words required for the essay in this task should be at least 300 words in 30 minutes. The essays of the test-takers are evaluated by 4 raters.

Saudi students from January 2012 to December 2012 had the second to the lowest score in the writing section of the TOEFL iBT when compared to the other sections of the test (Educational Testing Service, 2013). The average score for Saudi students in the writing section was only 15 out of 30. According to Educational Testing Service (2005), this score shows that the problems in the written essays for the independent writing by the test takers include:

- "Limited development in response to the topic and task

- Inadequate organization or connection of ideas

- Inappropriate or insufficient exemplifications, explanations, or details to support or illustrate generalizations in response to the task

- A noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms

- An accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage."

(Educational Testing Service, 2005, p. 51)

The Educational Testing Service (2005) points out that the problems in the written essays for the integrated writing at this score (15 out of 30) are:

"A response at this level contains some relevant information from the lecture, but is marked by significant language difficulties or by significant omission or inaccuracy of important ideas from the lecture or in the connections between the lecture and the reading; a response at this level is marked by one or more of the following:

- The response significantly misrepresents or completely omits the overall connection between the lecture and the reading

- The response significantly omits or significantly misrepresents important points made in the lecture

- The response contains language errors or expressions that largely obscure connections or meaning at key junctures, or that would likely obscure understanding of key ideas for a reader not already familiar with the reading and the lecture." (Educational Testing Service, 2005, p.52)

As we can see from the descriptions above, having such low mark shows that the academic writing skills of the Saudi students are poor. The essays written by Saudi students, for example, have problems with word choice, grammar, developing ideas, and

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the organization of the essay. These essays also show the lack of the ability to make connections between ideas and to support their points of view in the essays. Such writing problems are suggested by ETS and are not my analysis of the Saudi students' papers.

2.3.3. IELTS results for Saudi students

Another test used by many English-speaking colleges and universities as an admission requirement for the non-native speakers of English (NNS) is the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). The test is run by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment. The purpose of this test is to measure the English language proficiency of international people who want to study, to work, or to immigrate to English-speaking countries. The IELTS test is now used by a large number of agencies and programs that provide scholarships. The score of the tests is valid only for two years. After that, it is expired.

There are two types of the IELTS test. The first type is the academic test which is for students who want to enroll in universities and colleges in English-speaking countries. The second is the general test which is for those who want to emigrate to or work in English-speaking countries. Since Saudi students often take the academic test, it will be explained in details in the following paragraphs.

The IELTS scores ranges from zero till nine, where zero means "the test taker did not attempt the test" and nine means "the test taker is an expert user." Each sub-skill (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) has its own score. The test lasts for 2 hours and 54 minutes. Table 2 demonstrates more information about the IELTS test.

TABLE 2

Some information about the IELTS

	No. of passages and tasks	No. of questions	Time	Score
READING	Three passages	40 questions	60 minutes	0 – 9
LISTENING	Four sections	40 questions	40 minutes	0 – 9
SPEAKING	Three sections		11 - 14 minutes	0 – 9
WRITING	Two tasks		60 minutes	0 – 9
TOTAL			Around 2 hours & 54 m.	0 – 9

As can be seen from Table 2, the score for the writing section in the IELTS ranges from zero to nine. The writing section in the IELTS consists of two tasks. In Task One, the test-taker is supposed to describe, explain, or summarize a table, diagram, chart, or process in at least 150 words. In Task Two, the test-taker is required to write an essay responding to an argument about general topics in at least 250 words. The examiners will be looking at these areas when grading the test-takers' essays: task achievement (in Task One), task response (in Task Two), coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy.

Saudi students from January 2012 to December 2012 performed the worst in the writing section of the IELTS when compared with the other sections of the test (IELTS, 2013a). The average score for the Saudi students in the writing section was only 4.7 out of 9. The following tables show the problems in the essays scoring at the 4.7 range in Task One and in Task Two according to the writing band descriptors (IELTS, 2013b).

TABLE 3

The problemsin Task One essays in IELTS for test-takers who get 4 - 4.9

Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
* attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features / bullet points; the format may be inappropriate * may confuse key features / bullet points with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate.	* presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response * uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive.	*uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task * has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; * errors may cause strain for the reader.	* uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses * some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty.

TABLE 4

The problemsin Ttask Two essays in IELTS for test-takers who get 4 - 4.9

Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
* responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate * presents a position but this is unclear * presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported	* presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response * uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive * may not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing	* uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task * has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader	* uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses * some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty

As we can see from the descriptions above, having such low marks shows that the academic writing skills of the Saudi students are poor. They, for example, have problems with delivering their ideas, with connecting their ideas, with choice of vocabulary, with grammar, and with spelling. Additionally, they lack the way to voice their thoughts and they know a limited number of academic words and sentence structures. Such problems are based on IELTS standards and are not my analysis of the Saudi papers.

2.4. The literature on various aspects of academic writing

It is important to talk about academic writing in order to be familiar with the types of difficulties students usually have with academic writing, with the types of differences in L1 and L2 academic writing, and with academic writing and graduate students in terms of its purpose and their performance.

Academic writing has attracted the attention of many researchers (for instance, Canagarajah, 2002; Dudley-Evans, 1995; Ferris, 2009; Hyland, 2006; Matsuda, 1998; Swales, 2001; among others). Academic writing has been approached from different angles. Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), for example, focused on genres and Ferris (1995 a & b) focused on feedback.

Many researchers provide various purposes for academic writing. Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson (1994), for example, described academic writing as a "complex combination" of generating and choosing ideas to produce a text (p. 379). Torrance et al. (1994) claim that the purpose of academic writing is to create new knowledge. Irvin (2010) argues that academic writing is "demonstrate[ing] knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting." (p.

8). In this definition, Irvin (2010) points out that the writer should be aware of his/her audience and their expectations in order to be able to achieve success in the writing task.

 Other than producing or demonstrating knowing, Dong (1997) claims that academic writing:

> Involves learning a new set of academic rules and learning how to play by these rules. Often these rules change from discipline to discipline, and the audience and the purpose of writing vary according to each writing context. For non-native students, the mismatch of writing difficulties and expectations operating in their home countries compound their writing difficulties. (p. 10)

As we can see in the definition above, Dong has expanded the definitions of academic writing to include learning the rules and expectations of one's disciplines and learning about how the expectations in one's first language may be different from those in the L2. Therefore, students are advised to learn the features of academic writing, including textual borrowing, authorship, originality, and textual ownership in order to meet the expectations of their chosen fields in L2 academic writing. Introducing such features would hekp non-native speakers of English who want to write in English for academic purposes to be aware of some problems related to academic writing (Bloch, 2001).

Other than talking about the purpose and nature of academic writing, some scholars have pointed out the effects of academic writing. Academic writing could impact student's lives whether negatively or positively. Giridharan (2012), for example, points

out that good academic writing will lead to academic success. Academic writing could also have a negative effect on L2 students' academic success or survival as well. Listening to some international graduate students in the humanities and social sciences in the process of writing their theses, Cadman (1997) points out that the students are not aware of the academic conventions, and they are afraid that it would have a negative influence on their final grades.

Another reason for the failure of ESL/EFL students in meeting institutional literacy expectations is that students perceive academic writing as not important to them (Tuan, 2010). Tuan (2010), for example, who interviewed 85 second-year students in the English Linguistics and Literature department at a university in China, points out that not being interested in writing makes students lack motivation even to improve their own academic writing skills. Furthermore, academic writing is considered by some students as "a time-consuming and unpleasant chore" (Yong, 2010, p. 47).

2.4.1. Previous studies on difficulties in academic writing

Students in ESL/EFL contexts lack native-like linguistic abilities; however, they are expected to be familiar with the content of the subjects they are studying and the conventions of academic writing in order to be able to write good academic papers in their own disciplines. Many students face difficulties when they write in their mother tongues and writing becomes even more arduous when they write in the second language (Gilmore, 2009). Such challenges could have a bearing on their academic success.

It is important to shed some light on the difficulties in academic writing encountered by students. In subsequent chapters, I hope to compare and contrast such difficulties with those perceived by some Saudi graduate students in this study.

2.4.1.1. Difficulties related to the influence of first language (L1)

The theories of first language writing affect the learning of second language writing (McDonough, 1999). Several researchers attempted to identify the rhetorical features of certain languages, including, German (Clyne, 1987), Japanese (Kobayashi, 1984), Arabic (Al-jubori, 1984; Sa'Adeddin, 1989). One of the findings that these studies share is that students tend to transfer the rhetorical features of their first language writing into their second language writing.

2.4.1.2. Difficulties related to the writing process

International students also struggle during the writing process in English-speaking universities (Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; Dudley-Evans, 2002). Cooper and Bikowski (2007) claim that international students are sometimes not aware of the writing demands of their own graduate majors and this makes them struggle while writing their academic papers.

2.4.1.3. Difficulties related to teachers and teaching methods

Most Saudi EFL students lack the motivation to write in English (Aljamhoor, 1996; Jouhari, 1996; Al-jarf, 2001). They attributed this problem to old teaching methods and to unqualified teachers who are teaching English. Using the grammar-translation method in teaching English, for example, has limited the communication skills of the

Saudi students in the written and in the spoken forms (Abalhassan, 2002). Schneider (2009) refers to the formulaic writing introduced by the teachers who teach English to enable the students to increase their scores in standardized tests (for example, TOEFL, IELTS) as one of the reasons that make students not interested in writing. Unfortunately, this lack of interest affects students' writing proficiency (Petric, 2002).

2.4.2. Cross-cultural differences in writing

Kaplan (1966) made the first attempt to address the effect of culture on second language writing. He claims that each language has a specific writing conventions that can affects students' writing style when they write in a second language. That study started a new field of study initially called contrastive rhetoric and now is known as intercultural rhetoric. Intercultural rhetoric was first suggested by Connor in 2004 to describe the interpersonal and intercultural effects that shape second language writing (Connor, 2008). Intercultural rhetoric is defined by Connor (2011) as:

> an umbrella term that includes cross-cultural studies (comparisons of the same concept in culture one and culture two) as well as studies of interactions in which writers from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds negotiate through speaking and writing" (Connor, 2011, p. 2).

There are some researchers who are not in favor of contrastive/intercultural rhetoric. Casanave (2004), for example, points out that intercultural rhetoric might not be a useful pedagogical construct. She claims that the "principles of intercultural rhetoric cannot be applied directly to classroom writing instruction" (Casanave, 2004, p. 43). She

also claimed that "narrative inquiry in L2 writing research can potentially help L2 writing researchers dismantle stereotypes of cultural patterns in writing and of writers labeled simplistically as representatives of their respective cultures" (Casanave, 2005, p. 29). Casanave (2004, 2005) seems to be asking to treat all students as individuals without contexts.

Similar to Casanave, Spack (1997) claims that "Teachers and researchers need to view students as individuals, not as members of a cultural group, in order to understand the complexity of writing in a language they are in the process of acquiring" (p.772).

On the other end of the scale, there are some researchers who defended contrastive/intercultural rhetoric. Li (2014), for example, argues that culture/context should be taken into consideration while attempting to understand and explain texts. She also believes that contrastive rhetoric should be limited to applied linguistics and text analysis. She points out that those who are against contrastive analysis come from various disciplinary orientations with a qualitative research focus which is different from contrastive analysis because it is more of a quantitative research emphasis.

2.4.3. Differences in L1 and L2 academic writing

Several attempts have been made to identify the similarities and differences between first language and second language academic writing. Noor (2001), for example, looked at contrastive analysis in different studies that compared texts written by professionals and students. He finds that teaching English to students is not enough, but English teachers should remodel students' minds to help those students to develop their writing skills. He states that in order to develop the writing skill of ESL students, students

should be told that they "can learn a different rhetorical system the same way they have learned their own rhetorical system" if they want to be good writers (p.267).

Some researchers believe that academic writing in L1 and in L2 tend to have more similarities than differences. Stapleton (2002), who explored the findings of some studies that dealt with some features in L2 writing, argues that academic writing in L1 and in L2 have few differences. Those differences can be found in the development of the essay (for example, English writing is deductive whereas Chinese writing is inductive), in the structure (for example, the use of passive to avoid responsibility), and in the genre (for example, the absence of 'I' in journal articles).

On the other end of the scale, there are some researchers who believe that academic writing in L1 and in L2 have more differences than similarities. Wang (2012), for example, claims that there are differences between them at the sentence level (which includes sentence subject and pattern), in terms of vocabulary (which includes formation of the vocabulary and choice of vocabulary), and at the passage level (which includes voice, organization, and the selected topic).

Wang (2012) claims that one of the differences between academic writing in L1 and in L2 is at the sentence level. Wang (2012) claims that there is a tendency among Chinese students to use short sentences when they write in Chinese; therefore, that made them write short sentences in English, as well.

Regarding the differences in academic writing between L1 and L2 in terms of vocabulary, Wang (2012) claims that English words show how they are pronounced which is on the contrary of the Chinese characters because they can demonstrate their

meanings from their graphemes. Wang (2012) states that "[t]he differences in word formation between L1 and L2 can lead to differences in sentences, and structure in academic writing" (p. 637). There is a tendency among L1 writers to use the words forms in their first language when they write in a second language (Kaplan, 1976).

At the passage level, Wang (2012) claims that the paragraph organization is different from a language to another. Kaplan (1966) points out that English speakers "use a predominantly linear paragraph organization in expository texts". The Chinese students, on the other end of the scale, tend not to write their essays in a direct approach (Shen, 1989).

Apparently, the influences of L1 on one's L2 writing are complex, as we can see in the review above. My position is that e ach culture has its preferences regarding forms of expression and other culture-specific expectations (Kaplan, 1966). Najera (1990) states that international students face difficulties when they attempt to adjust to the academic setting of the university. Those difficulties come from the differences between the old environment (their own country) and the new environment (the new country) in terms of type of education, relations between students and teachers, and the techniques of writing academic papers (Al-Nusair, 2000). Fageeh (2003) referred to culture as one of the reasons that influenced the writing skill of the Saudi students. For example, hHe claims that speaking in Saudi culture is preferred over writing, which may have led some Saudi students to see less value in improving their writing.

Similarly, Bain Butler, Wei, and Zhou (2013) claim that Chinese and Thai students enrolled in American universities use the academic writing skills of their

cultures when they write in English. By the same token, Reid (1993) says "writers from different backgrounds organize and present written material that reflect the preferences of each particular culture" (p. 270). She claims that students' cultural differences will have an influence on the linguistic features used in writing in English. Therefore, when the international students start their academic lives in English-speaking countries, they encounter difficulties regarding the new conventions they are expected to be familiar with.

Of course, we will have to wait and see whether L1 culture and writing practices have any effecs on the perceptions of academic writing by the participants in this study. I will discuss this issue in the subsequent chapters.

2.4.4. The research on academic writing and graduate students

Since this dissertation is about graduate students' perceptions of academic writing, I will first talk about the purpose of academic writing for graduate students. I will then refer to the type of academic writing expected from students who are at the graduate level. Finally, I will show the differences between graduate and undergraduate writing.

Since graduate students are expected to be proficient writers (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000), the purpose of academic writing for graduate students in higher education, according to Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann (2003), is to enhance students' thinking skills and content knowledge, to evaluate their writing skills and knowledge, and to encourage them to take part in academic communities.

Linder, Murphy, Wingenbach, & Kelsey (2004) claim that the performance of graduate students is measured through what they write in their term papers during their study. Therefore, the graduate students' success in their programs is based on their academic writing skills (Pecorari, 2006).

The differences between graduate and undergraduate writing as illustrated by Heady (2007), are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5

The differences between graduate writing and undergraduate writing

Graduate Writing	Undergraduate Writing
Is mechanically skillful.	Is mechanically correct.
Is concise though also nuanced.	Is concise.
Is engaging, stylish, and interesting, and speaks with your own voice.	Is clear though not necessarily interesting.
Explores a topic or research question in an original way.	May or may not demonstrate new ideas.
Demonstrates extensive research.	Contains citations when required.
Has a strong organizational frame.	Uses transition words and phrases.
The paper moves from point to point in the way you want your audience's	Exactly conforms to outside models of argumentation, such as the Toulmin method

thoughts to move; structure grows out of content.	of legal argument or classical rhetorical theory.
Is written for a professional audience.	Is written for a general audience or for the teacher.
Will, with revision, be publishable in a professional journal or presentable at a good conference.	Will, with revision, be presentable at an undergraduate conference or in a general interest publication.

As can be seen from Table 5, the writing of graduate students goes beyond the conventions of good writing. Lavelle and Bushrow (2007), for example, referred to graduates' writing as a tool employed by the students "to make a meaning that is beyond the sum of words" (p. 808). They also state that the type of academic writing at the graduate level requires that students "move beyond the strategies of their undergraduate years, and that graduate instructors develop awareness of what graduate students believe about writing and about how it is that they tackle writing assignments at that level" (p. 818).

2.4.5. Voice in academic writing

Since some researchers (for example, Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Ivanic & Camps, 2001) considered the presence of the voice in students' English writing as a sign of how strong that writings is, it is important to define it and to talk about the reasons that make

students do not attempt to show their voices in their writing as mentioned by some studies in the literature.

Matsuda (2001) defines voice as "the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available, yet ever changing repertoires" (p. 40). Although some researchers might sometimes use other terms; for example, authorial presence (Hyland, 2001) and authorial identity (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Tang & John, 1999), these terms can be considered similar to voice because their aim is to "identify similar discursive features associated with individualism found in written texts" (Stapleton, 2002, 178).

Several studies made attempts to explore the reasons that make some L2 learners avoid presenting their voice while writing. Some studies attributed that to the hierarchical and/or cultural values in some countries (Hinkel, 1999; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996; Wu & Rubin, 2000). One of the signs that shows the use of voice in writing is the use of the 'I' (Hyland, 2001; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Shen, 1989; Tang & John, 1999; Wu & Rubin, 2000).

2.4.6. Awareness of audience in academic writing

An academic writer should consider his/her audience during the writing process if s/he wants her/his work to be considered a good one (Stapleton, 2002). The expert writers are the ones who know their audience, their purpose of writing, and the discourse type (Berkenkotter, 1981). A writer must understand the expectations of his/her audience and write his/her works accordingly (Hayes & Bajzek, 2008). Knowing the audience will

have an effect on the writers' works in terms of what information should be included and the arrangement of the presented information.

One of the important skills a graduate student has to acquire is audience awareness (Kakh & Mansor, 2014). Ede and Lunsford (1984) claim that there are two types of audience. The first one is audience addressed which is "the actual or intended readers of a discourse". The second one is audience invoked which is "a construction of the writer, a created fiction" (p. 82).

Thinking of the audience while writing made the Iranian participants in a study add more details to their writing to express their ideas (Kuhi, Asadollahfamb, & Amin, 2014). Carvalho (2002) claims that the number of qualifiers increased when his subjects started to take the audience into consideration during the writing process. In addition, thinking of the audience made the students use more sentences to describe their ideas and they also spent more time on planning in comparison with those who did not think of the audience while writing (Sato & Matsushima, 2006). Yoo (2010) points out that thinking of the audience made the students put much emphasis on the following strategies: keep in mind a purpose, adhere to the prompt, remember grammar and punctuation, and stick to rules and formats.

2.4.7. Writing center and graduate students

One of the facilities universities provide to their students to improve their skills is the writing center. Writing centers (sometimes they are called writing places, writing clinics, writing labs, writing rooms) take the form of peer tutoring (Williams & Severino, 2004). For the purpose of helping students with their academic writing skills, many

universities provide writing centers and academic writing courses (Torrance & Thomas, 1994; Wilkinson, 2005).

The purpose of the writing center is to have "better writers, not better writing" (North, 1984, p. 438). The writing center helps students to be better writers through structuring their ideas instead of just proofreading their academic papers. Although some universities offer writing courses to make students familiar with the type of writing required at the graduate level, such courses cannot provide students with the assistance they need till they finish their degrees (Mullen, 2001). The consultants at the writing center, according to Harris (1997), should:

> guide, ask questions, listen, and make suggestions, but they are neither authority figures nor evaluators. […] Tutors, then, are trained to move writers into the active role of making decisions, asking questions, spotting problem areas in their writing, and finding solutions. Tutors are taught how to keep from seizing control and how to avoid identifying problems and offering solutions for students ... The tutor's goal is not to fix the individual paper but to help the student become a better writer. (p. 221)

Both North (1984) and Harris (1997) show that the writing center staff should not only improve students' papers but also improve the students' writing skills.

Although the number of the undergraduate students at universities tend to be more than the number of the graduate students, almost half of those who go to the writing center are second language graduate writers (Phillips, 2008). The claim made by Phillips (2008) about the type of the students who visit the writing center (graduate non-native

speakers of English) shows how the services provided by the writing center are important for this group of students.

Since graduate students go to the writing center because they "need additional support to master both the content of their subjects and the writing conventions of their disciplines" (Snively et al., 2006, p. 154), it is important to talk about the reasons that make them go there and the reasons that prevented them from going there.

Several studies, on the one hand, have talked about the reasons that make students seek help from the writing center. Grinnel (2003), for example, points out that students go to the writing center because of its one-on-one tutorial method. This type of learning make students learn better (Bruffee, 1987). He claims that:

> [s]tudents learn better through noncompetitive collaborative group work
>
> than in classrooms that are highly individualized and competitive. (p. 40)

Another reason that make students seek help from the writing center is to discuss with the writing center staff the topic they want to write about before starting the writing process (Clark, 1992). This means that writing center's services are not only limited to helping the students after they are done writing papers, but even before that to help them with the possible ideas that should be talked about in their assignments.

Snively *et al*. (2006) claim that there are various reasons that make students go to the writing center. The first reason is that, unlike professors' feedback, the consultants in the writing center provide graduate students with intensive feedback during the whole semester. The second reason is that graduate students can ask the consultants in the writing center some of the questions that they cannot ask their professors because they

feel that those questions are "stupid." The last reason is that the consultants in the writing center can deal with some of the problems that some graduate students may encounter (for example, procrastination and writer's block) better than the graduate students' advisors. Students also prefer going to the writing centers because they know that the staff there will help them with their work instead of evaluating their work (Wallace & Wallace, 2006).

Rafoth (2010) pinpoints several reasons that make students pay visits to the writing centers. He claims that one of the reasons that make students go to the writing centers is that staff there can help them put on paper what they have in their heads. A second reason mentioned by Rafoth (2010) is that students are looking for reassurance about how good their writing are so that they do not need to make changes. A third reason is that writing center staff can help students to develop a sense of audience in their writing so they can understand how their readers will respond to their papers.

On the other hand, there are some studies that investigated the reasons that make students avoid seeking help from the writing center. Alexitch (2002), for example, claims that some students do not go to the writing center because they were not told to do so by their professors. Probably such students believed that their academic writing skills are good and that they are well-prepared so their professors do not ask them to go there (Vazquez, 2008). Another reason that makes some students do not want to go to the writing center is that they do not want to appear incompetent in front of their classmates and friends (Vazquez, 2008). Such students perceive visiting the writing center as a sign of having weak academic writing skills. Some of the students, according to Vazquez (2008), are not interested in writing itself. As a result, they avoid seeking help from the

writing center despite the fact that not going there might affect their academic papers'

grades negatively.

Rosove (2009) refers to time as one of the reasons that causes students to not go

to the writing center. She says that some students do not like spending a long time on

their papers. Another reason that was mentioned by some of the students in Rosove's

study (2009) is that they did not receive A in their academic papers although they went to

the writing center; therefore, students think that going there will not help them achieve

good grades.

2.5. Research about perception

Since my study is about students' perceptions, I am going first to talk about the

importance of students' perceptions. After that, I am going to highlight the findings of

some studies that explored students' perceptions of academic writing according to their

discipline, the students' perceptions of academic writing according to their countries, and

the students' perceptions of academic writing according to academic genres.

2.5.1. Definition of perception

Perception is defined as "the process by which people select, organize, interpret,

retrieve and respond to the information from the world around them." (Schermerhorn,

Hunt, & Osborn, 2003, p.2). I decided to explore students' perceptions because

perceptions are created based on their knowledge and backgrounds. Therefore,

perception, I believe, comes first and has an influence on shaping what comes after that.

2.5.2. The importance of understanding students' perceptions

The focus on learners in the field of L2 writing started with the beginning of using a student-centered approach to learning. This approach aims to explore students' needs, their attitudes toward, and their perceptions of various aspects of writing. Johns (1997) refers to this approach as exploring the students' personal theories of literacy. The personal theories she talks about are the writing strategies and experiences that students usually bring with them. She argues that the writing skill of learners is affected by such theories that shape their perceptions; therefore, it is very important to be familiar with students' perceptions of academic writing for the purpose of helping them improve their academic writing skills.

Students' writing performance, according to Pajares and Valiante (2006), is affected by their perceptions. As a result, knowing the perceptions by students of writing could play a major role in providing them with the suitable writing exercises to develop their academic writing skills.

2.5.3. Students' perceptions of academic writing according to their discipline

Using questionnaires, Koncel and Carney (1992) investigated the perceptions by 60 graduate social work students of academic writing. The questionnaires had questions about services provided by the writing center and why students go/do not go there, questions about the most important but difficult skills to acquire, and questions about the students' evaluations of their own writing skills and experiences.

Koncel and Carney (1992) claim that students liked writing counseling because it improved their term papers. In addition, the students pointed out that they lacked confidence when it came to their own academic writing skills. The use of accurate

terminology in their field and the ability to write more concisely, according to the students, were their main difficulties that they encounter.

Observing 47 doctoral students who had been enrolled within the last 5 years in the educational leadership program at a university in the USA and looking at their written and oral reflections on the scholarly writing process in order to explore their perceptions, Caffarella and Barnett (2000) found that the students in the study perceived receiving critique from professors and classmates as a very helpful element in terms of learning about the writing process and improving the last draft of their works. The students, however, revealed that receiving critique was emotional and sometimes frustrating.

Cai (2013) used questionnaires and focus group interviews to explore students' perceptions of academic writing. There were fifteen items in the questionnaire divided into three major sections. The first section explored the students' purpose of learning academic writing and how important it was to them to be familiar with various academic genres. The second section aimed to explore the perceptions of the students regarding the difficulties of some academic writing skills. The last section asked the students about their language problems and general writing skills. There were 6 students in the focus group interview. The interviewees were asked the same questions from the questionnaire. The interviewees were also asked to provide some comments regarding some general answers from the questionnaires.

The graduate students majoring in English dislike using academic language and claimed that they are interested in learning academic English only to finish their current

studies (Cai, 2013). Additionally, the findings revealed that the students experienced difficulties with the content and structure more than with language-related components.

Apart from language problems, the students in Cai's study (2013) also reported encountering problems regarding writing introductions, searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources, and referring to sources. in addition, they reported experiencing difficulties in reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap). Other sections following the introduction also proved difficult to them. these sections include designing the research methods, writing the methods section, summarizing and presenting the data, commenting data, writing references / bibliography, writing conclusions, and proofreading written assignments.

2.5.4. Students' perceptions of academic writing according to their countries

Graduate students' perceptions of academic writing have been explored in some countries. Cooley and Lewkovicz (1995), for example, asked 362 graduate students at Hong Kong University to fill out a questionnaire that explores different aspects of academic writing (for example, their experience with academic writing, the difficulties they encounter, the level of difficulty regarding some academic writing skills).

Cooley and Lewkovicz (1995) reported that at Hong Kong University, almost half of the graduate students who filled out the questionnaire revealed that they encounter difficulties with academic English. Those graduate students stated that they have major concerns with the development of ideas and with the organization of the argument.

Yeh (2010) interviewed 4 Taiwanese graduate students who had just finished their first semester in the master's program who were majoring in applied linguistics in order

to explore their perceptions of academic writing learned in the academic courses provided to them. The questions in the interview included questions about the students' writing experiences, the most important elements in a research paper, the difficulties the students encounter while writing a research paper, and the issues in research writing that they want to learn more about.

One of the interesting findings in that study is that the students revealed that such courses did not cover many issues related to academic writing. As a result, they still do not feel confident about their academic writing ability. The students also revealed that they encounter difficulties when it comes to writing the literature review section. Similar to the students in Cai's study (2013), the students in Yeh's study (2010) did not encounter difficulties with the language-related components.

Lee and Tajino (2008) asked 95 Japanese students to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire includes 18 items that explore the students' perceptions about the language-related and structure/content-related issues.

The students in Lee and Tajino's study (2008) revealed that they tended to perceive academic writing to be difficult. The students also perceive the language-related components (for example, expressing ideas in correct English, expressing ideas clearly & logically, using appropriate academic styles) as more difficult than structure/content-related components (for example, linking sentences smoothly, synthesizing information /ideas, proof-reading written assignments).

2.5.5. Students' perceptions of academic writing according to academic genres

There are some studies, although few, that looked at the students' perceptions when they are involved in writing different genres. Shaw (1991) interviewed 22 international graduate students in a British university while they were writing their dissertations. The questions in the interview aimed to elicit information from the students about the academic relationship with other peers and with the advisor, the writing process and the effect of mother tongue, and the awareness of audience.

Graduate students in the study conducted by Shaw (1991), for example, pointed out that the *Introduction* and the *Discussion* sections are the ones that they have problems with when they write their dissertations. Some of the students said that the *Literature Review* section is not difficult to write and some of the students, on the other hand, stated that it is difficult. Some of the participants claim that writing in English necessitates more sentences in order to provide more explanations.

Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) interviewed four international graduate students in a university in New Zealand to explore their perceptions about their writing difficulties. The questions in the interview included questions about the writing difficulties students encounter in writing some section in a thesis, the possible reasons for such difficulties, and some questions related to writing the content of the students' theses.

The students in Bitchener and Basturkmen's study (2006) perceive writing the *Discussion* section in a thesis as a difficult task. The interviews revealed that the graduate students encounter difficulties to meet the requirements of this genre. Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) claim that the reason for such difficulties is that the students do not

have a complete understanding of the role of this section. Moreover, it was found that the students tend to use simple sentences in writing this section.

2.6. Students' perceptions of plagiarism

Being an international student helped me to be familiar with some of the problems international students usually encounter in their academic lives and in particular with the problems they encounter while writing academic papers (for example, academic papers for courses, lab reports, dissertations, theses). Since more than 80 % of international students plagiarize (Burkill & Abbey, 2004) which means that plagiarism is a widespread practice among students (Furedi, 2003) and the penalties that students receive for committing such an act vary, starting from losing some points or marks on their academic papers to failing a course (in some universities for plagiarizing), it is important to shed some light on the perceptions of the Saudi graduate students regarding this issue and how they perceive it.

Carroll (2002) defines plagiarism as "passing off someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as your own for your own benefit" (p. 9). Plagiarism is considered by university faculty members as an increasing problem (Dennis, 2005; Maslen, 2003). Almost 54 % of the graduate students enrolled in Australian universities have plagiarized at least once (Maslen, 2003). The nonnative speakers of English have a tendency to commit plagiarism more than the native speakers (Dennis, 2005).

One of the reasons that may encourage students to plagiarize, according to Maslen (2003) and to Pickard (2006), is the new inventions of technology that provide information to the students without difficulty or efforts (for instance, the Internet). The

students also plagiarize because there is a heavy emphasis on the final assessments to the term papers that are written during the whole semester (Maslen, 2003). There are several reasons that make students plagiarize; for example, the student is not in contact with the professor because there are many students in the class, the student does not have the required skills, the student aims to get high marks, the bad design of the task, cultural differences, and the student does not have enough time (Razera, 2011; Relph & Randle, 2006).

Dawson (2004) and Park (2003), however, claim that some students commit plagiarism with no intention of doing that. Dawson (2004), for example, claims that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally because they forget to write the reference, they did not know that their professors would check their papers for plagiarism, and they did not paraphrase enough words.

Although plagiarism is not acceptable, Pennycook (1996) claims that plagiarism should not be completely prevented because:

> All language learning is to some extent a process of borrowing others' words and we need to be flexible, not dogmatic, about where we draw boundaries between acceptable or unacceptable textual borrowings. (p. 227)

Dennis (2005) asked 80 undergraduate and graduate students to fill out a questionnaire to explore their perceptions of the meaning of plagiarism and the accepted borrowings from other texts before it is considered plagiarism. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section included the definition of plagiarism and

several scenarios where the students were asked if these scenarios are considered plagiarism or not. The second section asked the students about their expectations of the number of their friends who plagiarized. The last section asked the students to provide the reasons that make students tend to plagiarize in their academic papers.

Dennis (2005) found that the students were less clear about which scenarios are considered plagiarism and which ones are not considered plagiarism. Moreover, when the students in this study were asked to choose among nine reasons for committing plagiarism, they pointed out that the most common reason is that *they started too late and ran out of time* and the least common reason is that *they thought paraphrasing would be disrespectful*.

The international graduate students (n. 47) and the undergraduate students (n. 69) in the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences in a Swedish university revealed that they were not completely aware of what was acceptable and what was not acceptable when it comes to plagiarism (Razera, 2011). The participants referred to the lack of interest in the topic and to the repeated assignments every time the course is given as two of the main reasons that made students tend to plagiarize (Razera, 2011).

2.7. Previous studies on students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism

Studies that talked about the perceived sources of students' perceptions of their academic writing skills and of the issue of plagiarism fall into two categories. The first category deals with the sources that take place on campus (for example, Lucas, 2001; Cai, 2013; Weil, Oyelere, Yeoh, & Firer, 2001). This category includes the effects of courses the students enroll in, the effects of teachers and professors, and the effects of the

teaching methods. The second category includes off-campus sources (for example, Carson & Nelson, 1996; Tajino, 2008). This category includes the effects of the students' culture and the effects of the students' English proficiency.

2.7.1. On-campus sources of students' perceptions

Some studies have talked about the sources of students' perceptions that take place on-campus. These sources include the effects of courses the students enroll in, the effects of teachers and professors, and the effects of teaching methods.

2.7.1.1. *The effects of the courses the students enroll in on their perceptions*

Some researchers explored the effects of the courses the students enroll in on shaping their perceptions. Lucas (2000), for example, points out that the subjects the students take during their first year when they major in accounting are very important. He attributes this importance to the role those courses play in shaping the perceptions of the students towards accounting and towards accountants. He says that students who found "the organisation of the course [is] very clear, with direct learning materials that provided them with reading for each section of the course and a clear programme of workshop questions and lecture handouts" (p. 487) did not consider accounting course as just a subject to be passed, but as techniques and strategies of accounting that they (the students) were eager to learn.

In the study conducted by Gambell (1991), several students noticed that "university discouraged writing" (p. 429). Those students referred to the writing courses they are required to enroll in to support their claims. The students indicated that the unrealistic writing demands in those writing courses made them perceive writing as

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difficult. One of the unrealistic writing demands, according to the students in Gambell's study (1991), was that they are required to finish writing six essays in only three hours during their final exam.

2.7.1.2. The effects of teachers and professors on students' perceptions

Academic writing is considered as a social activity (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). For instance, if we explore the expected kind of act between the student-writer and the teacher-reader, we will notice that such act is not to persuade, to entertain or to inform the teacher but to write the homework in the way s/he expected (Belanoff, 1991; Horowitz, 1991; Popken, 1989). Hence, it can be stated that academic writing can be regarded as a form of testing supervised by teachers and professors and performed by students.

Different researchers explored the effects of teachers on their students in terms of shaping their perceptions. Byrne and Willis (2005), for example, claim that teachers influenced their students' perceptions. The 135 students who filled out questionnaires indicated that their teachers played a major role in shaping their perceptions and making them understand how accounting as a profession is important. Cai (2013) also points out that the Chinese graduate students he interviewed perceived the Introduction and the Referencing sections in a thesis as not difficult. The interviewees in Cai's study (2013) referred to their teachers and to their professors who dedicated many lessons in their writing courses to teach them how to cite references correctly as the source of such a perception.

Gambell (1991) claims that one of the factors that make students perceive writing as difficult is the "inconsistent and ambiguous standards among professors" (p. 429). He

says that some of those professors did not clarify to their students what they (professors) expect from them (students) in their (the students') writing papers. He also says that the professors did not show their students how their papers would be graded. These two reasons, according to Gambell (1991), made the students in the study perceive writing as a difficult task.

Power (2009) also includes professors as the major players in shaping the students' perceptions of plagiarism. The students in her study claimed that "different professors have vastly different expectations and enforcements of plagiarism from one another" (p. 652). Such differences among professors lead to student penalties for plagiarizing although they did the same with other professors and were not punished for plagiarism. According to the students in Power's study (2009), only one professor explicitly talked about plagiarism.

Finally, Xuemei (2007) found that the professors and teachers of the students play a major role in shaping the students' perceptions of writing in particular and in education in general. In Xuemei's study (2007), the students did not search for different sources to improve their academic skills (for example, reading books, talking with a classmate), but they were relying on the teacher as the only source to teach them the academic writing conventions.

2.7.1.3. *The effects of teaching methods on students' perceptions*

The perceptions of students are shaped by various factors, including teaching methods (Weil, Oyelere, Yeoh, & Firer, 2001). The 51 graduate students who took part in Weil *et al*.'s study (2001) indicated that using case studies in their courses made them

believe that their thinking skills have developed. The use of case studies also helped the students to have a more comprehensive understanding of what their profession would be in the real world in the future (Weil et al., 2001).

2.7.2. Off-campus sources of the students' perceptions

Some studies have focused on the sources of students' perceptions that take place off-campus. These sources include the effects of students' culture and the effects of students' English proficiency.

2.7.2.1. The effects of students' culture on their perceptions

The students in the study conducted by Carson and Nelson (1996) perceived their peers' comments on their writing as not effective enough to improve their essays. Such perceptions, according to Carson and Nelson (1996), can be attributed to the students' culture (the Chinese culture) in which group harmony is valued more than criticism, in this case finding and correcting errors. As a result, the students in that study did not provide much feedback to their peers on their writings.

Culture is closely related to identity formation, which can also be a source of perception. For example, Shen (1989) claims that learning to write in English requires the creation of an English identity. He attributes this claim to his personal experience. He points out that he could not use the first person singular in English because that contradicts the Chinese tendency of showing modesty in writing. Shen (1989) says:

Acting upon my professor's suggestion, I intentionally tried to show my "individuality" and to "glorify" "I" in my papers by using as many "I's" as

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possible — "I think," "I believe," "I see" — and deliberately cut out quotations from authorities. It was rather painful to hand in such pompous (I mean immodest) papers to my instructors. (p. 460)

2.7.2.2. *The effects of students' English proficiency on their perceptions*

Sometimes students' level of English proficiency could be a possible reason for perceiving writing in English as difficult by these students. Some of the students in Lee and Tajino's study (2008), for example, referred to their low level of English proficiency as the reason for having difficulties with academic writing. This source, according to Graham (2006), is an internal factor which means that it requires much effort from the teachers to be treated because it is difficult for the students to overcome it.

2.8. The significance of the study

The experience and the native language of the writers affect their approaches and strategies (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007). Wang (2012) points out that each culture in the world has different standards regarding the meaning of good writing. Therefore, many researchers called for research on international graduate students' academic writing. Ferreira and Santoso (2008) indicate that the performance of the students is affected by their perceptions. In addition, it is important to explore the students' perceptions because "students' beliefs about their own writing processes and competence are instrumental to their ultimate success as writers" (Pajares & Valiante, 2006, p. 158). Therefore, research on students' perceptions is very crucial because it is going to help them to improve their academic writing skills (Abdulwahed, 2010).

2.8.1. The research gaps

There are various studies that explored the students' perceptions of different aspects of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism. Koncel and Carney (1992), for example, claim that their students liked the writing center because it improved their academic papers. They also said that their students encounter difficulty regarding the use of discipline-specific words. Caffarella and Barnett (2000) found that although the students perceived receiving critique from professors and classmates as a very helpful element, it was emotional and frustrating.

Sometimes, the difficulties are not just sociocultural, but textual as well. For example, Cai (2013) and Yeh (2010) reported that their students experienced difficulties in the content and structure more than with language-related components which is different from the findings of Lee and Tajino's study (2008). Cooley and Lewkovicz (1995) claim that their students had major concerns with the development of ideas and with the organization of the argument.

Students in some previous studies also talked about the difficulties they encountered with different sections of the academic paper. For example, the students in Yeh's study (2010) pointed out that they encounter difficulties writing the Literature Review section. By contrast, the students in Shaw's study (1991) claimed that writing the Literature Review section was not difficult. The students in Shaw's study (1991) and in Bitchener and Basturkmen's study (2006) claim that they encounter difficulties while writing the Introduction and the Discussion sections.

One of the reasons that encourage students to plagiarize, according to Maslen (2003) and to Pickard (2006), is the new inventions of technology that provides information to the students without difficulty or efforts. Students also plagiarize because there is a heavy emphasis on the final assessments to the term papers that are written during the whole semester (Maslen, 2003). Apart from technology and assessment, there are several other reasons that make students plagiarize; for example, students not being in contact with the professor because there are many students in the class, students aiming to get high marks, the bad design of the task, cultural differences, and students not having enough time (Razera, 2011; Relph & Randle, 2006). The students referred also to the lack of interest in the topic they are required to write about and the request for students to do the same assignments every time the course is given as two of the additional reasons that make students tend to plagiarize (Razera, 2011).

Apart from purposeful plagiarism, Dawson (2004) claims that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally because they forgot to write the reference, they did not think that professors would check their papers for plagiarism, and they did not paraphrase using enough words.

The studies that talked about the perceived sources of the students' perceptions on their academic writing skills and on the issue of plagiarism fall into two categories. The first category deals with the effects of the sources that take place on campus (for example, Lucas, 2001; Cai, 2013; Weil, Oyelere, Yeoh, & Firer, 2001). This category includes the effects of courses the students enroll in, the effects of teachers and professors, and the effects of the teaching methods. The second category includes off-campus sources (for example, Carson & Nelson, 1996; Tajino, 2008). This category

includes the effects of the students' culture and the effects of the students' English proficiency.

Some studies in the literature have pointed out that Saudi Arabian students encounter difficulties with academic writing (e.g., Fageeh, 2003), and the number of the Saudi students in the United States has reached 128,014 in 2013 (Ministry of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia, 2014). However, not much research has been carried on Saudi students. Shaw (2009) points out that:

> Research has been conducted to understand the challenges and needs of
> international students in general (with Asian students as the central focus).
> However, little research has been undertaken to understand the Saudi
> Arabian experience. In addition, studies exist that determine how to
> support international students (again predominantly Asian students), yet
> there is little that focuses on Saudi Arabian students. A sizeable sub-group
> of international students, Saudi students are under-represented in
> investigations of international students. (p.4)

Exploring Saudi graduate students' perceptions of different aspects of academic writing, of the issue of plagiarism, and of the perceived sources of such perceptions, especially when these students are from different disciplines, have not been investigated yet. As a result, this study will be focusing on some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing. By focusing on Saudi graduate students, this study could lead to a clearer understanding of the perceptions of Saudi graduate students of academic writing with respect to their educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Gaining an

understanding of Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing will add to the already existing body of research in the area of academic writing.

2.8.2. The possible effects of the study

I hope to use the findings from the current study to:

1- Help the instructors of academic writing courses at the graduate level at universities in Saudi Arabia and in other countries to be familiar with the weaknesses and strengths of the students' academic writing skills

2- Inform the Saudi graduate students about their weaknesses and strengths in academic writing

3- Shed some light on how academic writing is perceived by some graduate students in one part of the world, which can enable researchers to have a general understanding of how academic writing may be perceived in different parts of the world

4- Help the writing instructors who work with ESL and EFL students in English language institutes.

5- Assist the authors of the writing books and writing course designers in making more productive materials

6- Increase the awareness of those who work in the writing centers and proofreaders about the expected mistakes of some of their students that may be due to theirperceptions of academic writing

2.8.3. The research questions

Therefore, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive different aspects of academic writing?

2- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive plagiarism?

3- What might be the sources of the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism?

2.9. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I first reviewed the status of English in Saudi Arabia in terms of the role of English, the history of English teaching, and the approaches to teaching writing. To be familiar with the features of the Saudi students' writing skill according to writing experts, I reported on their writing scores in TOEFL and in IELTS.

Since this dissertation is about graduate students' perceptions of academic writing, I reviewed some studies that talked about academic writing, its purpose, the type of academic writing expected from students who are at the graduate level, and the writing difficulties graduate students usually encounter. I also presented the findings of some studies that explored students' perceptions according to their disciplines, their countries, and their genres to compare them with the findings of the current study. Finally, I referred to the studies that attempted to identify the sources of students' perceptions.

I concluded the chapter with a discussion of the research gaps and the research questions that this study aimed to address.

In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed discussion of my research design.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will first explain the philosophical orientation to my dissertation

project, which is social constructionism. After that, I will show that qualitative research is

the most appropriate approach to my research project. Then, I will discuss why

conducting interviews is suitable for this project. After that, I will present the interview

questions.

Next, I will point out the data collection procedure. After that, I will explain the

piloting of the interview, the procedures of coding, and the transcription of the

participants' interviews. Later, I will give some details about the students whom I

interviewed. In addition, I will talk about the reason that made me send the interview

transcripts to the participants for member checks.

I will also state how I established trustworthiness in my data collection and

analysis. I will then describe the methods I employed to avoid any bias that could take

place by me (the researcher). Finally, I will talk about the strategies I followed to ensure that the research has met the ethical standards of scientific research.

3.2. Social constructionism as the philosophical underpinning

Using a social constructionist perspective was the approach employed to answer the research questions in my dissertation project. Social constructionism is a philosophy which asserts that the beliefs people hold create their reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Schwandt, 2003). Social constructionism views "knowledge in some area [as] the product of our social practices and institutions, or of the interactions and negotiations between relevant social groups" (Gasper, 1999, p. 855). Social constructionism is considered a good metatheory for qualitative research (Reichertz & Zielke, 2008).

3.3. Qualitative research as the approach

Driven by social constructionism qualitative research approaches are considered the most suitable approaches to exploring the experiences and beliefs of participants (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). Qualitative methodologies aim to explore and understand individuals' experiences in greater depth (Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider, 2002), often striving to develop "a psychologically rich, in-depth understanding of a person, program or situation" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 37).

The reason that I adopted a qualitative research approach to conducting this study is, as Creswell (2009) claims, that a qualitative study attempts to understand a human problem through making a big picture that has rich details of information provided by the participants. Qualitative research methodology is appropriate for my dissertation project

because it will allow me to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants to explore how they perceive English academic writing as non-native speakers of English.

Qualitative research is "an approach to understanding and interpreting meanings constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (Yeh, 2012). Because "there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time," there is a tendency among qualitative researchers to have an understanding of the individuals' interpretations regarding a particular issue at a particular time (Merriam, 2002, pp. 3-4). As a result, studies that are based on qualitative methods are expected to contain rich details about the participants and quotes from them to be used later in the studies. Interview is one of these qualitative methods.

This study is an interview-based qualitative research using grounded theory for data analysis. A qualitative research design has been noted as especially capable of "reveal[ing] participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives." Since people's perceptions in general and their perceptions of academic writing are often associated with the "views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the context" of academic writing, a qualitative design coupled with grounded theory data analysis is especially suitable for exploring my research participants' perceptions and the sources of such perceptions (Charmaz, 2006, p.26).

Qualitative researchers

can expand [their] understanding through verbal as well as nonverbal communications, process data immediately, clarify and summarize

material, check the respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore

unusual or unanticipated responses" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5).

The current study has the characteristics of qualitative research suggested by

Maxwell (1996), Merriam (2002), and Creswell (2007):

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning, how people make

sense of their lives and experiences, and how people structure their

worlds. During the interviews with the participants, I did my best to make

them talk about their experiences with academic writing and how they

perceive academic writing and the issue of plagiarism

2. The outcome is descriptive through words and pictures and is more

concerned with process. My study was descriptive since I asked the

participants to describe their experiences with academic writing. I also

asked them to point out the difficulties they encounter while writing their

papers and the strategies they usually follow to overcome such difficulties.

3. Qualitative researchers are the primary instrument of data collection and

analysis. Data are mediated through the human instrument rather than

through inventories or machines. I was the only researcher who conducted

interviews with the participants. I was able to bring my own experience

which allowed me to ask the participants some specific questions and to

elaborate more on some questions during the interviews.

4. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researchers

usually build abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

(Creswell, 2009, p.145). In keeping with this tennet, I came up with codes

and themes from the participants' transcribed interviews. I was able to

develop three theoretical understanding based on the findings. I will

discuss these in Chapter VI.

3.4. Interview as the main data collection method

Conducting interviews is suitable for this project because interviews have these

characteristics and advantages:

Open-endedness: Interviewing the participants can help researchers to find out what

those participants feel and think of their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), a characteristic

consistent with the basic tenets of qualitative research described above.

Patton (1990) explains:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly

observe .... we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We

cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time ....

we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of

interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into other person's perspective

(p. 196).

Since the participants' perceptions of academic writing are not directly

observable, conducting interviews with the participants enabled me to "ask open-ended

questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past findings" (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). Open-endedness is suitable for this project because it makes the students talk about their experiences with academic writing and they might elaborate in their answers for a question to cover more than one point. Asking the participants about what they like/dislike about academic writing in English, for example, will make the participants talk about their difficulties in academic writing (through the things that they dislike about academic writing) and the purpose of academic writing (through the things that they like about academic writing).

Comprehensiveness: The researcher also can reach a comprehensive understanding regarding the participants' experiences even if s/he did not take a part in those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The best way to study the beliefs people have is to interview them (Tuckman, 1972) because an interview "seeks to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the interviewee" (Kvale, 1983, p. 175).

Comprehensiveness is suitable for this project because it makes the students talk about and describe their own experiences in and perceptions of academic writing in their disciplines in a comprehensive manner. Each major requires that its students conform to academic writing conventions that are particular to that major. Coming from the department of English, I could not be aware of the academic writing skills required in the various disciplines the participants come from. Therefore, interviewing the participants helped me reach a comprehensive understanding about the academic writing conventions required in each major.

In fact, similar to my study, interviews have been used in different studies that aimed to explore participants' perceptions of other issues, such as in Burrows (1989), Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006), Ferreira and Santoso (2008), Power (2009), Ismail (2011), Sasagawa (2011), Gamlem and Smith (2013), and Lam (2013).

The type of the interview in this study was a semi-structured one because it "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). A semi-structured qualitative interview enables the interviewer to introduce the topic to the interviewees and guide the discussion to make them provide detailed information to answer the research questions. The result of such method when compared to other methods is more reliable because the data are given in details; therefore, the researcher will be able to have a solid ground for his/her study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In planning this type of research, I followed the following steps suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) to conduct semi-structured interview, which are: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. This is how they describe each stage of an interview inquiry:

1.Thematizing: Formulate the purpose of an investigation and the conception of the theme to be investigated before the interviews start. The why and what of the investigation should be clarified before the question of how method is posed. I thematized my interview questions before my interview. I did my best to make the interview questions cover various aspects of English academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism.

2.Designing: Plan the design of the study, taking into consideration all seven stages of the investigation, before interviewing. Designing the study is undertaken with regard to obtaining the intended knowledge and taking into account the moral implications of the study. I borrowed and created the questions in the interview to help elicit as much information as possible to explore the Saudi graduate perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism.

3.Interviewing: Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the interpersonal relation of the interview situation. I interviewed 12 graduate Saudi students enrolling in different majors and in various American universities.

4.Transcribing: Prepare the interview material for analysis, which generally includes a transcription from oral speech to written text. The 12 interviews with the Saudi graduate students were transcribed. More details in Section 3.3.3.

5.Analyzing: Decide, on the basis of the purpose and topic of the investigation and of the nature of the interview material, which modes of analysis are appropriate for the interviews. The interviews with the participants were coded using grounded theory

6. Verifying: Ascertain the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the interview findings. Reliability refers to how consistent the results are, and

validity means whether an interview study investigates what is intended to be investigated. Credibility, validity, and reliability of the current study were attempted. More details in Section 3.3.8.

7. Reporting: Communicate the findings of the study and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria, takes the ethical aspects of the investigation into consideration, and results in a readable product. The findings of the current study were reported in the next chapters of this project. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 108).

The interview questions were prepared in advance. As Richards (2003) suggested, I avoided sticking rigidly to the interview schedule and I gave the interviewees sufficient "thinking space" so they could express their opinions freely. When, for example, I asked the participants question No. 14, which aims to identify the problems that they have with writing, some of them talked about the problems they encounter and they also talked about the strategies they followed to overcome some of those problems. The strategies the participants follow to overcome such problems and to cope with writing academic English are the answer for question No. 20 in the interview questions list. I did not want to interrupt their answers because I wanted them to continue expressing their opinions freely.

3.3.1. The interview questions

The interview questions were prepared in a way that could reveal some answers to the research questions. Because the interview was semi-structured, I was able to ask more questions whenever one is required during the interviews. The interview questions are

available in Appendix C and a sample interview transcript with one of the participants is available in Appendix D. For the current study, there are thirty-eight questions divided into two sections.

The first section of the interview aimed to collect some background knowledge, such as academic major, graduate degree, their education in Saudi Arabia, time these students started writing in English, the reasons that made the students write in English, their understanding of the meaning of academic writing, and the difference, if any, between academic writing and non-academic writing. These questions are necessary to track the sources of these Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism (research question no. 3).

The second section of the interview covers the students' perceptions towards their personal academic writing skills. Those include how do they see themselves as writers in their majors (question No. 8 in the interview), their academic writing process (question No. 9 in the interview), proofreading and peer review (question No. 10 in the interview), the level of satisfaction with their own academic writing skills (question No. 12 in the interview), the importance of being able to write well as a graduate student (question No. 13 in the interview), the problems they and other Saudi graduate students encounter while writing academic papers (questions No. 11, 14, &15 in the interview), the issues they like and the ones they dislike about academic writing in English (question No. 16 in the interview), what should be the focus of an academic writing course (question No. 17 in the interview), how academic writing should be taught (question No. 18 in the interview), learning to write academic English (question No. 19 in the interview), strategies they follow to cope with writing academic English (question No. 20 in the interview), the most

challenging issue/s in academic writing and the strategies and/or the services they have

made use of to address these challenges (question No. 21 in the interview), and the

factors that could positively or negatively affect their academic writing style (question

No. 22 in the interview).

The second section of the interview also asked the participants about the effect of

Arabic on writing in English (question No. 27 in the interview), definition of plagiarism

(question No. 28 in the interview), how plagiarism can be prevented (question No. 29 in

the interview), the reasons that make students plagiarize (questions No. 31 & 33 in the

interview), the pitfalls of plagiarism (question No. 32 in the interview), the ways to

increase the students' knowledge about plagiarism (question No. 34 in the interview),

and the possible effects of the grading method in the Saudi educational system on their

academic writing skills(questions No. 35, 36, 37, & 38 in the interview). The

interviewees were also asked about topics related to academic writing that arose during

the interviews. Table No. 6 provides a summary of the questions for the interview.

Table 6

Information about the focus of the questions

	FOCUS OF QUESTIONS		PURPOSE
First section	➢ Academic major ➢ Graduate degree ➢ The participants' education in Saudi Arabia ➢ The time those participants started writing in English	➢ The difference, if any, between academic writing and non-academic writing. ➢ The reasons that made the participants write in English ➢ Their understanding of the meaning of academic writing	Background knowledge
Second section	➢ How do they see themselves as writers in their majors ➢ Their writing process while writing academic papers ➢ Proofreading Engaging in peer review ➢ The importance of being able to write well as a graduate student ➢ The problems they encounter while writing academic papers ➢ The issues they like and the ones they dislike about academic writing in English ➢ Strategies employed to learn to write academic English ➢ Strategies followed to cope with writing academic English ➢ The most challenging issue/s in academic writing	➢ The strategies and/or the services they have made use of to address these challenges ➢ The factors that could positively or negatively affect their academic writing style ➢ The effect of Arabic on writing in English ➢ Definition of plagiarism ➢ The ways to increase the students' knowledge about plagiarism ➢ How plagiarism can be prevented ➢ The reasons that make students plagiarize ➢ Effect of the grading methods in the Saudi educational system on their academic writing skills.	Perceptions of academic writing skills

Some of the questions in the interview in this study were adopted and adapted from other studies because they serve the purpose of this study, which was to explore the sources of the perceptions by first probing into the participants' perceptions of academic writing. From Krampetz and Ramirez (2005), for example, I adopted Questions 8, 9, and 10. Those questions are related to the evaluation of the participants' academic writing skills, writing process, and the revision process. Question 13 was adapted from Burrows (1989). This question deals with the importance of having good academic writing skills. In addition, Question 14 was borrowed from Gambell's study (1991). This question seeks to uncover the difficulties the participants encounter while writing their academic papers. From Rosove's study (2009), I borrowed point B in Question 21. This question explores the strategies the participants use to address the challenges they encounter in their academic writing. Moreover, I borrowed Questions 23, 24, 25, and 26 from Fageeh's study (2003). Those questions explore the participants' Arabic writing skills (their level in writing in Arabic, writing process, and difficulties they encounter during their writing process). Finally, Questions 32 and 33 were borrowed from Power's study (2009). These two questions describe the pitfalls of plagiarism and the difficult-to-understand parts in plagiarism. The rest of the questions in the interview were designed by me. Table no. 7 provides some information about the borrowed questions for the interview in the current study.

Table 7

Information about the borrowed questions

QUESTION(S) NO.	STUDY ADOPTED FROM	PURPOSE
8, 9, and 10	Krampetz and Ramirez (2005)	Evaluation of their own academic writing skills, writing process, and revision
13	Burrows (1989)	Importance of having good academic writing skills
14	Gambell (1991)	Difficulties the participants encounter in academic writing
B in question no. 21	Rosove (2009)	Strategies the participants use to address the challenges
23, 24, 25, and 26	Fageeh (2003)	Exploring the participants' Arabic writing skill (their level in writing in Arabic, writing process, and difficulties they encounter during their writing

		process)
32 and 33	Power (2009)	Describing the pitfalls of plagiarism and difficult-to-understand parts in plagiarism

3.3.2. The data collection procedure

After receiving the permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my University, I started to recruit participants through emails and phone calls. I contacted 20 potential participants. Although some of the students initially agreed to be interviewed, they later declined to do so for various reasons when they were subsequently contacted for the interview. At the end, twelve participants agreed to be interviewed.

After signing the consent form, every participant was interviewed alone. The time for the interviews was between one and two hours. Six interviews were face-to-face, while six participants who lived in other U.S. states were interviewed by phone. Sykes and Hoinville (1985) and Borg and Gall (1996) point out that telephone interviewing is almost as effective as the standard face-to-face interview in terms of reaching the number of the interviewees and of the gained data.

For those who were interviewed over the phone, I read the consent form to them first so that I could have their verbal agreement before starting the interview with them. After finishing the telephone interview with the participants, I emailed them the consent form so that they could sign it and return it to me. Since there was no need to videotape

the interviews because the students' behavior, reaction, or facial expressions were not relevant to the research question in the current study, the interviews were only audio-recorded.

Each interview lasted between 60 to 120 minutes, as noted above. Although the participants were given the choice of being interviewed in English or in Arabic (the native language of the researcher and the interviewees), all the interviewees chose Arabic because they felt that their mother tongue made it easier for them to express their ideas freely and effectively.

Before starting the interviews with the participants, I talked with them informally about different topics that were not related to the topic of my study so as to establish rapport with them. During the interviews, all the participants were asked the same questions in the same order unless they had already given answers to any questions that had not been asked yet. In cases like that, I would skip those questions because they had already provided the answers. Some of the participants, sometimes, were asked additional questions to clarify an issue or to expand on a potentially interesting or relevant point.

In cases where participants talked about topics that do not seem to be directly related to the theme of the interview (for example, a sick daughter, an unpleasant trip, a disagreement with a friend), I did not interrupt them; however, only the parts that I considered to be directly related to the questions of the interviews were transcribed. The cited quotes in this project are verbatim as spoken by the interviewees and transcribed from the audiotapes.

3.3.3. Transcribing the interviews

To maximize the transcription quality of the participants' interviews, I followed some of the strategies that were suggested by Poland (2003). The suggested strategies are:

1- Ensuring the quality of the recording device and process. To follow this step, I chose rooms there were quiet and interruptions were not expected. The rooms were in the university library. Those rooms were designed to be quiet places in order to allow students to study. I also ensure that the battery of the recording device was fully charged. For telephone interviewes, I followed the same step.

2- Using transcription conventions. I used some of the transcription conventions in order to help the readers of my dissertation to understand some of the excerpts used in the current study. A list of the transcription conventions is available in Figure 1.

3- Reviewing transcription quality. After checking the accuracy of my transcription and my translation, I asked a student to check the accuracy of my translation. In addition, I asked a different student to code the transcribed interviews).

4- Member checking. After finishing writing up the participants' interview transcripts, I sent them to the participants to be able to read them and to confirm their answers).

The following paragraphs and sections provide more details about how I followed the previously mentioned strategies.

After interviewing the participants, I transcribed the interviews. Only the parts that are directly related to the questions of the interviews were transcribed. Digressions,

as noted above, were not transcribed. The cited quotes in this dissertation are verbatim as spoken by the interviewees and transcribed from the audiotapes. Since I have some experience performing this task, I did the transcriptions myself. The participants were also given pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity.

The transcribed interviews with the participants were compiled in a document of 56 single-spaced pages. For ensuring the quality in the transcripts, I transcribed each interview and then I listened to the audiotapes 2 times for coherence and consistency. For clarification purposes, Figure No. 1 demonstrates the transcription conventions that were used in the excerpts used in the next chapters:

FIGURE 1

Transcription conventions

[word]	A square bracketed word is used to clarify a piece of information (for example, a pronoun) that was previously mentioned (for example, "he [the professor] did not ask me to do that").
…	Three periods without brackets are used to refer to a pause that lasted more than three seconds.

I transcribed the interviews in Arabic and translated them into English. The accuracy of my translation was checked by a Ph.D. student who is a native speaker of Arabic who was studying in the English Department in a different university from the one in which I conduct my dissertation project.

3.3.4. Piloting the interview

For the purpose of avoiding any chances of misunderstanding or ambiguity during the interviews with the students, a pilot study of the interview with one student was conducted. It was completed as a full-fledged research project. The pilot interview lasted for 70 minutes. The interview with the student was recorded and transcribed. Based on the results of the pilot study (those include my observations and those of the participant), I made some changes:

1- The result of the pilot study helped in avoiding some leading or biased questions. For example, instead of asking " How important is academic writing for you?" which could be considered as a leading question, the question was changed to be "Do you think academic writing is important for graduate students or not? Why?"

2- In addition, the pilot study provided me with assistance in rephrasing, rewording, changing, and reordering some questions. For example, instead of asking the participants the following question "What are your strategies to cope with problems in writing academic English?" before asking them this question "How did you learn to write academic English?", I thought it would be much better to start with the second question before the first one because logically learning to write academic English comes before dealing with problems related to academic English in their academic papers.

3- The pilot study also helped me keep track of the study via concentrating more on the research questions and more interview questions were developed in the

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list of the interview questions to support the main research question in the current study.

3.3.5. Coding

Once I finished conducting interviews with the participants, I started listening to the audio files several times. The purposeof this step was to familiarize myself with what the participants had said in the interview. After that, I transcribed only the participants' responses related to the research objectives. Therefore, information not relevant to academic writing (for example, a sick daughter, an unpleasant trip, or a disagreement with a friend) was not transcribed. After transcribing the interviews, I read the responses many times in order to identify the recurring themes and the overall thematic patterns across the 12 transcriptions.

I coded the interviews using Grounded Theory. Grounded theory is a method that helps researchers to develop theories that are "inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). It aims to "build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.24). In this case, since I hoped to develop a clear understanding of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing, grounded theory seemed to be a suitable data analysis approach that could help me to become sensitive to how these students perceived academic writing from their vantage point.

The coding process took place in several steps. First, I identified all the key points in the individual interviews. Key points in this case referred to data that have various degrees of significance. The next step involved the exploration of thematic similarities

across the key points throughout all the interviews. As a result, a number of common

themes were identified which I will elaborate on in the findings and discussion chapters.

During the coding process, I recursively reduced the number of codes and sub-codes in

order to capture a more organized and hierarchical picture of the participants'

perceptions' of academic writing and the sources of such perceptions. Finally, the coding

process was completed using the help of another researcher with prior coding experience.

He looked at the sentences and the identified codes and sub-codes. When we had any

disagreement, we would talk about the reasons behind the disagreement until we reached

a complete agreement about which code should be assigned for that particular sentence.

The complete coding scheme is presented in Table 8.

Table 8

The complete coding scheme

LEVEL 1 CODES	LEVEL 2 CODES	LEVEL 3 CODES	LEVEL 4 CODES	LEVEL 5 CODES	EXAMPLES FROM THE PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEWS
Perceptions of academic writing (RQ 1)	Simplistic understanding of the definition of academic writing	Macro level			"[Academic writing] is ... how you divide your paper into sections."
		Micro level			"Words that I do not hear much…words that I am not familiar with…words that I do not hear on a daily basis…words that I do not know how to pronounce ... words that we expect to find in academia only."
		Meeting the expectations			"You are expected to write more and you'll never graduate till you have good

	Viewing academic writing as important for academic survival only				academic writing skills."
		Surviving academically by taking shortcuts			"It [the organization] helps you to save time by reading the headings and the abstract."
		Helping in publishing their articles in peer-reviewed journals to graduate			"Because it [academic writing] is your way to organizations and peer-reviewed journals and graduate."
		Succeeding in courses			"Because grades are mostly based on writing papers."
			A lexicon-based		"I make my assignments written in an academic writing style through repeating

			approach (e.g. using formal terminology)		some of the words in the question ... since our questions [questions in Computer Science major] might reach several pages."
Perceived approaches to learn AW	Successful approaches	A genre-based approach (e.g. similar academic articles and books)		"I collect many journal articles written about topics related to mine ... then I read the introduction section in all the papers and I imitate them."
		A human-based approach (e.g. practicing and receiving help and feedback)		"I lived with an American host family... I used to write some essays and then ask one of the parents ... both have a bachelor's degree ... to read them and suggest some corrections."
		A technology-based approach.		"I tried many things [to make my papers written in academic writing style] ... I tried some websites ... of course I always use

				(e.g. Microsoft Word and Google)		Microsoft word program and its auto correction feature."
		Unsuccessful approaches	Institutional	Rote memorization		"We were asked to memorize 2 paragraphs and we will be asked to write one of them in the final exam."
				Lack of academic writing resources (e.g. writing courses)		"Even in the U.S. there is no one to teach you how to write a dissertation ... there is no course that informs you about the sections of a dissertation and what should be written in each section."
				NNES university instructors		"Because my advisor is a non-native speaker of English, he makes mistakes in the sentences just like me .. so why should I care about improving my term paper?!

					But if my advisor is a native speaker of English, I will pay more attention."
			Personal	help from unreliable sources (e.g. siblings)	"[when I was in primary schools] my parents and elder brothers used to write my composition assignments."
				Being under pressure	"One of the things that affect my academic writing skills is being under pressure ... whether due to family reasons or because of my study… I make mistakes in my sentences and I cannot focus and arrange my ideas."

	Academic writing difficulties at the formal level only	Lexical			"I have a problem regarding using transitional words and phrases while I am writing."
		Grammar			"I encounter difficulties with grammar ... they [the writing center consultants] always ask me about the meaning of my sentences."
		Organizational (e.g. IMRaD)			"I encounter difficulties with the literature review because it is something new to me and I do not know how to search for similar studies and compare and contrast them."

Perceptions of plagiarism (RQ 2)					
	Agents behind raising plagiarism awareness	Self-learning			"I heard about it [plagiarism] when I was in Saudi Arabia ... I have a friend who was expelled from university in Netherlands because of plagiarism."
		Professors and teachers			"I knew about it [plagiarism] during my first semester here [in the U.S.] … they [professors] told us [students] that we might be expelled [for plagiarizing]."
	Importance of plagiarism knowledge for academic survival	Strategies for avoiding plagiarism	Lexical level (e.g. replacing words)		"[To avoid plagiarism] I try to change words … I use synonyms."
			Syntactic level (e.g. paraphrasing)		"[To avoid plagiarism] I paraphrase… I try to change the structure of the sentence."
			Consulting human resources (e.g.		"If I have doubt about information, I have to make sure about it by asking my

			professors)		professors."
			Technological resources (e.g. plagiarism detecting software)		I also bought a program that can detect the plagiarized sentences ... so after I am writing my papers, I would check it for plagiarism … the plagiarized sentences would be highlighted so I can change them."
		Consequences of lack of concern about plagiarism guidelines	Lack of subject-matter knowledge		"When you plagiarize in your papers, you are relying on other people to get you information for your papers … so when you get your degree, you wouldn't have much knowledge about your major."
			Unfair treatment and lower grades for others		"It is unfair because those who plagiarized might receive better grades."

			Lack of contribution to scientific fields		"If it [plagiarism] is allowed, I would not go and do research to come up with something new."
Perceived sources of acquiring such perceptions (RQ 3)	Participants' professors				"Because my advisor is a non-native speaker of English, he makes mistakes in the sentences just like me … so why should I care about improving my term paper?! But if my advisor is a native speaker of English, I will pay more attention."
	Participants' fields of study/ occupations				"Academic writing and plagiarism as something that they are not compelled or required to learn."

	Participants' peers				"Students who plagiarize for the first time should not be punished but they should be given another chance."
	Participants' culture				"It is the professor's responsibility to educate his/her students about plagiarism."

3.3.6. The participants

Twelve Saudi graduate students (six males and six females) pursuing their graduate degrees in different programs at various American universities in 2014-2015 were interviewed (six by phone and six in person). I limited the participants to those who had enrolled in their programs for at least one year to ensure that they have written at least several assignments at the graduate level. All the participants were fluent speakers of Arabic (their mother tongue) and they have fulfilled the English proficiency requirements of the respective graduate programs. Table 9 provides the demographic details about the participants who took part in the interviews in terms of their genders, majors, and their graduate degrees.

Table 9

Demographic information about the interviewees

NAME	GENDER	MAJOR	GRADUATE DEGREE
Reem	F	Educational Leadership	Ph.D.
Nader	M	Engineering Management	Master's
Lila	F	English Linguistics	Master's
Sami	M	Business	Ph.D.

Deema	F	Food Science	Master's
Mohammad	M	Mechanical Engineering	Ph.D.
Huda	F	Finance	Master's
Turki	**M**	Industrial Engineering	Master's
Rakan	M	Hospitality Administration	Master's
Maram	F	Chemistry	Ph.D.
Adel	M	Computer Science	Ph.D.
Tala	F	Chemistry	Ph.D.

3.3.7. Member check of the participants' overall profiles related to the findings

After writing the participants' profiles based on their answers in the interviews, I asked them to read their profiles. My purpose for doing this was to confirm that my recordings of their answers were accurate and to make sure that what is written in those profiles clearly represents what they have said in the interviews. The participants gave their approval to the profiles and no changes were required.

3.3.8. Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) suggests some criteria that should be addressed by qualitative researchers to establish the trustworthiness of a research project. Those criteria are: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). I will talk about each one of these criteria and my strategies to meet them.

Credibility (internal validity): Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that ensuring credibility is one of the essential elements in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility, or internal validity, according to Merriam (2001), deals with the question of "how research findings match reality" (p. 201). To ensure internal validity, I discussed my findings and interpretations with the participants. The participants pointed out that the findings and interpretations represent their perceptions.

Another way to ensure the internal validity is by following a random sampling approach when recruiting the participants for my study. Preece (1994) claims that random sampling helps in distributing any unknown effects evenly among the participants. Researchers who use a random sampling approach, according to Bouma and Atkinson (1995), can claim that their participants and subjects could be considered as a representative sample of a larger community.

Member checks are considered by some researchers (for example, Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to be very important to increase the credibility of a study. After transcribing the participants' interviews, I sent them to the participants and asked them to

read those transcripts to confirm their answers and to make sure that what had been written clearly represented their own perceptions.

Transferability (external validity): The external validity, according to Merriam (2001), deals with "the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 207). To ensure transferability, I tried provid as thick descriptions about the data collection and data analysis processes as possible, as I have been doing in this chapter. Such detailed information, hopefully, can enable any researcher to decide if the findings of the current study can be transferred to his/her context of research or not.

Dependability (reliability): According to Silverman (1993), one way to achieve dependability, or reliability, in interviews is to have a highly structured interview (the words and the sequence of the questions are the same for all the interviewees). To ensure reliability, the same wording and sequence of questions were followed in the present study although the participants were allowed to bring up any points they thought were relevant, as typically is the case in semi-structured interviews. Merriam (2001) points out that there are some traditions to make sure that the findings are reliable. The first one is the investigator's position. To make my findings reliable, I followed the suggestions provided by Merriam (2001) by providing the theoretical background, information about the participants, the reasons for choosing them in this study, and information about the sampling method. The second one is an audit trail. I described how I collected the data from the participants, how the findings were analyzed, and how the findings were categorized.

Confirmability (objectivity): Mackey and Gass (2013) argue that:

for confirmability, researchers are required to make available full details

of the data on which they are basing their claims or interpretations. (p.

178)

To achieve confirmability, I provided many excerpts from the participants'

interviews while talking about their perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of

plagiarism to support the findings of the study. Those excerpts were written in Arabic and

in English.

3.3.9. Researcher bias

For the purpose of avoiding any bias that could take place, I followed several

procedures. For example, I recorded and transcribed all the interviews with the

participants. I also member checked the findings and the interpretations with the

interviewees. Moreover, I tried to make the questions in the interviews open-ended ones.

In addition, I did not express my opinions regarding any issue during the interview.

Finally, my expectations regarding the outcomes of the interviews before conducting the

interviews were the same for all the interviewees.

3.3.10. Ethical considerations

For the purpose of ensuring that my dissertation meets the ethical standards of

scientific research and because "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of

the world" (Stake, 2000, p. 447), several strategies were followed. In order to protect the

identity of the participants, for example, pseudonyms were used to refer to each one of

them. The participants were assured that the collected data would be protected in a safe

place.

I also tried to report and to discuss the findings without taking any participants'
responses out of context. The cited quotes in my dissertation project are as spoken by the
interviewees and transcribed from the audiotapes. In addition, this study follows the rules
of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university in which I pursued my doctoral
degree. The informed consent form, approved by the IRB borad and signed by the
participants, is available in Appendix D.

3.5. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have provided a general overview of the methodology employed
in my dissertation project to elicit the needed information to answer the research
questions. I first provided the philosophical orientation to my dissertation project, which
is social constructionism. After that, I showed that qualitative research is the most
suitable approach for this type of research. Then, I discussed why conducting interviews
is the most suitable method for this project. I also talked about the type of questions the
participants were asked during the interviews.

After that, I explained the data collection procedure in detail. Next, I talked about
the piloting of the interview, the procedures of coding, and the transcription of the
participants' interviews. Later, I gave some details about the students whom I
interviewed. In addition, I talked about the reason that made me send the interview
transcripts to the participants.

I also stated how I established trustworthiness. I then described the methods I
employed to avoid any bias that could take place by me (the researcher). Finally, for the

purpose of ensuring that my dissertation project meets the ethical standards of scientific research, I talked about the strategies I followed to achieve that.

The biographical profiles of the participants in the current study will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the participants and to protect their identities, pseudonyms will be used. The information provided in this chapter was taken from the data the participants provided during the interviews. The introductions will include information about the participants' backgrounds (for example, their educational degrees, cities they came from in Saudi Arabia, their work experience, and their length of stay in the U.S.) and their experiences with learning English and with learning how to write in English. Providing the profiles of the participants based on their answers to the interview questions, hopefully, would help the readers understand the participants better and then understand their feelings and struggles regarding learning English and writing in English. Understanding these individual profiles can also help the readers make sense of the findings and discussion chapters later

4.2.   The participants' biographical profiles based on their answers to the

interview questions

4.2.1.   Reem

Reem was a doctoral student. She just started pursuing her Ph.D. in Educational

Leadership in a university in southern United States. She earned her Master's degree

from a university in northern United States. She studied English in two different English

Language Institutes (ELI) (fee-based pre- matriculated language learning institute) in the

United States for 24 months before she was able to achieve the required TOEFL score

that allowed her to start her Master's degree.

Reem was born and raised in Dammam city, the capital city of the Eastern

Province in Saudi Arabia. Dammam city is the largest city in the Eastern Province, and it

is the fifth largest city in Saudi Arabia (Central Department of Statistics and Information

in Saudi Arabia, 2013). Those who live in Dammam are a mix of several different

ethnicities and nationalities. Reem was in her early thirties and had two children at the

time of the study.

Reem was among the top ten students of her elementary, intermediate, and

secondary schools. After finishing secondary school, she decided to study biology, a

major that she was interested in. Although she liked biology, she graduated with a low

grade point average (GPA). She was not happy with that because she wanted to get a

good GPA. She explained that her poor grades were due to her recent marriage and the

lack of seriousness in teaching by the professors at her undergraduate university, as can

be seen in Excerpt 1.

(Excerpt 1)

<div dir="rtl">

"اكتشفت ان الدكاترة مو سريوس ... وبنهاية الجامعه كانت عندي ظروف الزواج فحبيت اني

اخلص بسرعة."

</div>

"I discovered that professors are not serious ... and by the end of my

bachelor degree I was going to get married so I just wanted to graduate as

soon as possible." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 1)

Based on the interview, I learned that Reem, similar to almost all the Saudi

students, started learning English when she was in intermediate school (the equivalent of

Grade 7 in the American educational system). She claimed that the English teachers

focused only on grammar, neglecting the development of all other language skills. As a

result, Reem said that she grew to dislike English because she could not use it to

communicate with foreign people which rendered her English knowledge useless.

(Excerpt 2)

<div dir="rtl">

"وكنت اكرهها ماكنت اشوف فيها اي متعه ...ومثل اي شخص كنت اقول ايش فايدة الانجليزي

... هي مادة والسلام ... فما كنت اهتم فيها."

</div>

"I hate it [English] ... I did not enjoy learning it ... and just like any other

person I was wondering what was the benefit of learning English … it was

just a subject ... I did not care about it." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 1)

At that time, her perspective was that English was a detested subject that she and

her classmates were forced to study in intermediate and secondary schools if they wanted

to go to the next level of their study. During secondary school (grade 10-12), she tried to

do her best to learn English. She wanted to get high scores on exams because that would help her to be accepted into a major she wanted to study for her bachelor's degree. Despite hiring a private tutor to teach her English, she was not able to get the high grades she wanted. Asked about her reasons for failing to achieve high grades in English in secondary school, she explained that her teachers focused on grammar in the class and she was not prepared to answer exam questions related to reading, writing, and listening skills.

Reem claimed that students were asked only to copy sentences from the English textbooks they were studying for the English writing assignments in Saudi primary school. Being asked only to copy sentences shows that students were not taught the writing strategies (for example, organization, referencing, and voice). For the final exam in secondary school, she and her classmates were instructed to memorize a passage or two and then asked to write one of them. As can be seen, in intermediate and secondary schools, English teachers never taught her or her classmates how to improve their writing skill. In college, she did not study English because she had to study the academic vocabulary of biology by studying Latin.

Reem started studying academic writing when she came to the U.S. and enrolled in an ELI. Despite the fact the she managed to get the required TOEFL scores to start her graduate studies, she claimed that she always asked two native speakers if it was possible for them to read her academic papers before submission to make sure that what she had written was academic.

(Excerpt 3)

"علشان اخلي كتابتي أكاديمية ... بعد ما اخلص الكتابة ... راح ارسله لصاحبتي الأمريكيه علشان
تقول لي رأيها... وبعدين اروح للنيتف سبيكرز اللي في الرايتنق سنتر."

"To make my writing academic ... after I am done writing the paper ... I
would send it to my American friend to tell me her opinion about what I
wrote ... and then I would go to the natives in the writing center." (Reem,
Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Asking two native speakers of English to read her academic papers
suggests that Reem believed that the native speakers were knowledgeable in
academic writing skills or could at least ensure that her sentences were
grammatically correct.

Reem was not satisfied with her academic writing skills. She indicated
that she lacked the academic writing skills and that:

(Excerpt 4)

"مستحيل اقدم اي اساينمت للدكتور بدون ما اروح للرايتنق سنتر."

"There is no way that I could submit my assignments without going to the
writing center first." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 3)

In fact, on one occasion, she could not find anyone to read her term paper
because her American friend was asleep, so she sent an email to her professor requesting
to extend the deadline for two hours (so that her American friend could read it after she
woke up) and her professor agreed.

4.2.2. Nader

Nader came from Jeddah city, which is a big city in western Saudi Arabia. It is the major urban center of the western region of Saudi Arabia. It is considered the second largest city in the country. It is the gateway to Makkah and Madinah (the two holiest places in Islam). It is also considered a center for finance and business in Saudi Arabia. Its population in 2010 was estimated to be 3.4 million, where half of them were non-Saudis (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013).

Nader was working on his Master's degree in a southern U.S. state when he was interviewed. He was majoring in Engineering Management. He was in his early thirties and had two children at the time of the study. He studied English in the United States in an ELI for only two months before starting his Master's degree.

Nader studied in Saudi public schools all his life (elementary, intermediary, and secondary). He also studied in a Saudi public university for his Bachelor's degree. He said that he started studying English at home when he was studying at elementary school. His father, a physician, used to receive calls from different countries around the world. Nader, therefore, was taught English by his father in order to answer those calls. He described that experience as a very good one because it helped him to improve his speaking and listening skills.

(Excerpt 5)

"أنا والدي طبيب فكان يعني يركز بالإنجليزي شوي ... وكنت مسؤول عن التلفون في البيت ذيك الأيام ... فكانت تجيه اتصالات دوليه وماكن احد يرد عليها الا واحد يعرف إنجليزي ...وكان هذا الشخص انا في الغالب... فكان هو يشد زياده لما درسنا في المتوسط والثانوي ... فكان لازم أكون

"My father is a physician which means he pays more attention to English

... I was responsible for answering the landline ... he used to receive

international calls and no one can answer them unless he knows English ...

that person was me mostly ... so when we started intermediate and

secondary schools he asked us to study more for English ... therefore, I

had to be aware of and understand what the international persons say when

they call home ... thank God I was better in conversation ... and generally

speaking I was better than most people around me." (Nader, Interview

Transcript, p. 5)

After graduation, Nader wrote in English for nonacademic purposes when he

worked for a company for ten years. During that time, he wrote reports, emails, letters,

and user manuals in English. After working for 10 years, he decided to pursue his

graduate studies in Engineering Management.

Nader claimed that he was able to learn academic writing skills through continued

practices of writing (a writing-oriented approach). He pointed out that many of his

assignments had been rejected by his professors. Each time he went to one of his

professors' offices to talk about his paper, he learned something new about academic

writing. He also mentioned that, although he studied at an ELI for only two months, the

ELI teachers helped him to be familiar with academic writing.

Another strategy that Nader followed to ensure that his papers had been written in academic English was asking proofreaders outside the university to edit his papers and visiting the writing lab (a resources-oriented approach), as can be seen in the following excerpt.

(Excerpt 6)

" فيه عندي أكثر من شخص أثق برأيهم وأحاول أتابع معاهم ... وطبعا واحد من أهم الأماكن الأساسية في الجامعه عندي الرايتنق لاب ... هذا مكان جدا مهم وهو مكان اساسي بالنسبة لي."

"I have several persons whom I trust on their opinions ... of course one of the essential places in the university is the writing lab ... it is a very important place and it's an essential place to me." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 7)

Nader had his own blog where he writes in both Arabic and in English. He said that he tried to translate journal articles that were written in English into Arabic. The reason for the blog was to share what he learned in his classes with those who are interested in engineering, human resources, and everyday situations. He did not mention that he was translating to improve his English in general or writing skill in particular.

4.2.3. Lila

Lila came from Riyadh which is the capital and the largest city in Saudi Arabia. The population of that city was 5.7 million, and 2 million were non-Saudis (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013).

Lila was a single woman, and was in her twenties during the time of the
interview. When she was studying for her Bachelor's degree in Princess Nora bint
Abdulrahman University, which is considered the largest all female university in the
world, she majored in English. Therefore, she did not study at an ELI before she started
pursuing a Master's degree in English in the south west part of the United States.

Just like most of the participants in the current study, Lila started to study English
formally in intermediate school. Moreover, her mother used to teach her some English
vocabulary when she was an elementary school student. She believed that her teachers
were not qualified to teach English. The main concern of the English teachers (the Saudi
and the non-Saudi ones) at her intermediate and secondary schools, according to Lila,
was to finish the textbook before the end of the semester.

(Excerpt 7)

"الاستاذات ماكانو كواليفايد ... يعني ماكان فيه ذمه ... اهم شي يخلص الكتاب وبس."

"[English] teachers were not qualified ... they did not take teaching of

English seriously... the most important thing to them was to finish

covering the entire textbook." (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 11)

Lila claimed that the teaching of English academic writing skills in Saudi public
schools is very poor. She said:

(Excerpt 8)

" لأنهم ماكانوا يعلموننا كيف نكتب سنتنس او باراقاراف او اسسي ابدا ... ماكنت يعني ... يعني المرة الوحيدة اللي كتبت فيها شي كان في ثالث ثانوي في اختبار الرئاسة ... وكانت باسج حفظتها وكتبتها زي ماهي في الاختبار ... ماكانت كرييتيف."

"Because they [teachers] were not teaching us [her classmates and her] how to write a sentence or paragraph or an essay... the only one time I was asked to write something was in the final exam in my last year in secondary school ... it was a passage that I memorized and I wrote it as it was in the exam ... it was not creative." (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 11)

Lila used English to write for academic purposes only. She attributed that to two reasons. The first reason was that she had her own Arabic language blog where she wrote prose and poems. The second reason was that she lacked confidence in writing in English, as can be seen in Excerpt 9.

(Excerpt 9)

"لأنه عندي مدونه بالعربي ومركزه عليها ... يمكن لاني ماني كونفيدت بالانجليزي ."

"Because I have my own blog where I write in Arabic ... and because I am not confident in English." (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 12)

Because she had written many highly graded research papers with only a few comments on her writing style, Lila believed that her academic writing skills were good. However, she thought that she would not be able to make her academic writing skills perfect because she still encountered difficulties when it came to prepositions and phrasal verbs. Similar to Nader, Lila relied on reading to improve her writing skill. She was also

willing to suggest this approach to other Saudi graduate students because reading journal articles would help them to become more familiar with how research papers are structured.

4.2.4. Sami

Sami was born and raised in a small village in the northern part of Saudi Arabia. The population of that village was fewer than 10,000, according to Sami, and almost all of them were Saudis. He was a doctoral student when being interviewed. Before he received his Master's degree from a university in a western US state, he had studied English in the United States for 12 months. He was pursuing his Ph.D. in Business in a university in the southwestern part of the U.S. He had taught several courses for undergraduate students in his American university while working on his Ph.D. He was in his mid-thirties with one child at the time of the study.

When I asked him when he started studying English, he said that he started when he was in intermediate school. He claimed:

(Excerpt 10)

> " يبدا عندنا من المتوسط لكن ... ماناخذه بجد ... وفي الجامعه كان فيه مادتين عن الانجليزي بس
> كانت بيسك انجليزي وقرامر وما اتوقع انها ا □افت لي شي."

> "It [studying English] started in intermediate school but ... we [students]
> did not take it seriously ... at university, there were two courses in English
> but they were about basic English and grammar and I don't think they

improved my English proficiency at all" (Sami, Interview Transcript, p. 18).

His answer reveals that English was perceived by some Saudi students as not important in primary education. He also pointed out that even when he was studying for his Bachelor's degree, he only took two English courses, and they were mainly focused on basic grammar. As a result, he did not think that he was successful in his English language studies in Saudi Arabia.

Sami believed that, because he wrote a Master's thesis in English, his academic writing skills were acceptable. However, he thought that he still needed a proofreader to make sure that his papers were completely understood before they were being submitted. Before submitting the paper, he would ask one of his American classmates to read it. When I asked him if he was willing to ask his non-native English speaking classmates to read his papers, he said that he would ask them only if their major was English.

Sami pointed out that he learned academic writing using two approaches, as can be seen in Excerpt 11.

(Excerpt 11)

" بديت من المعهد ... وكنت اقرأ كتيبات عن كيفية الكتابة ... وكمان اخذت رايتنق كلاسس."

"[Learning academic writing skills] started from the ELI ... and I was

reading books about writing ... I also took writing classes." (Sami,

Interview Transcript, p. 19)

Sami claimed that he improved his academic writing skills through writing classes in the ELI. The second approach was, on the other hand, a reading-oriented one (reading books about writing), something I will elaborate on in the next chapter.

4.2.5. Deema

Deema was a Master's student, and was working on her degree at a university in the south west part of the United States. She was majoring in Food Science when she was interviewed. She was in her twenties and not married. Similar to Lila, Deema came from Riyadh city, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. She had studied English in the United States for 18 months before starting her Master's degree.

Deema studied in private schools all her life and was always among the top 10 students in all the schools where she had studied in Saudi Arabia. She started learning English in kindergarten. During her primary education, Deema was taught English primarily by non-Saudi teachers. She talked about that experience in Excerpt 12.

(Excerpt 12)

" من الرو□ة وكنت ادرس انجليزي ... اللي علموني كانوا اجنبيات ... وكنا نضحك على نطقهم ونجلسهم نحاكيهم في النطق ... في المتوسط كانت المدرسة تطلب منا انه نكتب باراقرافز موجودة في الكتاب ونغير اشياء بسيطه ... والثانوي كانوا يطلبون منا نحفظ مقالين وراح يجي واحد ... وفي الجامعه اخذت كورس واحد وكان قرامر."

"I started learning English in kindergarten ... the teachers were non-Saudis

...we [she and her classmates] used to laugh at their pronunciation

[teachers' pronunciation because it was not correct and sounded funny] ...

we used to imitate their pronunciation ... in intermediate school, the

teacher used to ask us to rewrite some paragraphs from the textbook with

some slight changes ... in secondary school, we were asked to memorize 2

paragraphs and we would be asked to write one of them in the final exam

... at university, I took only one English course and it was about

grammar." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 21)

Deema and her classmates used to laugh at their teachers' accents because they were not able to pronounce some words correctly which, according to Deema, made her classmates and her laugh at their teachers' pronunciation. In addition, the non-Saudi teachers (Egyptians and Syrians), according to Deema, were trying to make English a very easy subject to the students in a negative way. The teachers, for example, would give their students only a limited number of short paragraphs to memorize to be written later on an exam. At the university level, Deema claimed that the only English course she enrolled in was about English grammar. These three reasons (1- laughing at their teachers' accents, 2- memorizing short paragraphs only, and 3- taking a grammar class) might have caused Deema not to take English in general (reasons no. 1 and 3) and writing in particular (reason no. 2) seriously.

Deema thought that her academic writing skills were acceptable in comparison with other American and international graduate students in her classes. The proof that she provided to support her claim was that she always received high grades on her assignments.

Deema claimed that she learned academic writing through different ways, as can be seen in Excerpt 13.

(Excerpt 13)

" من المعهد في كلاسات الكتابة ... ومن الكومنتس اللي من التيتشر ومن البروفسورز ... و غالبا لما ابغى اتاكد انه الكلمه اكاديمية اروح اكتبها في قوقل ومن خلال الامثلة والسياق اقدر احكم عليها... واقرأ جريدة الجامعة وكتب اكاديمية ومقالات علمية ... وهذا زاد كلماتي الاكاديمية بشكل عام وبتخصصي بشكل خاص."

"[I learned academic writing] from the writing classes in the ELI ... and from my teachers' and professors' comments on my assignments ... and if I want to make sure that the word I used was an academic one or not I would write in Google search bar and from the examples and contexts provided I would be able to say if it was academic or not ... I also read the university's newspaper and academic books and journal articles ... and that increased my academic vocabulary in general and in my field in particular." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 22-23)

Deema had followed three methods to learn academic writing: a resources-oriented method (writing classes), a reading-oriented method (comments and reading university's newspaper, books, and journal articles), and a technological one (Google search bar), all of which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Only Deema touched on the concept of voice in academic writing. She claimed that Saudi graduate students make no attempt to include their voices in their academic papers. Not showing their voices in their academic papers might indicate that the

participants were not aware of this aspect in academic writing. Another reason for the absence of students' voice in their academic writing may well be attributed to the differences between academic writing in L1 and in L2 regarding the use of voice, as Wang claims (2012). A third reason is that the participants lacked skill with linguistic features that reveal their voices. A final reason is that they were not confident enough to express their ideas in their academic papers.

4.2.6. Mohammad

Mohammad was a doctoral student majoring in Mechanical Engineering. He came from Jubail, a city in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia. The population of that city was about 337,778 and only half of them were Saudis (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013). It is the largest industrial city in the Middle East. Mohammad was in his mid-thirties. He was married with three children at the time of this study.

Mohammad studied in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools in Saudi public schools. After finishing secondary school, he started studying at Jubail Industrial College. After studying for three years, he graduated and started working for a company called the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) for five years. He then decided to come to the United States to continue his education. He studied English in an ELI for five months before he was able to achieve the required TOEFL scores. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in a university in the United States.

When Mohammad was asked about the first time he started learning English, his reply was:

(Excerpt 14)

" المتوسط والثانوي فهي دمار ... كلية الجبيل كويسين جدا خصوصا في القراءة والمحادثة ...

اول سنة في الجبيل كلها انجليزي ... وكانوا المدرسين اكثرهم امريكان ... ولا تعلمنا اي شي عن

الكتابة ... ماكان فيه كتابة ... ولما جيت امريكا درست بس 6 شهور في المعهد."

"[teaching English] in primary education, it was so bad ... Jubail Industrial

College was very good [in terms of teaching English] especially in reading

and speaking skills ... during the first year in Jubail Industrial College we

took only English courses ... the English instructors there were mainly

Americans or British ... we did not learn anything about writing ... there

was not any course about writing ... when I came to the U.S., I studied

only for 6 months in the ELI." (Mohammad, Interview Transcript, p. 25)

Excerpt 14 shows that, even if a college or university used English as a medium

of instruction, writing skills could be ignored by English instructors. The predominant

focus on English reading and speaking skills in Jubail Industrial College can be justified

because the graduates would work in industries where there are many foreign employees

from different countries and they only use English to communicateorally with each other

other or through reading technical documents.

During his study in intermediate and in secondary schools, and even in Jubail

Industrial College, Mohammad claimed that he did not learn anything about writing

skills. Although he and his classmates were asked to write very few paragraphs,

Mohammad indicated that the purpose was only to check grammar and not to teach

general writing skills.

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Mohammad considered his academic writing skills as not very good and that he was still learning how to improve his academic writing skills, despite the fact that he received his Bachelor and Master's degrees in American universities, as can be seen in Excerpt 15.

(Excerpt 15)

"انا غير را□ي عن مهاراتي في الكتابة الأكاديمية ... انا الان اتعلم كيف اكتب الرسالة حقتي ... حتى في امريكا مافي احد يعلمك كيف تكتب الرسالة ... يعني مافي مادة تعلمك اقسام الرسالة وايش تكتب في كل قسم."

"I am not satisfied with my academic writing skills ... I am now learning

how to write my dissertation ... even in the U.S. there is no one to teach

you how to write a dissertation ... there is no course that informs you about

the sections of a dissertation and what should be written in each section."

(Mohammad, Interview Transcript, p. 25)

4.2.7. Huda

Huda was born and raised in a small city in the eastern region in Saudi Arabia called Qatif. It is one of the oldest cities in that region of Saudi Arabia. The population is estimated to be about 118,327. 94,830 are Saudis. Most used to work as fishermen and farmers before oil was discovered, which has caused most of the people to work in the oil industry now (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013).

Huda was in her early thirties and married with four children. Because she majored in English for her Bachelor's degree, she did not need to study at an ELI in the

United States before starting her Master's degree. Huda was working on her Master's degree in Finance in a university in the south west part of the United States. She wrote poetry in Arabic in her spare time.

During her primary education, Huda studied in Saudi public schools. She was always among the top students. When she started college, she majored first in mathematics and then she changed her major to English. She graduated from college with an honor of distinction.

Huda pointed out that she started studying English when she was in intermediate school. She said that studying English during her primary education did not help her improve her English language skills. Because English language classes in both intermediate and secondary schools focused only on basic English, she started to rely on herself to improve her skills in English.

Huda mentioned that, in intermediate and secondary schools, her teachers were not serious about teaching English writing skills. In college, she discovered that she liked writing in English. When asked to write about the differences between a city and a village on an assignment, she wrote:

(Excerpt 16)

" المدينة هي امرأة في فترة حداد ، دائما لابسه سوداء [أقصد المباني المبنية من اسمنت] ... لدبها عادة سيئة وهي التدخين [إشارة الى الدخان المتصاعد من المصانع] ... والقرية هي امرأة سعيدة ترتدي ملابس مزركشة بالألوان."

"The city is like a woman in mourning, always wearing black [a reference

to the tall buildings that are built of cement] ... with the bad habit which is

smoking [fumes from the factories] ... while a village is like a happy

woman wearing colorful clothes." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 31)

Huda was discouraged when she received a zero for that assignment and was told

by her English professor at college in Saudi Arabia that a village and a city could not be

compared to women and that this was not how an essay should be written. After that

incident, Huda stopped her attempts at writing because she did not want to receive an

unsatisfactory grade. In fact, she even started avoiding writing academic assignments

because:

(Excerpt 17)

" الغير اكاديمي طبعا لانه ما فيها □غط ... وانت موجالس انك تر □ي الغير ... وهذا عكس

الاكاديمي ... واتحاشى الكتابة واركز على الجانب العملي لما اشتغل في قروبز ... واخليهم هم

اللي يكتبون. "

"There is no stress while writing non-academic writing ... because you are

not trying to please someone else ... which is contrary to academic writing

... therefore, I avoid writing [in her courses] and I focus on the practical

part [analyzing numbers] when I work with groups ... and I make them do

the writing" (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 31)

Huda enjoyed writing in English for pleasure. She claimed that she sometimes

composes poems or writes about different issues in her life. She pointed out that she liked

the spontaneity of writing for pleasure because, unlike writing for academic purposes,

there was no stress since she writes only for herself, without fear of being evaluated by her professors.

Huda learned academic writing through the writing courses she took while she was studying for her Bachelor's degree and also by reading books about academic writing. Unlike most of the participants in this study who did not practice reading to improve their academic skills, Huda's reliance on reading some books related to academic writing could be due to the effect of her major, English, where she had to read some books that could teach her how to write an academic paper for the writing courses she enrolled in.

4.2.8. Turki

Turki was working on his Master's degree in Industrial Engineering in a university in the south west part of the United States when I interviewed him. He was in his late twenties - and married with one child at the time of this study. Like Nader, he came from Jeddah city, which is a large city in the western region in Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, he studied in public schools, with the exception of grades five through nine. After graduating from high school, he studied in the College of Telecom and Electronics, a two-year-technical college. He came to the United States and studied English for a year and a half before studying for his Bachelor's degree in Engineering. After completing his Bachelor's degree, he continued to study for his Master's degree at the same university.

Turki said that he started studying English when he came to the U.S. When asked

about the English classes that he took in intermediate and in secondary schools, his reply

was:

(Excerpt 18)

"بالنسبة لي كانت صفر ... ماتعلمت منها اي شيء ... لكن ... لما جيت هنا ... بديت من الصفر."

"To me ... they [English classes] were zero ... I did not learn anything from

them ... but ... when I came here [U.S.]... I started from scratch." (Turki,

Interview Transcript, p. 36)

Although he spent at least six years studying English in the primary school, he

believed that he did not learn anything. Such a claim from him and from most of the

participants in the current study who mentioned that they started learning English when

they came here to the United States might prove that the way English skills were taught

in their home country was not successful. Nader pointed out:

(Excerpt 19)

" وقتها ... ماكنت عارف ايش الهدف من دراسة الإنجليزي ... علشان كذا ماكنت أدرس لها."

"At that time ... I was not able to realize what it meant to study English ...

actually ... I never studied in those English classes." (Turki, Interview

Transcript, p. 36)

The previous excerpt might indicate that Nader used English only in his class. The

absence of the opportunities to practice those skills was probably one of the reasons why

such students did not excel in learning those skills and also why they lacked the motivation to learn them.

When he started his Master's degree in the United States, Turki said that, after finishing writing his assignment, he would ask a friend who is a native speaker of English to proofread it. When his friend finished proofreading the assignment, Turki would take it to the writing center. He said:

(Excerpt 20)

" اروح لصديقي الامريكي وبعدين الرايتنق سنتر ... واروح للامريكي علشان ينقح البيبر حقتي اول وبعدين يصير اغلاط بسيطه اروح للرايتنق سنتر ... فهم وقتهم ⬜يق يعني تروح ولا تطول معهم ... وصراحة نادر جدا اني اروح الرايتنق سنتر لأنه مثل ماقلت لك كتابتنا جدا قليله واكثر حاجة نتعامل معها هي الارقام ... فلما يكون اسايمنت كتابة ما اهتم فيه كثير لأن التركيز راح يكون على الأرقام."

"I go to my American friend then to the writing center ... I go to the American first because the staff in the writing center limits the amount of time it can spend with each student ... frankly I rarely go to the writing center because as I told you before we rarely write anything in texts and most of our assignments consist of numbers ... so when I have an assignment that has some paragraphs I do not pay much attention to those paragraphs because the focus will be on numbers." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 37)

Turki claimed that he was first introduced to academic writing in the ELI. He claimed that because he had confidence in the teachers and the instruction at that ELI, he

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did not make any attempts to learn academic writing skills from any other sources except from the teachers there.

4.2.9. Rakan

Like Nader and Turki, Rakan came from Jeddah city which is a large city in the western region of Saudi Arabia. He was in his early thirties and married with one child at the time of this study. He studied English in the United States for 14 months before starting his Master's degree. Rakan was a Master's student in a university in the south west part of the United States. His major was Hospitality Administration.

During his primary education, he studied in different schools and in different countries. In Saudi Arabia, he studied in a private elementary school. For intermediate school, he studied in a public school in Saudi Arabia. Finally, for secondary school, he studied in a public school in Jordan. He attended college in Jordan for almost two years before transferring to Saudi Arabia where he completed his studies and received his Bachelor's degree. He described his English learning journey in these schools and countries as:

(Excerpt 21)

" في الابتدائي تعلمت انجليزي كويس لأني كنت في مدرسة خاصة كويسه وهذا اللي خلاني احسن من الكل لما رحت المتوسط ... لكن لما رحت الثانوي في الاردن كنت الأقل ... في الجامعه اخذت مادتين في الانجليزي وكانت بدائية ... والتركيز على القرامر ... وكان المنهج في السعودية يعتمد على القرامر فقط ... ولا كان فيه تمارين كتابه اصلا ."

"In elementary, my English was good because I was studying in a good private school and, for that reason, I was better than all the students when I started my intermediate school [he moved to a public school] ... but when I went to study in a secondary school in Jordan ... my English was the worst ... I took only two courses when I was doing my bachelor degree and they were all basic English ... the focus is only on grammar ... the curriculum in Saudi Arabia is mainly based on grammar ... there are no writing exercises at all." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p. 41)

Rakan went to Jordan for personal reasons and education was not among them. Completing his primary education in two different countries made Rakan compare the English classes in these countries. As Excerpt 21 shows, the English classes in Saudi Arabia, in his view, were mainly focused on grammar in comparison with the English classes in Jordan.

Rakan stated that he used English in some social websites (for example, Facebook and Twitter). He said that he used English on such websites to demonstrate to others that he was at ease communicating in English.

Rakan pointed out that he was not satisfied with his proficiency in English academic writing. He said:

(Excerpt 22)

"أنا دائما وعلى طول عند الرايتنق سنتر ... أروح هناك علشان يراجعون لي القرامر النيتف سبيكرز اللي يشتغلون هناك ."

"I am a regular and frequent student visitor at the writing center ... I go there mainly to have my grammar checked by the native speakers of English who work there." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p. 41)

Excerpt 22 shows that he perceived native speakers of English as knowledgeable in academic writing. In addition, it shows that Rakan believed that he encountered difficulties with grammar only. A possible reason for such perception could be traced to what happened to him regarding his first assignment as a graduate student. He was directed to go to the writing center because his professor wanted to focus on the content of the paper and not to be distracted by the need to correct the grammatical mistakes in every sentence, as we can see in Excerpt 23.

(Excerpt 23)

"أول واجب سويته رماه الدكتور في وجهي ... وقال أنا أبغى أقرأ معلومات مو أصحح لك قرامر."

"The first term paper I wrote was thrown at my face by my professor ... he said: I want to focus on the content of the paper not to teach you grammar." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p.42)

Rakan pointed out that the ELI he attended did not teach him what academic writing is or how to write academic papers. He said:

(Excerpt 24)

" المعهد سيء ... لأنهم يستخدمون كتب تجاريه ... والمدرسين سيئين."

"The ELI is bad ... because the textbooks used there are poor [in terms of quality] ... and the teachers are not qualified." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p. 41)

Although he studied in the ELI for 14 months before he started his Master's degree, he claimed that he did not learn how to write academic papers there. The case of Rakan draws our attention to the fact that not all the students who were able to obtain the required TOEFL/IELTS scores to be admitted to the graduate programs have the necessary academic writing skills.

He began to learn about academic writing when he started his Master's degree with the help of his professors. Reading his professors' comments and following the format of a journal article on a similar or familiar topic were his strategies to ensure that his papers were written according to academic English standards.

4.2.10. Maram

Maram was pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry at a university in the southwest of the United States. She received her Master's degree from a university in the south part of the U.S. She studied English in the United States for 18 months before she started her Master's degree. Maram was in her late twenties and not married at the time of this study.

Maram came from a big city in the western region in Saudi Arabia called Almadinah Almunawwarah. It is the second holiest city in Islam after Makka City. The total population of that city was estimated around 1962558 where 396048 were non-Saudis (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013).

Maram claimed that she started studying English seriously when she came to the United States. When working on her Bachelor's degree, she took only one English course, which focused primarily on grammar, as can be seen in Excerpt 25.

(Excerpt 25)

<div dir="rtl">

"تعلمت لما جيت هنا في امريكا ... صحيح انا اخذته في المتوسط والثانوي بس حفظ بدون فهم ... وفي الجامعه اخذت مره وحده انجليش وكان مره بيسك قرامر ... لما جيت هنا درست في المعهد سنة وخمسة شهور."

</div>

" I learned [English] when I came to the U.S. ... it is true that I studied [English] in intermediate and in secondary schools but it was rote memorization without understanding ... at the university I took only one course and was about grammar ... when I came here, I studied in the ELI for one year and five months." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 44)

Just like most of the participants in the current study, Maram said that she started learning English when she came to the United States. Although she studied English for 6 years during her primary school, she indicated that it mostly involved rote memorization without understanding what was taught by teachers. Even when she was pursuing her Bachelor's degree, she took one course and it was mainly about grammar rules that she already studied in her primary education.

When Maram wrote her thesis, she asked an American classmate who worked with her in the same lab to read it. She felt that he would understand the topic better than the consultants in the writing center because of his familiarity with the topic, as can be seen in Excerpt 26.

(Excerpt 26)

<div dir="rtl">

" لما كتبت الرسالة اعطيتها امريكي وبنفس شغلي لأنه راح يكون عارف شغلي ... لكن لما اروح

للرايتنق سنتر ماراح يعرفوا ... ممكن يعرفوا قرامر ... بس ماراح يعرفوا هل المعلومة صح او

لا ... لاني مرة رحت لهم وقالوا كل شي اوكي ... ولما وديتها لزميلي الأمريكي قال لي ايش

تقصدي هنا وايش تقصدي هنا ... فهو يفهم اكثر."

</div>

"When I wrote my thesis, I gave it to an American student who worked
with me in the lab because he would know the type of work I was doing ...
but if I went to the writing center, they [the instructors] would not know ...
they might know grammar ... but they would not know if the information
was correct or not ... because I went there once and they [writing center
consultants] told me that my paper looked fine ... but when I showed it to
my American friend, he asked me to clarify the meaning of some
sentences ... he understood better [than the consultants in the writing
center]." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 45)

Maram claimed that she gained her academic writing skills from the classes she
took at the ELI. Living with an American family in a live-in arrangement was an
additional help because the college-educated parents would read her work and offer
suggestions and corrections, as can be seen in Excerpt 27.

(Excerpt 27)

<div dir="rtl">

" كنت ساكنة مع عائلة أمريكية ... مخلصين البكالوريوس ... وأكتب لهم حاجات غير اللي

مطلوبة ... وأجلس أوريهم ويصححون لي إذا فيه أخطاء ."

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"I used to live with an American family ... the parents had college degrees ... I used to show them some of my work … and they would correct my mistakes if there are some." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 46)

4.2.11. Adel

Adel was a doctoral student. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degree from a university in the south west part of the United States. He was working on his Ph.D. in Computer Science at a university in the south west part of the U.S. Similar to Huda, he came from a small city in an eastern region in Saudi Arabia called Qatif. He was in his thirties and married with four children at the time of this study. Since his proficiency in English was reportedly high when he came to the United States before completing his Bachelor's degree, he studied in an ELI program for only one month.

After graduating from secondary school, he enrolled in a technical college for three years where he majored in Computer Science. Because his field requires the knowledge of English, he worked on improving his English language skills by reading books.

Adel was sure that he would not be able to reach the level of a native speaker of English when he writes his papers. He said:

(Excerpt 28)

"الانجليزي ماهي لغتي فلما أكتب ما راح أصير مثل اليتف."

"English is not my mother tongue so when I write, I will not reach the level of the native speaker of English." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p. 49)

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Because his current advisor was a non-native speaker of English, Adel was not confident that he (his advisor) would able to recognize all of his grammatical errors. He claimed that:

(Excerpt 29)

<div dir="rtl">

"لأنه مشرفي أجنبي فهو يخطأ في الجمل مثلي ... فليش أعدل بحثي؟! لكن لو مشرفي متحدث

أصلي راح أركز أكثر."

</div>

"Because my advisor was a non-native speaker of English, he made

mistakes in the sentences just like me ... so why should I care about

improving my term paper?! But if my advisor was a native speaker of

English, I would pay more attention." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.49)

From the previous excerpt, we can see that there were at least three misconceptions in the way Adel perceived the importance of academic writing. The first one is that Adel assumed that because his advisor was a non-native speaker of English, his advisor would not be able to identify the grammatical mistakes he (Adel) makes. The second misconception is that the native speakers of English do not make grammatical mistakes. The third misconception is, similar to Rakan, Adel limited academic writing skills to be able to write academic sentences that lack any grammatical mistakes.

Adel referred to another reason for not being interested in improving his academic writing skills. He claimed that he used programming languages to write his assignments instead of paragraphs made of texts, as can be seen in Excerpt 30.

(Excerpt 30)

"وبحكم ان قسمنا 75% أجانب و اكثره لغات برمجة فالانجليزي الأكاديمي عندنا مو ذاك الزود."

"Since 75% of the professors in our major [Computer Science] were foreigners [non-native speakers of English] and [assignments] were written in programming languages, academic English is not important to us [students]." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.49)

Although Adel used English words while using programming languages in his assignments, he was referring to academic writing skills when he used the word 'English' in the excerpt.

4.2.12. Tala

Tala came from Saihat city in the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The population of that city was estimated around 75,794, where 13873 were non-Saudis (Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia, 2013). Most people in that city worked in agriculture or in fishing industries.

Tala received her Master's degree from a university in the eastern part of the United States. She was working on her Ph.D. in the field of Analytical Chemistry in a university in the southwest part of the United States when she was interviewed. She had studied English in the U.S. for 18 months before beginning her Master's degree. She was in her late twenties with no children.

Tala started studying English when she came to the U.S. She pointed out that she was not motivated to study for her English classes when she was in intermediate and in

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secondary schools. When I asked her why she had not studied more effectively before, she responded:

(Excerpt 31)

> " مثل كل سعودي ... ماكنت ادرس ولا اهتم ... لأنه اي دونت نيد إت ...ماكان فيه حاجة تخليني
> اتعلمها ... بس لما جيت هنا كان فيه دافع وهو اني اكمل دراستي."

"like every Saudi ... I was not studying and I did not care ... because I do not need it ... there was not any motive for me to do that ... but when I came here [to the U.S.], there was a motive which is pursuing my [higher] studies." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p. 51)

We can see from Excerpt 31, lacking the motivation to study English was a common problem encountered by many Saudi students in Saudi Arabia, and it affected them negatively because they did not take the English classes seriously. However, when Tala came to the United States to do graduate work, she realized the necessity of learning English. She studied at three different English language institutes because she was looking for a program that focused on academic English.

Tala claimed that when she finished writing her academic papers, she would ask an American classmate to review her work. She pointed out that if one of her classmates was writing about the same topic, it would affect her academic writing style positively because they could share ideas and sources with her. Similar to Adel, she perceived collaboration with other students while doing an assignment as a factor that could influence their work positively.

4.3. Comparing the profiles of the participants

In this section, I will compare and contrast some of the details that are related to the participants' socio-cultural backgrounds. The points resulting from such comparisons and contrasts include the influence of participants' native language (Arabic) on English, the influence of the type of schools (private or public) the participants enrolled in during their primary education on their learning of English, and the influence of the cities' population sizes on the participants' learning of English.

4.3.1. **The influence of the participants' native language (Arabic) on English**

The participants expressed contradicting opinions regarding the influence of Arabic on English. Some of them pointed out that there was a positive influence, others said there was a negative influence, and a third group claimed that there was no influence at all.

The majority of the participants perceived that being able to write well in Arabic would have a positive effect on a person's writing skill in English. Sami, Adel, and Nader, for example, claimed that there would be a positive influence because delivering an idea, vocabulary, and the writing style do not change from a language to another. Nader, for example, pointed out that:

(Excerpt 32)

"أظن أنه يأثر ايجابا ... أظن أنه تكون تكتب بأي لغة ... راح يكون له تأثير على اللغات الأخرى ... لأنه الكتابه لها جوانب مره كثيرة ... واحد منها القرامر ... لكن يبقى الأسلوب والطريقه والستركشر حقت الكتابه ... هذي هتكون عامة في كل اللغات."

"I think it has a positive influence ... I think when you write in one language it'll have an influence on the other languages ... because writing has many aspects ... among of which is grammar ... but grammar and structure ... would be the same in all the languages." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 9)

On the other end of the scale, some participants pointed out that being a good writer in Arabic would affect a person's English writing skills negatively. Deema, for example, said:

(Excerpt 33)

"بحكم انه فيه فرق بين قواعد وكلمات اللغتين ... فراح يصير تأثير سلبي ... وخصوصا للمبتدأين في اللغة."

"Since the two languages [Arabic and English] have different grammatical rules and vocabulary … there would be a negative influence … especially for those who just started learning the language [English]." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 23)

Lila also believed that there would be a negative influence. She claimed:

(Excerpt 34)

"اللغة الأولى تأثر سلبا دائما على اللغة الثانية ... أحيانا أسوي ترانزفر من ناحية الكلمات والقرامر بالغلط ... أحيانا أفكر بالعربي وأكتب بالإنجليزي فماتطلع مضبوطة."

"The first language always has a negative effect on the second one ...

sometimes I accidently transfer words and grammar rules ... sometimes I

think in Arabic but I write in English and the result may be

incomprehensible". (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 15)

A third group of the participants claimed that there was no influence at all. Rakan

and Reem, for example, believed that there would not be any influence. They support this

claim by saying that English and Arabic are different languages. Reem, for example,

stated:

(Excerpt 35)

"أتوقع مافيه أي تأثير ... هذا شيء وهذاك شيء ثاني ... بسبب الاختلافات بينهم."

"I think there is not any influence … because this [Arabic] is something

and that [English] is something else … because the differences between

them." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 4)

Although the participants provided their own perceptions about whether having

good Arabic writing skills would affect English writing skills positively or negatively,

they were talking about that issue as a general idea, rather than from personal experience

perspective. Looking closely at the profile of one of the participants might bring

something interesting to the study. For example, in college, Huda discovered that she

liked writing in English. When asked to write about the differences between a city and a

village on an assignment, she wrote:

(Excerpt 36)

"المدينة هي امرأة في فترة حداد ، دائما لابسه سوداء [أقصد المباني المبنية من اسمنت] ... لدبها

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عادة سيئة وهي التدخين [إشارة الى الدخان المتصاعد من المصانع] ... والقرية هي امرأة سعيدة

ترتدي ملابس مزركشة بالألوان".

"The city is like a woman in mourning, always wearing black [a reference

to the tall buildings that are built of cement] ... with the bad habit which is

smoking [fumes from the factories] ... while a village is like a happy

woman wearing colorful clothes." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 31)

Huda's case is different from the rest of the participants. Although she writes

poems in Arabic and in English and wrote a good piece of writing in which she compared

a city to a village, she was not sure if being a good writer in Arabic would affect her

writing skills in English. She pointed out that:

(Excerpt 37)

"صعب انك تحدد ... لأنه فيه عوامل كثير تأثر ... ممكن يصير كويس بالعربي فيجي يدرس

انجليزي ويكون المدرس مو كويس فيأثر سلبا."

"It is difficult to determine [if writing well in Arabic has a positive or a

negative influence on writing well in English] … because there are several

factors that could affect [the writing skill in both languages] … a person

probably is good in writing in Arabic but when he started learning

English, he teacher was not a good one so the writing skills of the student

would be negatively affected." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 34)

Huda probably was talking about her bad experience with her teacher (I talked

about that experience in Huda's profile).

4.3.2. **The influence of the type of schools (private or public) the participants**

enrolled in during their primary education on their learning of English

I am a Saudi person (similar to the participants in the current study), a student who studied his primary education in different Saudi schools in Saudi Arabia, and an English teacher who taught in intermediate and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia for 5 years. From this vantage point, I think I might be eligible to share some personal experience while discussing this point. Since all schools in Saudi Arabia are required to use the same materials and textbooks while teaching English, the major player in improving students' English writing skill, I think, is the teacher and not the type of school (whether a private or a public one). If a teacher wants to improve his/her students' writing skill, s/he has to give them extra activities (in addition to the activities in the textbooks s/he is required to teach by the Saudi Ministry of Education). Unfortunately, not all the teachers who teach English in Saudi schools are willing to take that extra step.

Some excerpts from the participants support my observation above. Sami, for example, studied in public schools during his primary education. When it comes to teaching English, he said:

(Excerpt 38)

"يبدأ عندنا من المتوسط لكن ... ماناخذه بجد ... وفي الجامعه كان فيه مادتين عن الانجليزي بس

كانت بيسك انجليزي وقرامر ... ما اتوقع انها ا□افت لي شي .

"It [studying English] started in intermediate school but ... we [students]

did not take it seriously ... at university, there were two courses in English

but they were about basic English and grammar … I don't think they

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improved my English proficiency at all." (Sami, Interview Transcript, p. 18)

On the other hand, Deema, who studied in private schools during her primary education, stated that:

(Excerpt 39)

"من الرو□ة وكنت ادرس انجليزي ... اللي علموني كانوا اجنبيات ... وكنا نضحك على نطقهم
ونجلسهم نحاكيهم في النطق ... في المتوسط كانت المدرسة تطلب منا انه نكتب باراقرافز موجودة
في الكتاب ونغير اشياء بسيطه ... والثانوي كانوا يطلبون منا نحفظ مقالين وراح يجي واحد ...
وفي الجامعه اخذت كورس واحد وكان قرامر ".

"I started learning English in kindergarten ... the teachers were non-Saudis ...we [she and her classmates] used to laugh at their pronunciation [teachers' pronunciation because it was not correct and funny] ... we used to imitate their pronunciation ... in intermediate school, the teacher used to ask us to rewrite some paragraphs from the textbook with some slight changes ... in secondary school, we were asked to memorize 2 paragraphs and we would be asked to write one of them in the final exam ... at university, I took only one English course and it was about grammar."
(Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 21)

The last two excerpts might suggest that studying in private schools does not always indicate that students will be better than those who are studying in public schools in terms of their English writing skills (at least as I see it in my participants' cases).

4.3.3. The influence of the cities' population sizes on the participants' learning of English

Regarding the size of the cities that the participants came from, I do not think that it had an obvious influence on the participants' English skills. It is true that big cities would have a large number of foreigners; however, those foreigners are mostly from India and Bangladesh and do not have any level of education. They are blue-collared workers (people who perform manual labor), personal drivers for some wealthy families, workers in farms, and grocery stores sellers. Therefore, they tend to use a simplified version of Arabic that allows to survive and to communicate with the Saudis.

The influence of the size of the cities the participants in the current study came from can be looked at from a different angle. Small cities, unlike big ones, tend not to have much entertainment. Not having much entertainment might make some students focus on their studies (for example, reading some books to learn English). The participants, however, did not touch on the influence of their cities on their learning of English. Whether they were coming from big cities (for example, Deema came from Riyadh where the population was 5.7 million) or from small ones (for example, Sami came from a small city where the population was around 10,000), the participants did not talk about the influence of their cities on their English skills.

4.4. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I provided a biographical profile for each participant. The profiles included information about the participants' backgrounds (for example, their educational degrees, cities they came from in Saudi Arabia, their work experience, and their length of

stay in the U.S.) and their experiences with learning English and with learning how to

write in English. Generally speaking, there were 6 males and 6 females. There were also

6 Ph.D. students and 6 Master's students. The participants' majors were Educational

Leadership, Engineering Management, English, Business, Food Science, Mechanical

Engineering, Finance, Industrial Engineering, Hospitality Administration, Chemistry, and

Computer Science. Finally, I compared and contrasted some of the information related to

the participants' socio-cultural backgrounds.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will shed some light on the similarities and on the differences found among the answers of the participants regarding their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. The points will be presented based on the research questions which are:

1- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive different aspects of academic writing?

2- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive plagiarism?

3- What might be the sources of the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism?

I would like readers to keep in mind that most of what is presented or emphasized in this chapter is my interpretation of the participants' insights gained from listening to the recordings and reading the interview transcripts while writing my dissertation project.

5.2. Some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing (RQ 1)

To explore the participants' perceptions of academic writing, I will discuss four issues that I noticed in the participants' interviews. These issues are: simplistic understanding of the definition of academic writing, viewing academic writing as mainly important for academic survival, adopting certain approaches to learn academic writing, and perceiving academic writing as difficult only at the formal level.

5.2.1   Simplistic understanding of the definition of academic writing

The participants provided several definitions for academic writing. They looked at academic writing from different angles. Most of the participants focused only on the micro level when they defined academic writing. By the micro level, I mean choice of vocabulary, grammar, and cohesive devices. Reem, for example, perceived academic writing as:

(Excerpt 40)

"هي كلمات ... ماسمعها كثير ... مو فميلير معها ... مو كل يوم اشوفها قدامي ... احيانا فيه كلمات ما اعرف انطقها ... كلمات اكاديمية."

"Words that I do not hear much…words that I am not familiar with…words that I do not hear on a daily basis…words that I do not know how to pronounce ... words that we expect to find in academia only."
(Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 1)

Reem seemed to be limiting her definition of academic writing to the type of words used in formal academic setting only. Her definition may be simplistic. For

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example, if a slang word was not one that she hears "on a daily basis," it might be considered an academic one according to her definition.

Some of the participants, on the other hand, focused on the macro level. By the macro level, I mean rhetorical forms and conventions, organization, and audience. Lila, for example, referred to the organization of academic papers, as can be seen in Excerpt 41.

(Excerpt 41)

" اكتب بالفصحى ... اكتب على الستايل اللي بالفيلد... والاورقانيزيشن."

"Writing in formal language ... following style in the field ... and organization." (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 12)

Similarly, Sami focused on the macro level while defining academic writing, as can be seen in Excerpt 42.

(Excerpt 42)

"هي طريقة كتابة مو□وعك ... كيف تقسم كتابتك الى اقسام ... كيف تتعامل مع مو□وعك."

"It's how you start your topic ... how you divide your paper into sections (introduction, body, conclusion) ... how you tackle your topic." (Sami, Interview Transcript, p. 18)

As can be seen from the excerpts above, the participants did not have a comprehensive understanding of what academic writing means. In fact, most participants, for example, limited their definitions of academic writing to one or two issues from the

following list (word choice, general organizational conventions such as introduction, body, and conclusion, avoiding the use of first person pronouns, and accurate grammar usage). A comprehensive understanding would include what the participants mentioned in addition to audience, textual borrowing, authorship, originality, and textual ownership. Being familiar with such features, according to Bloch (2001), would make NNESs able to improve their academic writing skills. Additionally, Coffin *et al*. (2003) point out that academic writing deals with students' thinking skills and content knowledge, helps students to evaluate their writing skills and knowledge, and encourages them to take part in academic communities. The points mentioned by Coffin et al. (2003) did not appear in my participants' perceptions of the definition of academic writing.

5.2.2 Viewing academic writing as mainly important for academic survival

The participants provided several reasons for the importance of academic writing. One of the reasons was that, since they were graduate students, it was expected of them to have good academic writing skills. Nader, for example, said:

(Excerpt 43)

"انت متوقع انك تكتب كثير ولا راح تتخرج الا بعد ماتكون متمكن فيها."

"You are expected to write more and you'll never graduate till you have good academic writing skills." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 8)

Here, we can see that academic writing is linked to the practical goal of graduation.

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A different reason for the importance of academic writing was that it might help people to survive academically by taking shortcuts, according to some participants. Sami, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 44)

" تساعدك في حفظ الوقت من خلال قراءة التقسيم والابستراكت ... فاول ماتقرا الابستراكت مثلا تشوف انت تكمل او لا."

"It [the followed organization in an academic paper] helps you to save time by reading the headings and the abstract… when you read the abstract, you would be able to decide if you want to read the whole paper of not." (Sami, Interview Transcript, p. 19)

The organization of an academic paper, as Sami claimed, enables readers to find the information they are searching for quickly by browsing the sections in a paper and then reading the section(s) that they want which, eventually, helps them save their time and survive academically.

The third reason is that having good academic writing skills might help the participants to publish their articles in peer-reviewed journals. Tala, for example, stated that academic writing was important because it was:

(Excerpt 45)

" لأنه هي واجهتك للمنظمات والمجلات العلمية وللتخرج ."

"[academic writing is] your way to organizations and peer-reviewed journals and graduate." (Tala, Interview Transcript, p. 54)

Tala claimed that academic writing was important because it allows her to meet one of her degree's requirements (publishing an article) in order to graduate.

The participants also mentioned that academic writing skills are important because they help them to succeed in their courses because poor or non-existent academic writing skills will result in failure in the course. Nader, for example, pointed out that he wanted to have good academic writing skills because:

(Excerpt 46)

"هي مهمة في التعليم العالي لأنه قايم عليها."

"Grades are mostly based on writing papers." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 8)

It is important, according to Deema, to have academic writing skills at the graduate level. She said:

(Excerpt 47)

" لأنه فيه دكاترة يحطون درجات معينة للكتابة ... والشيء الثاني اني راح اكتب رسالة فكيف راح اكتب رسالة وانا ما اكتب كويس."

"Because there are professors who assign marks for well-written papers ... also I am going to write a thesis so how I am supposed to do that if I lack academic writing skills." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 22)

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Reem also claimed that as an international student, academic writing is not important to her because there are other sources where she can have her academic papers improved (for example, writing center and proofreaders).

(Excerpt 48)

"كطالبة دولية مو مهم اني اكتب كويس ... لأني ممكن أروح للرايتنق سنتر او بروفريدرز."

"As an international student, it is not important for me to have good academic writing skills ... because I can go to the writing center or to proofreaders." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 3)

Reem seems to limit the use of academic writing to writing her assignments and term papers only.

Turki pointed out that it was important for him to write well in order to be able to demonstrate to his professors that there were minimal linguistic differences in writing skills between him and native speakers of English, as can be seen from the following excerpt.

(Excerpt 49)

"لازم تبين لدكتورك انك مثل الطلاب الأمريكان في الكتابة."

"[When you write] you have to demonstrate to your professor that there are no differences between you and the American students in writing." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 36)

As can be seen, most participants viewed academic writing as important for survival only. The participants pointed out that academic writing was important to them because professors would expect them to have good academic writing skills, it helped them to survive academically by taking shortcuts, it helped them to publish their articles in peer-reviewed journals to graduate, and it helped them to succeed in their courses. All these reasons could be considered as parts of survival in their studies.

Viewing academic writing as important for survival could be considered as an instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), refers to learning a language as an instrument to achieve specific goals. In the current study, the participants had a tendency to learn English academic writing to be able to survive while doing their graduate studies.

5.2.3 Perceived approaches to learning academic writing

The participants reported several successful and unsuccessful approaches to learning academic writing. The successful approaches, according to the participants, were: a lexicon-based approach, a genre-based approach, a human-based approach, and a technology-based approach. Those approaches were considered successful ones because the participants believe that such approaches helped them learn and improve their academic writing when they were asked the following questions in the interview: how did you learn to write academic English? During your writing process, does your process involve revision? (Why)? What kind of instruction do you receive? What are your strategies to cope with writing academic English? (In other words: how do you make sure that what you are writing is academic English).

One of the successful approaches was to use formal terminology. Adel, for example, said:

(Excerpt 50)

"أخلي كتابتي أكاديمية عن طريق أني أخذ كلمات من السؤال ... بحكم أن اسئلتنا ممكن توصل لصفحات."

"I make my assignments written in an academic writing style through repeating some of the words in the question [borrowing some of the words in the question(s) and use them in his paper]... since our questions [questions in Computer Science major] might reach several pages." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p. 51)

Adel used the question prompt as a strategy to improve his academic writing skills. He said that in his computer science courses, lengthy questions of two to three pages are typical. By repeating selected phrases and terminology from the questions in his responses to the question, he believed that he was able to improve his academic writing skills.

Another successful approach was a genre-based one. The term genre refers to "a distinctive category of discourse of any type, spoken or written, with or without literary aspirations" (Swales, 1990, p. 33).

Maram, for example, reported that she:

(Excerpt 51)

" اجمع البيبيرز اللي في نفس مو□وعي ... وبعدين اقرأ المقدمات كلهم واحاكيهم ."

"Collected many journal articles written about topics related to mine ...

then [she] read the introduction section in all the papers and imitated

them." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 45)

In the previous excerpt, Maram said that when she wanted to write the

introduction section, she looked at the same genre in journal articles and then imitated

how that genre was written while writing her papers.

The human-based approach is considered by some of the participants as one of the

successful approaches to learn academic writing skills. This approach means the

participants relied on other people (for example, the consultants in a writing center, a

friend) to provide them with feedback regarding their papers and, eventually, improve

them. Nader, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 52)

"وطبعا واحد من أهم الأماكن الأساسية في الجامعه عندي الرايتنق لاب ... هذا مكان جدا مهم

وهو مكان اساسي بالنسبة لي لتعلم الكتابة ... احيانا لما اروح الرايتنق لاب اخليه يقرأ وأشوف

ايش فهم من البيبر حقتي ... واذا لقيت انه ماهو 80 بالميه فاهم ايش اقول في البيبر حقتي معناته

أنا ماوصلت المعلومه بشكل سليم ... هو شغلته التصحيح اللغوي ... واذا هو مو فاهم من البداية

فمعناته راح تعيده وترجع تصيغه من جديد وبعدين ترجع له تشوف هو فاهم أو لا."

"Of course one of the essential places in the university is the writing lab ...

it is a very important place and it's an essential place to me to improve my

writing skills... sometimes when I go to the writing lab, I ask him to read

my paper ... if he [the writing center consultant] did not understand 80 %

of my paper, this means that I was not able to deliver the ideas in a

successful way ... his job is to correct the language problem … and if he

did not understand from the beginning, this means that you have to rewrite

it and bring it to him again to see if he is able to understand it or not."

(Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 7)

Nader mentioned that after finishing writing his papers, he sometimes would ask

one of the consultants in the writing center to check them for grammatical mistakes.

Doing that, from Nader's point of view, helped him improve his writing skills.

Similarly, Maram said:

(Excerpt 53)

"كنت ساكنة مع عائلة أمريكية ... وكنت اكتب لهم حاجات واجلس اوريهم ويصححون لي."

"I lived with an American host family... I used to write some essays and

showed it to them (asking one of the parents who both have bachelor's

degree) to read them and suggest some corrections." (Maram, Interview

Transcript, p. 46)

In the previous excerpt, Maram indicated that she improved her academic writing

skills through writing some essays and asking two educated persons to read them and to

provide her with help and feedback.

The last approach mentioned by the participants to learning academic writing

skills was using technology. Nader stated:

(Excerpt 54)

<div dir="rtl">

"جربت أشياء كثيرة ... و جربت بعض المواقع ... طبعا دائما استخدم برنامج الوورد وميزة
التصحيح الآلي."

</div>

"I tried many things [to make my papers written in academic writing style]
... I tried some websites ... of course I always use Microsoft word program
and its auto correction feature." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 9)

On the other hand, there are some approaches that affected the learning of
academic writing skills negatively, according to the participants. Those approaches are:
rote memorization, lack of academic writing resources (for example, writing courses),
NNES university instructors, help from unreliable sources (for example, siblings and
parents), and being under pressure. Those approaches were considered unsuccessful ones
based on the participants' answers to the following questions in the interview: Could you
please talk about your English learning journey? How do you see yourself as a writer in
your major field? Do you have any concern while writing an academic paper? If yes,
what are they? How are student English writing assignments graded in Saudi Arabia?

Deema claimed that in their primary education, they were not taught how to write
in English. Instead, they were asked to memorize a passage written in English to write it
in the final exam, as can be seen in Excerpt 55.

(Excerpt 55)

<div dir="rtl">

"كانوا يطلبون مننا أنه نحفظ مقالين وراح يجي واحد في الاختبار النهائي."

</div>

"We were asked to memorize 2 paragraphs and we will be asked to write

one of them in the final exam." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 21)

Lacking academic writing resources in their primary schools and at the graduate

level (for example, courses for writing per se) was one of the reasons that did not help the

participants improve their academic writing skills. Mohammad, for example, pointed out

that:

(Excerpt 56)

" حتى في امريكا مافي احد يعلمك كيف تكتب الرسالة ... يعني مافي مادة تعلمك اقسام الرسالة

وايش تكتب في كل قسم."

"Even in the U.S. there is no one to teach you how to write a dissertation

... there is no course that informs you about the sections of a dissertation

and what should be written in each section." (Mohammad, Interview

Transcript, p. 25)

Mohammad complained that he was encountering difficulties while writing his

dissertation, and that there were no writing courses at his university to teach him how to

go over such difficulties. This excerpt indicates that Mohammad probably did not write

academic papers that were composed of texts before starting writing his dissertation.

One of the participants referred to the NNES university instructors as one of the

reasons for not being interested in improving his academic writing skills. Adel pointed

out that:

(Excerpt 57)

<div dir="rtl">

"لأنه مشرفي أجنبي فهو يخطأ في الجمل مثلي ... فليش أعدل بحثي؟! لكن لو مشرفي متحدث

أصلي راح أركز أكثر."

</div>

"Because my advisor is a non-native speaker of English, he makes

mistakes in the sentences just like me ... so why should I care about

improving my term paper?! But if my advisor is a native speaker of

English, I will pay more attention." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.49)

Adel assumed that because his advisor was a non-native speaker of English, he

(his advisor) would not be able to identify the grammatical mistakes he makes. Adel also

believed that the native speakers of English do not make grammatical mistakes.

Additionally, Adel, similar to Rakan, limited academic writing skills to being able to

write academic sentences that lack any grammatical mistakes.

The participants also referred to the help received from their parents in writing

their English writing assignments. Huda claimed that because her parents did her writing

assignments, she did not have a chance to practice writing in English, as can be seen in

Excerpt 58.

(Excerpt 58)

<div dir="rtl">

"والدينا واخوتنا الكبار كانوا يكتبون عننا."

</div>

"[When I was in primary schools] my parents and elder brothers used to

write my composition assignments." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 33)

Huda's parents and elder brothers, with good intentions, would write the

assignment for her so that she would be assured of a higher grade.

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The final reason mentioned by the participants, which could affect their academic writing skills negatively, was being under pressure. Tala, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 59)

"من الأشياء اللي تأثر على كتاباتي الأكاديمية هي لما أكون مضغوطه ... سواءا لأسباب عائلية أو دراسية ... اخطأ في الجمل ولا اقدر أركز وأرتب أفكاري."

"One of the things that affect my academic writing skills is being under pressure ... whether due to family reasons or because of my study… I make mistakes in my sentences and I cannot focus and arrange my ideas." (Tala, Interview Transcript, p. 55)

Tala pointed out that when she is under pressure, she makes mistakes while writing her sentences. She also said that she cannot focus while writing her academic papers and that her ideas would not be connected. Tala seemed to be focusing on grammar and on ideas when she talked about how being under pressure could affect her academic writing skills negatively.

The participants talked about several successful and unsuccessful approaches to learning academic writing. The successful approaches, on one end of the scale, are: a lexicon-based approach, a genre-based approach, a human-based approach, and technology-based approach. On the other end of the scale, the participants revealed some approaches that affected their learning of academic writing skills negatively. Those approaches are: rote memorization, lack of academic writing resources (for example, writing courses), NNES university

instructors, help from unreliable sources (for example, siblings and parents), and being under pressure.

5.2.4 Academic writing difficulties are at the formal level only

The participants in the current study referred to three areas where they usually encounter difficulties. Those areas were: difficulties at the lexical level, difficulties with grammar; and difficulties at the organizational level, for example, IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion).

Some participants revealed that they encountered difficulties in academic writing at the lexical level. Adel, for example, mentioned that he had:

(Excerpt 60)

"عندي مشكلة في الترانزشينينق ووردز وفريزز."

"[In academic writing] a problem regarding using transitional words and phrases while I am writing." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p. 50)

Adel said that linking sentences and paragraphs with each other was difficult for him because he was not familiar with transitioning words and phrases. His major, Computer Science, probably, led to this problem since it is based on programming languages rather than complete sentences and paragraphs.

Maram and Reem claimed that writing for academic purposes was different from writing for non-academic purposes because it required using vocabulary that demonstrates to the readers that you are knowledgeable and well-informed.

(Excerpt 61)

<div dir="rtl">

" الكلمات اللي استخدمها للقارئ للقارئ لازم تكون قوية ... علشان ابين للقار بأني انا مثقفة و قوية و

أكاديمية."

</div>

"[In academic writing] I have to use powerful vocabulary … so I can show

the reader that I am knowledgeable and educated." (Reem, Interview

Transcript, p. 2)

Almost all the participants mentioned that they have difficulties with grammar

when it comes to academic writing. Rakan, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 62)

<div dir="rtl">

"عندي صعوبات مع القرامر ... هم دائما يسألوني عن معاني الجمل."

</div>

"I encounter difficulties with grammar ... they [the writing center

consultants] always ask me about the meaning of my sentences." (Rakan,

Interview Transcript, p. 41)

Rakan believed that because he made grammatical mistakes in his papers, the

writing center consultants were not able to understand his sentences. The writing center

consultants were not able to understand his papers mainly because of his grammatical

mistakes that he made.

The last type of difficulties encountered by one of the participants in the current

study in academic writing is at the organizational level (for example, IMRaD which is an

acronym for introduction, methods, results, and discussion). Lila, for example, pointed

out:

(Excerpt 63)

<div dir="rtl">
"اواجه صعوبة في الليترتشر رفيو لانه شي جديد علي وماكنت عارفه كيف ابحث عن اشياء

متصله مع بعض وكيف اقدر اربطهم مع بعض."
</div>

"I encounter difficulties with the literature review because it is something

new to me and I do not know how to search for similar studies and

compare and contrast them." (Lila, Interview Transcript, p. 13)

Lila's difficulties with writing the literature review section could be attributed to

the fact that she did not write this section earlier while she was doing her Bachelor's

degree.

5.2.5 Summary

In the previous points, I talked about some Saudi graduate students' perceptions

of academic writing. I showed that the participants seemed to have a simplistic

understanding of academic writing. I also mentioned that the participants seemingly

perceive academic writing as mainly important for academic survival. Later, I listed the

approaches that the participants perceived to be successful for learning their academic

writing skills, and the ones that the participants perceived to be unsuccessful. Finally, I

showed how the participants seemed to perceive academic writing as difficult mainly at

the formal level.

5.3. Saudi graduate students' perceptions of plagiarism (RQ 2)

Regarding the participants' perceptions of plagiarism, the major issues that came up from my analysis of the interview are: the agents behind raising plagiarism awareness, and importance of knowledge about plagiarism for academic survival.

5.3.1 The agents behind raising awareness of plagiarism

According to the interviewees, learning about plagiarism came from two different agents. The first agent was self-learning. Nader said:

(Excerpt 64)

"سمعت عنه وأنا في السعودية ... لي صاحب طردوه من الجامعه في هولاندا بسبب البليجريزم."

"I heard about it [plagiarism] when I was in Saudi Arabia ... I have a friend who was expelled from university in Netherlands because of plagiarism." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 10)

In other words, a critical incident raised his awareness of plagiarism. As a result, he took the initiative to learn about plagiarism, turning himself into an agent for raising his awareness of plagiarism.

The second agent mentioned by the participants was through professors and teachers, as can be seen in Excerpts 65 and 66.

(Excerpt 65)

"عرفت عنه في البكالوريوس لما جيت هنا ... هم قالوا لنا انه ممكن ننفصل."

"I knew about it [plagiarism] during my first semester here [in the U.S.]
… they [professors] told us [students] that we might be expelled [for
plagiarizing]." (Mohammad, Interview Transcript, p. 28)

Mohammad claimed that because he was warned by his professors about
plagiarism when he started his Bachelor's degree in the United States, he became aware
of it for the first time, making his professors an agent for increasing students' awareness
of plagiarism.

Reem also claimed that she:

(Excerpt 66)

"تعلمته لما جيت هنا في المعهد."

"Learned about it [plagiarism] when [she] came here [U.S.] in the ELI
[English language institute]." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 4)

Unlike Mohammad who learned about plagiarism from his professors
when he started his Bachelor's degree despite the fact that he studied at an ELI for
more than 6 months, Reem learned about plagiarism from her teachers at an ELI.
Mohammad's and Reem's cases highlight the importance of not having high
expectations about what students learned in the ELIs to prepare them for
universities in the United States as some ELIs teach about plagiarism (in Reem's
case) while others do not (in Mohammad's case).

As noted above, the participants mentioned that they learned about
plagiarism from two different agents. The first one was self-learning, and the

second one was through their professors and teachers. I also asked the participants about the agents that they believed should be responsible for increasing students' awareness in general about plagiarism. The participants' answers varied. Turki, for example, was the only student who expressed the opinion that students, professors, and the university (through flyers and workshops) share equal responsibility in dealing with plagiarism. He believed that they should work together to spread knowledge about preventing plagiarism since the negative effects that result from an incidence of plagiarism affect all, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

(Excerpt 67)

"الجامعة والدكاترة وحتى الطالب نفسه ... لأنه كلهم راح يتأثرون منه."

"[Increasing the students' awareness about plagiarism] is the responsibility of the university, professors, and the student himself … because they will be all affected." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 40)

Lila, Nader, and Reem considered student as the main player in the awareness-raising process. Nader, for example, said:

(Excerpt 68)

"المسئولية الأساسية هي مسئولية الطالب نفسه."

"The main responsibility [to be aware of plagiarism] lies in the student himself." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 10)

The majority of the participants (Adel, Rakan, Huda, Maram, Mohammad, and Tala) indicated that the professor should take the main role in teaching students about plagiarism. Tala, for example, says that the responsibility of awareness of plagiarism should be on:

(Excerpt 69)

"الدكتور ... بحكم أنه الطالب جاهل فيه فكيف يقرأ عن حاجة يجهلها."

"The professor ... because a student can't be expected to read about plagiarism if he/she has never heard of it." (Tala, Interview Transcript, p. 56)

Both Deema and Sami indicated that only the university should be in charge for helping students to be aware of plagiarism. Deema, for example, said:

(Excerpt 70)

"مسؤولية الجامعة ... صعب كل دكتور يدخل ويتكلم عنه ... راح ياخذ من وقت الكلاس."

"It's the university's responsibility ... it's difficult for professors to come and talk about plagiarism ... because it'll take class time." (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 24)

By university, Deema meant distributing flyers and offering workshops about plagiarism.

One of the participants suggested an off-campus source could be responsible for teaching students about plagiarism. Huda indicated that parents

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should take a role, as well, in teaching their children about plagiarism. She

pointed out that:

(Excerpt 71)

<div dir="rtl">

"أهلي ماقالوا لنا عنه لما كنا صغار."

</div>

"My parents didn't tell us anything about it [plagiarism] when we were

growing up." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 35)

Huda, possibly, wanted to say that learning about plagiarism starts from

home and it was not limited to schools, universities, professors, or teachers.

5.3.2 The importance of the knowledge of plagiarism for academic survival

The participants were asked about different issues related to plagiarism. The most

important issues they brought up as important were: causes of plagiarism, strategies for

avoiding plagiarism, and the consequences of the lack of concern about plagiarism

guidelines.

5.3.2.1. The causes of plagiarism

Several causes for plagiarism have been offered by the participants. These causes

can be categorized into two groups. The first group includes the causes directly related to

an individual student's behavior or motivation. The second group cited reasons for

plagiarism that are related to the role professors play.

The first group of causes that are directly related to an individual student's

behavior or motivation can be divided into two categories: intentional and unintentional

causes. The intentional reasons for engaging in plagiarism include: laziness coupled with the lack of motivation to study, the desire for good grades, the lack of confidence in writing skills, wanting to submit a perfect paper, poor time management skills, entertainment activities that take precedence over studying, and the desire to complete their degree quickly as soon as possible by overloading their schedule and not having enough time to do the required work for each class. Huda, for example, pointed out that:

(Excerpt 72)

<div dir="rtl">

"أحد أسباب البليجريزم انه الطلاب يبغوا يكتبون إجابة مثالية ... وبحكم انه مو واثق في مهارات الكتابه عنده فهو يسوي بليجريزم."

</div>

"One of the reasons for plagiarism is that students want to write a perfect answer in the academic paper ... and because he is not confident in his writing skills, he plagiarizes." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p. 35)

Because students seek to achieve better grades in their academic papers they try to plagiarize since they do not have confidence in their writing skills. This excerpt may also indicate that some students might not be aware of the consequences of plagiarism because they are taking the risk of failing in the course.

The unintentional causes for students to plagiarize the work of others include: the lack of familiarity with or knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism, forgetting to cite the reference, and not being aware that plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Maram, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 73)

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"بعض الطلاب يسوو بليجريزم من غير قصد ... لأنهم متعمقين في الكتابة ينسون كتابة المصدر."

"Sometimes students plagiarize with no intention to do that … because

they are working so hard in their papers, they forgot to cite." (Maram,

Interview Transcript, p. 47)

Both Maram and Dawson (2004) claim that because students often focus on the

content of a paper while writing their academic papers, they forget to cite their sources.

The participants also blame the behavior of some professors as a reason why

some students plagiarize. According to some of the participants, when professors do not

check for plagiarism on students' academic papers, students have the impression that

these professors do not care about academic dishonesty because they accept plagiarized

work. Turki, for example, said:

(Excerpt 74)

"بعض الدكاترة يخلونك تسوي بليجريزم ... لأنهم مايشيكون على البليجريزم ... فهذا يخلي
الطلاب يفكروا انه اوكي انه يسوون كذا."

"Some professors make you plagiarize … they [professors] do not check

for plagiarism … which makes students think that it is ok to do that."
(Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 40)

Although Turki and the students in Razera's study (2011) blame some professors

for making students plagiarize, they were looking at professors from different angles.

Turki, for example, was saying that some professors do not check for plagiarism in their

students' assignments. Students in Razera's study (2011), on the other hand, were saying

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that some professors ask their students to do the same assignment every time the course is given which made some students copy their friends' assignments who already took that course.

5.3.2.2. *The reported strategies for avoiding plagiarism*

Most of the participants pointed out that they use several methods to avoid plagiarism. The first method was replacing words (lexical level). Maram, for example, said:

(Excerpt 75)

"أحاول أغير الكلمات ... استخدم كلمات مشابهة."

"[To avoid plagiarism] I try to change words … I use synonyms."
(Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 47)

Maram's method to avoid plagiarism was only to replace words with synonyms. She believed that replacing words, and not the structure of the sentence, would make her safe from the accusation of plagiarism. Such method might indicate that Maram did not have a complete understanding of plagiarism or the strategies to avoid it since replacing words only is not a guaranteed method to avoid plagiarism.

The other method reported by the participants was paraphrasing (at the syntactic level). Tala claimed that:

(Excerpt 76)

"أسوي بارفريز ... أحاول أغير ستركشر الجملة."

"[To avoid plagiarism] I paraphrase… I try to change the structure of the sentence." (Tala, Interview Transcript, p. 55)

Different from Maram, Tala talked about paraphrasing as a method to help her avoid plagiarism. In other words, she claimed that she tries to rewrite the sentence that she wants to use. However, this method is not always guaranteed because professors disagree on when paraphrasing becomes plagiarism (Roig, 2001). For example, asking faculty members to decide if six rewritten versions of a specific paragraph from an article were considered plagiarism or not, Roig (2001) found that the professors could not reach a final conclusion about the versions.

Another method mentioned by the participants to avoid plagiarism was consulting human sources (for example, their professors). Turki, for example, said:

(Excerpt 77)

"إذا شكيت في معلومة راح أحاول أتأكد منها و أسأل الدكتور."

"If I have any doubt about any information, I have to make sure about it by asking my professors." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 40)

Turki claims that if he was ever uncertain about whether certain information was public knowledge or if he should write a reference for that information, he would ask one of his professors, so, if needed, his professors would provide him with the source of that information.

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The last method for avoiding plagiarism was seeking the help of technological resources (for example, plagiarism detecting software). Rakan, for example, indicated that:

(Excerpt 78)

"اسوي بارفريز ... وكمان شريت برنامج يكشف الجمل اللي فيها بليجريزم ... يعني بعد ما أخلص كتابة البيبرز راح اشيك على البليجريزم ... الجمل اللي فيها بليجريزم راح تكون مظللة علشان اقدر اغيرها."

"I paraphrase … I also bought a program that can detect the plagiarized sentences ... so after I am writing my papers, I would check it for plagiarism … the plagiarized sentences would be highlighted so I can change them." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p. 43)

Rakan used technology to avoid plagiarism. The program he is using allowed him to see if he was able to avoid plagiarism or not by highlighting the plagiarized sentences. In case he has plagiarized sentences, he would change them before submitting the papers to his professors. Using such method suggests that Rakan was really afraid of plagiarism and/or that he did not trust his paraphrasing abilities. The reason for such a claim is that he was the only participant who mentioned that he used a technology-based method to avoid plagiarism after finishing writing his assignments.

5.3.2.3. *The consequences of the lack of concern about guidelines for preventing plagiarism*

Some of the participants reported that plagiarizing affects the plagiarizer him/herself. The person who plagiarizes, according to the participants, would lack subject-matter knowledge, as can be seen in Excerpt 79.

(Excerpt 79)

"لما تسوي بليجريزم في البيبيرز يعني انت تعتمد على الاخرين علشان تحصل على المعلومات لبحثك ... لما تخلص من دراستك تكون ماستفدت من المعلومات اللي في تخصصك."

"When you plagiarize in your papers, you are relying on other people to get you information for your papers … so when you get your degree, you wouldn't have much knowledge about your major." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p. 40)

Turki claimed that plagiarizing would allow students to graduate while still lacking subject-matter knowledge. In this excerpt, Turki was probably talking about the negative effects of plagiarism on the prospective jobs of those who plagiarize (for example, because those who plagiarized lack knowledge, would they be hired or not?, If they were hired, would they succeed or not?).

In addition, some of the participants claimed that plagiarizing would affect other people. The participants said that those who did not plagiarize might receive lower grades than those who plagiarized, which could be unfair to the students who follow the rules. Deema pointed out that:

(Excerpt 80)

"راح يكون ظلم فاللي سوى بليجريزم ممكن ياخذ درجات أعلى."

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"It is unfair because those who plagiarized might receive better grades."

(Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 24)

The participants also indicated that plagiarizing would lead to the lack of contribution to the scientific fields that the plagiarizers are a part of. Maram, for example, said:

(Excerpt 81)

"لو كان مسموح ماراح أبحث وأجيب حاجة جديدة."

"If it [plagiarism] is allowed, I would not go and do research to come up with something new." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 47)

5.3.3 Summary

In this section, I talked about how the participants became aware of plagiarism. The participants mentioned that learning about plagiarism came from two agents: self-learning and through professors and teachers. Asking the participants about the agents that they thought should be responsible for increasing students' awareness in general about plagiarism, their answers were: professors, the university (through flyers and workshops), students themselves, and parents.

The participants also highlighted some of the causes that make students plagiarize. Some of the causes were related to students and others were related to professors. I also referred to the strategies the participants perceived as helpful for avoiding plagiarism. Those strategies were: replacing words (lexical level), paraphrasing

(syntactic level), consulting human sources (for example, their professors), and seeking the help of technological resources (for example, plagiarism detecting software).

Finally, I pointed out the consequences of the lack of concern about guidelines for preventing plagiarism as perceived by the participants. Some of the participants mentioned that the person who plagiarizes would lack subject-matter knowledge. Some of them talked about the negative effects of plagiarism on those who did not plagiarize. Some participants claimed that those who did not plagiarize might receive lower grades than those who plagiarized, which could be unfair to the people who follow the rules.

5.4. The sources of such perceptions (RQ 3)

In the present study, I aimed to explore what might be the sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of English academic writing. Listening to the participants' interviews multiple times and reading the interview transcripts recursively enabled me to identify several possible sources for their perceptions and misconceptions. These sources include the perceived effects of the participants' professors, of their fields of study/occupations, of their peers, and of the Saudi culture. I will discuss these four themes one by one below.

5.4.1 The perceived effects of the participants' professors on their perceptions of academic writing

Several participants talked about the effects of their professors on their perceptions of academic writing in several situations. Mohammad, a Ph.D. student in Mechanical Engineering, for example, stated that:

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(Excerpt 82)

<div dir="rtl">

"أنا أروح للرايتنق سنتر ... لأني أبغى أنه يوصل لدكتوري أني أروح هناك وأحصل درجة كويسة."

</div>

"I go to the writing center ... because I want my professor to know that I was there and then get a better grade." (Mohammad, Interview Transcript, p. 26)

Mohammad believed that going to the writing center would enable him to get a better grade on his academic papers. Mohammad's claim for having better grades was not because he believed that the writing center would help him with his papers but because the instructors at the writing center would inform his professors that he was a client and this would affect his grades positively. As we can see here, the professor, by requiring students to go to the writing center, which may be a good suggestion, had indirectly affected the students' perceptions of the role of the writing center and the potential benefits of the writing center to him as an academic writer. The writing center should have been a place where he could have improved his academic writing skills. Instead, it has become a place where he could gun the system to obtain a higher grade.

Another participant, Rakan, a Master's student in Hospitality Administration, was directed to go to the writing center because his professor wanted to focus on the content of the paper and not to be distracted by the need to correct the grammatical mistakes in every sentence, as we can see in Excerpt 83.

(Excerpt 83)

"أول واجب سويته رماه الدكتور في وجهي ... وقال أنا أبغى أقرأ معلومات مو أصحح لك

قرامر."

"The first term paper I wrote was thrown at my face by my professor ... he

said: I want to focus on the content of the paper not to teach you

grammar." (Rakan, Interview Transcript, p.42)

Since that incident, Rakan started perceiving his weak grasp of grammar as a

major difficulty in writing a paper. Therefore, he would have any academic paper he

wrote proofread before submitting it to make sure that it did not have any grammatical

errors. He felt strongly that grammar instruction should be a component of an academic

writing course and that writing teachers should correct grammatical errors when reading

their students' papers. His professor's comment seemed to have created a tunnel vision

for Rakan, making Rakan limit his perception of successful academic writing skills to

only the ability to write a term paper that is free of grammatical errors.

Huda, a Master's student in finance, perceived non-academic writing as easier

than academic writing. She believed that, with non-academic writing, the writer is not

trying to please the reader, contrary to academic writing where students are motivated to

satisfy their professors. Such a perception came as a result of one of her professor's

comments when she was asked to write about the differences between a city and a

village. Below is a short excerpt of what she wrote for that assignment:

(Excerpt 84)

" المدينة هي امرأة في فترة حداد ، دائما لابسه سوداء [أقصد المباني المبنية من اسمنت] .. لدبها

عادة سيئة وهي التدخين [إشارة الى الدخان المتصاعد من المصانع] .. والقرية هي امرأة سعيدة

ترتدي ملابس مزركشة بالألوان."

"The city is like a woman in grief, always wearing black [a reference to the tall buildings that are built of cement] ... with bad habit which is smoking [fumes from factories] ... while a village is like a happy woman wearing colorful clothes." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p.31)

Because her professor in her Bachelor's degree program told her that her writing assignment was not satisfactory because academic assignments were not written in that way, Huda stated that she lost her confidence in her ability to master writing skills. As a result, she started to prefer to collaborate with classmates in her Business Administration courses (she majored in Finance for her Master's degree). In such collaborative efforts, she could focus on numbers, while other members of the group could be responsible for the writing process for the projects they were working on.

Unlike the students in Kuhi et al.'s study (2014) and in Sato and Matsushima' study (2006) whose students spent more time in planning and adding more sentences when they started thinking of the audience, Huda stopped practicing writing because she thought the audience (her professors) were difficult to please.

Whether the professors are native speakers of English or not seems to have played a major role in influencing Adel's perception of academic writing. He explained that:

(Excerpt 85)

"لأنه مشرفي أجنبي فهو يخطأ في الجمل مثلي ... فليش أعدل بحثي؟! لكن لو مشرفي متحدث
أصلي راح أركز أكثر."

"Because my advisor is a non-native speaker of English, he makes

mistakes in the sentences just like me ... so why should I care about

improving my term paper?! But if my advisor is a native speaker of

English, I will pay more attention." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.49)

Adel's case is different from the above cases in that his professor did not actively cause Adel to form any specific opinions about academic writing. He was not told the wrong information about academic writing, such as going to the writing center to clean up his grammar only. Instead, his professor had caused Adel to develop a certain perception of academic writing by virtue of his status as a nonnative speaker of English. At the same time, we can see several misconceptions in the way Adel perceived the importance of academic writing. The first one is that Adel assumes that because his advisor is a non-native speaker of English, he (his advisor) would not be able to identify the grammatical mistakes he makes. The second misconception is that the native speakers of English do not make grammatical mistakes. The third misconception is, similar to Rakan, Adel limits academic writing skills to be able to write academic sentences that lack any grammatical mistakes.

Rakan defined academic writing as not using pronoun 'I' in his academic papers. He claimed that he was told that information by one of his professors. Since one of the signs that show the use of voice in writing is the use of the 'I' (Hyland, 2001; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Shen, 1989; Tang & John, 1999; Wu & Rubin, 2000), probably that is what made Rakan not talk about the importance of voice while writing his term papers.

5.4.2 The perceived effects of the participants' fields of study/occupations on their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism

I also noticed how the participants commented on the influence of their majors or fields of study on their perceptions of their academic writing skills in several cases. Previously, we have seen how Huda retreated into her major in business administration so that she could defer the writing tasks to her teammates. The interview transcripts contained additional examples of students proclaiming that their majors or fields of study had an influence on their perceptions of academic writing. For example, when I asked Turki, who majors in Industrial Engineering, about his own ways to improve his academic writing skills, he pointed out that:

(Excerpt 86)

"تخصصي مايساعد ... دائما أتعامل مع أرقام ورسومات ... فيعتمد على الريا□يات ... يعني من يوم درست البكالوريوس والماجستير أعتقد ماكتبت حاجة الا في كومبزشن 1 و 2 والباقي معادلات."

"My major does not help [to practice academic writing and to improve his academic writing skills] … I always deal with numbers and graphs … it is mainly mathematics … since I was doing my Bachelor and Master's degrees, I only wrote academic papers that are composed of texts in Composition 1 and 2 courses." (Turki, Interview Transcript, p.37)

Because he believed that his major necessitated that he used numbers and graphs, rather than words, in his assignments, Turki did not seem to believe that he had any chance to practice some academic writing skills (for example, using references correctly,

adopting the proper style of writing, or targeting the needs of one's audience). Although Turki's major did not help him improve his academic writing skills as he claimed, he did not search for other opportunities to improve such skills, as I noticed from the interview.

Adel also said that because almost all of his assignments in his major, Computer Science, were written in programming languages, English was not relevant to him, as can be seen in Excerpt 87.

(Excerpt 87)

<div dir="rtl">

"وبحكم ان قسمنا اكثره لغات برمجة فالانجليزي عندنا مو ذاك الزود."

</div>

"Since [assignments] in our major [Computer Science] are written in programming languages, English is not important to us [students]." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.49)

Although Adel used English words while using programing languages in his assignments, he was referring to academic writing skills when he used the word 'English' in the Excerpt.

Excerpt 88 shows that Adel also perceived plagiarism as not important since answers for the professors' questions in his major can be found in the Internet as open sources.

(Excerpt 88)

<div dir="rtl">

" البليجريزم مو بيق ديل بقسمنا وبحكم انه برمجه فدائما حلول الواجب موجوده في النت كمصدر

مفتوح . "

</div>

"[Plagiarism] is not a big deal ... and because it's programming, the answers are always in the internet as an open source." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.52)

Both Adel and Nader viewed academic writing and academic papers as lengthy (Excerpts 89 & 90). Such perception is probably as a result of effects of their majors, Computer Science and Industrial Engineering, where they are required mostly to use programming languages, graphs, and numbers in their academic papers and not academic texts. Although they did not write academic texts, their use of the word "lengthy" probably came as a result of reading journal articles.

(Excerpt 89)

"انها طويلة ومو انها تو ذا بوينت."

"[Academic writing] is lengthy and not to the point." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.51)

(Excerpt 90)

"المقالات العلمية تاخذ وقت كثير على بال ماتخلصها للأخير."

"Journal articles require so much time to finish reading them." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p.7)

Similarly, because her major is Chemistry, Tala was mostly required in her assignments to write using numbers and chemical formulas. Because she rarely, if ever, wrote academic texts in any extensive manner, she perceived academic writing to consist

of lengthy texts, some of which need paraphrasing and summarizing from other sources to make the texts long enough. When she tried to paraphrase a paragraph that she found in a book or in an article to write it in her dissertation, she said that she encountered difficulties doing that, as we can see in what she said in the interview (Excerpt 85).

(Excerpt 91)

> "عندي مشكلة ... انه لما يكون عندي باراقراف كامل وابغى اسوي له بارفريز ... يصير اقل من
> البارقراف نفسه ."

> "I have a problem ... when I have a complete paragraph and I want to paraphrase it ... it [the paragraph] becomes less than the original paragraph … not long enough." (Tala, Interview Transcript, p. 54)

The previous excerpt shows that Tala believed that a paraphrased paragraph should be as long as the original one. This belief seemed to have made her perceive the paraphrasing process as a difficult task in academic writing. In other words, she seemed to be in a dilemma: academic texts should be lengthy, but she saw herself as lacking the skills to make her text long enough because her paraphrases of original sources were not long enough. To make matters worse, her major, in her view, relied heavily on formulas and numbers, thus further depriving her of the opportunity to practice paraphrasing and making her texts long enough to meet her expectations of what academic texts should be.

Students in some majors are required to work alone when they do their assignments. Not working collaboratively with other classmates, according to Adel, might have affected their academic writing skills negatively, as we can see in Excerpt 86.

(Excerpt 92)

"مشكلة بعض الطلاب انه يعطى الأسايمنت ويترك لحاله ... ممكن لو كان معاه واحد يصيرون يطلعون بأفكار كويسة وكتابة كويسة."

"One of the problems encountered by some students is that they are given the assignment and then left alone to do it ... if he had other students with him, he could have come up with better ideas and better paper in terms of the writing style." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p. 51)

Adel perceived working collaboratively with other classmates would make students come up with better ideas for their assignments. Additionally, working collaboratively, from Adel's point of view, would improve the academic writing skills of the students. Adel was probably referring to not being able to work collaboratively with his classmates as one of the reasons for his weak academic writing skills. This point is really interesting because, earlier, Huda told me in the interview that she retreated to business management because she could give some of the writing tasks to her teammates while she worked on numbers. It seemed that the students' perceptions of the impact of their majors on their writing could be very complex. Their perceptions seemed to have influenced their understanding of collaboration in different ways. In turn, their perceptions of collaboration, by virtue of how it is normally carried out in their major, seemed to have influenced their perceptions of how academic writing skills should be cultivated.

From Excerpts 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91 and 92, I noticed that not being required to write academic texts in an extensive manner due to some majors' emphases on using

codes, numbers, and graphs instead of using complete sentences and paragraphs could be a reason for some students to start losing some academic writing skills (for example, lacking coherence). They may start to lose the incentive to improve their academic writing as well, which might endanger their academic success (for example, not being able to paraphrase correctly as in the case Tala may open the students to accusation of plagiarism).

Other than the students' majors, their previous nonacademic jobs also seemed to have influenced their perceptions of academic writing. Several participants worked in various nonacademic jobs before they started their graduate studies, and we can see the effects of their previous jobs on their perceptions of academic writing. For example, having worked in a company for ten years where he had to write user manuals may have affected Nader's perception of the differences between academic writing and non-academic writing. He perceived academic writing as more difficult than non-academic writing because:

(Excerpt 93)

" لأنه شكلها غريب وغير مريح للقراءة أبدا ... ممكن هم يشوفونه مريح بس هو لا ... لما يكون
الكلام مكتوب كله بنفس الطريقة يقل التركيز على النقاط اللي تحاول تبرزها ... لما يكون الخط
بحجم واحد معين الى نهاية السطر فيكون شكله غريب ولا يحمسك أنك تقرأ ... بينما في المقابل لو
كنت ابغى اسوي لك مانويل أو حتى خطاب راح أرتبه لك وهايكون وا□ح وسهل والمعلومه اللي
تبيها وا□ح من فين تجيبها ... بينما في الكتابه الأكاديمية مو زي كذا ابدا."

"It looks strange and difficult to read ... probably the readers see it as comfortable but it is not ... when all the sentences are written in one way

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... that will not allow you to focus on some points that you want the readers to pay attention to ... when the font size is the same for the whole sentences, it looks odd and does not encourage you to read ... on the other hand, if I want to make a user manual or write a letter I'll arrange it [a user manual or a letter] to you and it will be clear and can be easily read and the information you are looking for will be easy to find … while academic writing it is not like this at all." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 6)

Note that Nader considered academic writing difficult not because of the academic writing skills required to complete an academic writing task but because of the appearance (organization and format) of a typical academic text.

In Excerpt 88, Nader also referred to structure as one of the differences between academic texts and nonacademic texts. The structure of the papers that are written in an academic style is complicated which, according to Nader, makes them boring for international students because English is not their mother tongue. It is even boring for Americans as well even though English is their mother tongue.

(Excerpt 94)

" الستركشر حقها يختلف ... لكن الكتابة الأكاديمية تطفش كثير ... ماتستمع ... فأنت تكون

متحمس للنتائج لكن تجي بآخر شيء ... المقالات العلمية ماتحمسك للقراءة ... وتاخذ وقت كثير

على بال ماتخلصها للأخير ... وقد يكون هذا حاجز بحكم اننا أجانب ... فاللغة الانجليزية مو لغتنا

الأم ... لكن أحس انه الكتابة الأكاديمية صعبة ... وحتى الأمريكي العادي ماراح يستمتع بقرائتها

... لكنك تحاول تسوي هذا النوع من الكتابة اللي مو ممتع أبدا."

"Its [academic writing's] structure is different [from non-academic writing] ... but academic writing is boring ... you don't enjoy [reading it] … so you are eager to read the results [in a journal article] but they [results] come at the end ... may be because we are nonnative speakers of English … English is not our mother tongue ... but I believe that academic writing is difficult ... even the American guy [as a native speaker of English] would not enjoy reading ... but you have to do this kind of writing which is not enjoyable at all." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 7)

He also claimed that academic writing is lengthy which makes the article boring to be read. These three features, font style and a uniformed look of the text (Excerpt 93), complicated structure (Excerpt 94), and lengthiness (Excerpt 94) seemed to be different from what Nader used to do in writing user manuals (which require simple sentences and short paragraphs) at his nonacademic job prior to pursuing his Master's degree. Therefore, his experience in writing users manuals seemed to have affected his perceptions regarding the features of academic writing, leading him to paint academic writing in a negative light.

Apart from prior nonacademic jobs, future prospective jobs of the students also seemed to have influenced some participants' perceptions regarding academic writing. As can be seen in Excerpt 89, Lila pointed out that some students perceive academic writing as something that they were not compelled or required to learn. These students, according to Lila, claimed that academic writing would not be needed in their prospective jobs. Those students might be looking at academic writing as a means to get their degrees only and not as a skill that could be used outside the academic life.

(Excerpt 95)

<div dir="rtl">

" وهم يقولون انه هذا مو تخصصي اللي هو الكتابة لكن تخصصي اشياء اخرى فليش اهتم في

الكتابة ... وشايفين انه هذا الشيء ماراح يفيدهم ... يعني ماراح يكتبون في وظيفتهم فليش يهتمون

فيه . "

</div>

"They [students] say that writing is not their majors, we are majoring in
something else so why do we care about writing ... they think that it
[writing] is not going to be beneficial to them ... they would not write in
their jobs so why do they care about it [plagiarism]." (Lila, Interview
Transcript, p. 13 & 16)

In sum, the excerpts in this section have shown us how students' majors,
their work history, and their perceptions of their future jobs all seem to be the
sources that have influenced the students' perceptions of academic writing.

5.4.3 The perceived effects of participants' peers on their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism

The effects of the participants' classmates and friends on their perceptions of
academic writing and of plagiarism can be seen in several cases. Deema and Huda, for
example, noticed that their classmates wrote more than they did. They concluded that
academic papers should be lengthy. Deema, for example, said:

(Excerpt 96)

<div dir="rtl">

"أحس انه عندي مشكلة ... اني ما أكتب كثير ... لأني أشوف انه الكلاسميتس اللي معاي يكتبون

أكثر مني . "

</div>

"I think I have a problem ... I do not write much [in the term papers] ... because I can see that my classmates write more than I do" (Deema, Interview Transcript, p. 21)

Huda pointed out:

(Excerpt 97)

" احس اللي حولي عندهم القدرة على الكتابه ... فأشوف غيري يكتب كثير وانا شوي فأحس انه افضل مني يعني."

"I think those around me are better than me in writing ... I see others write more [than me] and I write less [than them] so I think they are better than me." (Huda, Interview Transcript, p.32)

Although Deema mentioned during the interview that she received better grades than her classmates did, she did believe that writing lengthy papers was something necessary in academia because not being able to do that is considered a problem from her point of view.

Friends and classmates also seem to have influenced the participants' perceptions of plagiarism. Because his friend was expelled for having plagiarized material in a paper, Nader felt that students should be better informed about the consequences of academic dishonesty. The friend explained to Nader that he was unaware of what constituted plagiarism, and so Nader believed that some incidents of plagiarism were the result of students being uninformed about university policies regarding plagiarism and as a result the students who plagiarized for the first time should not be punished but they should be

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given another chance because they (students) came to the United States to learn, as we can see in Excerpt 98.

(Excerpt 98)

<div dir="rtl">

"من الطبيعي انه كلنا نغلط ... واحنا جايين هنا نتعلم ... والأسباب ممكن تكون من عدم معرفة النظام."

</div>

"It's normal that we make mistakes ... we are here to learn ... reasons could be because of not being familiar with the system [university policies]." (Adel, Interview Transcript, p.10)

5.4.4 The perceived effects of participants' national culture on their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism

Reem claimed that Saudi students do not have good academic writing skills because they were not taught those skills in Saudi Arabia. When asked about the reasons that make English teachers and professors in Saudi Arabia neglect teaching academic writing skills to their students, she enumerated three reasons. Those reasons were:

(Excerpt 99)

<div dir="rtl">

"لأن المدرسين والدكاترة مايعرفون المهارات الأكاديمية ... وأحيانا المشرفين يقولون للمدرسين انهم يركزون على القواعد ... والمدرسين الأجانب جايين هنا علشان الرواتب العالية مو علشان يطورون مهارات الطلاب."

</div>

"Because teachers and the professors themselves lack the academic writing skills ... and teachers are told by their supervisors to focus mainly

on grammar... and non-Saudi teachers are primarily motivated by generous salaries rather than the wish to improve students' writing skills." (Reem, Interview Transcript, p. 5)

From this excerpt, I can see that Reem focused mainly on the teachers and professors. She may have neglected the effect of students and the effect of English textbooks in a process (neglect teaching academic writing skills), and this neglect could be attributed to the effects of the Saudi culture which considers the teacher as the only source of knowledge (Grami, 2012).

With the exception of Deema, all the participants did not talk about their voices in their academic papers. A suggested reason for such absence could be attributed to their culture which views professors as the only authority of knowledge and considers the teacher as the only player in the teaching process (Grami, 2012). Culture also played a role in not showing the students' voices in Wu and Rubin's study (2000). Another suggested reason for such absence could be they were not taught or at least made cognizant of certain features that enhance a writer's voice.

Since all the participants studied in schools in Saudi Arabia, the effects of the Saudi education system may be a factor that influences the participants' perceptions of plagiarism because most of them mentioned that plagiarism was not an academic issue when they were studying in Saudi Arabia's schools and universities. As a result, their reactions towards plagiarism, when first made aware of it in the U.S., varied. Nader, for example, said that students should avoid plagiarism because:

(Excerpt 100)

<div dir="rtl">"بحكم أنه جالسين ندرس هنا ... فلازم انه نحترم ثقافتهم."</div>

"Because we are studying here [in the U.S.] ... we have to respect their

culture." (Nader, Interview Transcript, p. 10)

Excerpt 100 shows that Nader viewed plagiarism as a cultural issue rather than as

an act of academic dishonesty.

As can be seen in Excerpt 101, Sami pointed out that it was not surprising that

Saudi students were sometimes caught plagiarizing while they are studying here in the

U.S. He attributed this perception to the fact that they were never introduced to the

concept of plagiarism when studying in Saudi Arabia. Although Sami acknowledged the

effects of the Saudi education system (for not introducing plagiarism to students), he did

not acknowledge the effects of the American education system (because it introduces

plagiarism to students).

(Excerpt 101)

<div dir="rtl">" كان متوقع ... لان جايين من ثقافة مانعرف عنه حاجة ... فمن المتوقع يعني."</div>

 "It [Saudi students sometimes caught plagiarizing] was expected ...

because we came from a culture that does not know what plagiarism is ...

it was expected." (Sami, Interview Transcript, p. 20)

In Excerpt 101, Sami probably did not want to blame the students for plagiarizing.

In fact, he was picturing them as victims of their culture because it did not introduce them

to plagiarism.

Table no. 10 provides a summary of some students' perceptions and the sources of those perceptions.

Table 10

A summary of some students' perceptions and the sources of those perceptions

SOURCE	PERCEPTION
Professors	Going to the writing center will enable students to get a better grade on their papers because the instructors at the writing center will inform their professors that they were clients and this will affect their grades positively
	Good academic papers are the ones that lack grammatical mistakes
	Non-academic writing is easier than academic writing because with non-academic writing, the writer is not trying to please the reader, which is in contrast to academic writing where students are motivated to satisfy their professors
	My advisor is a non-native speaker of English … so why should I care about improving my term paper?!

Field of study/ occupation	Writing instructors should focus on the cohesiveness and transitions between sentences and between paragraphs
	Using transitional words and sentences in academic writing is the greatest difficulty
	Plagiarism is acceptable
	Academic texts should be lengthy
	Paraphrasing process as a difficult task to do in academic writing
	Academic writing is difficult because it makes academic papers difficult to read.
	Academic writing and plagiarism as something that they are not compelled or required to learn
Classmates and friends	Academic papers should be lengthy
	Students who plagiarize for the first time should not be punished but they should be given another chance
	Saudi students do not have good academic writing skills because they were not taught those skills in Saudi Arabia
	Plagiarism as a cultural issue rather than as an act of academic dishonesty

The Saudi culture	Students are expected to plagiarize
	It is the professor's responsibility to educate his/her students about plagiarism

5.4.5 Summary

In the last points, I tried to explore what the sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of English academic writing and of plagiarism may be. The interviews revealed that the possible sources for their perceptions were: the perceived effects of the participants' professors, the perceived effects of their fields of study/occupations, the perceived effects of their peers, and the perceived effects of the Saudi culture.

5.5. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I attempted to explore some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of different aspects of academic writing, some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of plagiarism, and the perceived sources of the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. Regarding the participants' perceptions of academic writing, I pointed out that the participants might have a simplistic understanding of academic writing. Additionally, I talked about how the participants perceive academic writing as important for survival only.

After that, the approaches that the participants perceived to be successful to learning their academic writing skills, and the ones that the participants perceived to be

unsuccessful were identified. The successful ones were: the lexicon-based approach, the genre-based approach, the human-based approach, and the technology-based approach. The unsuccessful ones were: rote memorization, lack of academic writing resources (for example, writing courses), NNES university instructors, help from unreliable sources (for example, siblings and parents), and being under pressure. Finally, I indicated that the participants perceived their difficulties in academic writing as existing at the formal level only.

I also mentioned that the participants became aware of plagiarism through two different agents: self-learning and through professors and teachers. The participants perceived teaching students about plagiarism should be the responsibility of professors, the university (through flyers and workshops), students themselves, and parents. I then talked about the causes that make students plagiarize. Some of those causes were related to students and others were related to professors.

Later, I listed the strategies that were perceived by students as helpful to avoid plagiarism. Those strategies were: replacing words (at the lexical level), paraphrasing (at the syntactic level), consulting human sources (for example, their professors), and seeking the help of technological resources (for example, plagiarism detecting software). Finally, I discussed the consequences of lack of concern about plagiarism guidelines as perceived by the participants.

The last research question was about the perceived sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of English academic writing and of plagiarism. The perceived sources for the participants' perceptions were: the perceived effects of the

participants' professors, the perceived effects of their fields of study/occupations, the

perceived effects of their peers, and the perceived effects of the Saudi culture.

In the next chapter, I will discuss three important issues that might have a crucial

impact on the participants' academic writing skills. Those three issues are:

Misunderstanding academic writing, misunderstanding the role of academic writing, and

the problematic sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

In this study, I aimed to explore some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing. After conducting interviews with the participants, I presented in chapter V the findings related to the three research questions: (1) the perceptions of some Saudi graduate students of academic writing, (2) the perceptions of some Saudi graduate students of the issue of plagiarism, and (3) the perceived sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism.

Listening to the participants' interviews multiple times and reading the interview transcripts recursively enabled me to identify three important issues that might have an essential influence on their academic writing skills. Those three issues are: misunderstanding academic writing, misunderstanding the role of the writing center, and problematic sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing.

I would like readers to keep in mind that most of what is presented or emphasized in this chapter is my interpretation of the participants' insights gained from listening to the recordings and reading the interview transcripts while writing my dissertation project.

6.2. Misunderstanding academic writing

After critically examining my findings, I can say that the participants seem to have a limited understanding of the meaning and of the purpose of academic writing. The participants excerpts led to the following larger issues related to what I noticed as the participants' (mis)understamding of academic writing: academic writing is only for academic survival, viewing non-nativeness in English as a liability and as having negative impact on academic writing, and the difficulties in academic writing at areas other than sentence level concerns. In addition, I will provide several suggested explanations as to the participants' arguments about the role of academic writing.

6.2.1. Academic writing is only for academic survival

The findings in the current study reveal that almost all the participants reported having perceptions about the importance of academic writing skills for their graduate studies. The importance of learning academic writing, however, was perceived by the participants as mastering only the survival strategies required in academia. The participants in my study may have developed instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) when they study academic writing. Lila, for example, pointed out that some students claim that it is not necessary to have good academic writing skills because academic writing skills are not needed in their prospective careers. Similarly, Adel did not care about his academic writing skills because his advisor was a non-native speaker of English. Moreover, Reem held the opinion that academic writing skills are not relevant, or important, for international graduate students. She justified her answer by

referring to the presence of a writing center and proofreaders who can read her academic papers and suggest any necessary changes.

Although the participants indicated that they wanted to improve their academic writing skills, they showed little intrinsic motivation in learning such skills. Various reasons were mentioned by the participants for the lack of interest for learning academic writing. First, there are, reportedly, other agencies to make their writing better (for example, writing centers and proofreaders). The second reason is that the participants might not need or use academic writing in their prospective careers. The second reason mentioned by the participants that make them not interested in improving their academic writing skills (which is that their prospective jobs do not require writing skills) is different from the findings of Foster and Russell (2002). Foster and Russell (2002) motivate language learners to master academic writing skills because professional careers "increasingly depend on specialized written communication in a global environment" (p. 1). This means that those who have good English writing skills will have better chances of having good jobs (Glazier, 1994). The differences in the points of view of my participants and those of Foster and Russell's (2002) and of Glazier's (1994) might indicate that the participants in the current study do not make any connection between their academic writing skills and the world(s) beyond their universities (for example, their prospective jobs).

It seems to me that the participants in the current study and the students in Fan's (2014) study may be looking at the purpose of academic writing through different lenses. Most of my participants, on the one hand, perceived the purpose of academic writing as a means for others to evaluate their writing skills and knowledge or as a means to publish

research result. Fan (2014), who studied the disciplinary writing of three Taiwanese graduate students in the USA in engineering related fields, claims that the students in his study were looking at the purpose of academic writing as a means to help them understand their findings and their field. All the students in Fan's study were Ph.D. students, studying in the U.S. for at least five years, and has published at least two research articles by the time of the study. The participants in the current study were considering academic writing as merely a means to help them write their ideas and findings only, and they had probably not been introduced to the possibilities of looking at academic writing as a tool for writing-to-learn that was followed by Fan's students (2014).

6.2.2. Viewing non-nativeness in English as a liability and as having negative impact on academic writing

The term "native speaker fallacy" was suggested by Phillipson in 1992. This term suggests that the ideal teacher for English is the native speakers of English. Phillipson (1992) disproved the native speaker fallacy and claims that "teachers are made rather than born whether teachers are native or nonnative" (p.194).

The notion of (non)nativeness in English has been mentioned as one of the barriers that the students perceive in terms of the person's qualifications and language proficiency (Choi, 2007). Choi (2007) claims that some of his participants mentioned that because they were NNSE, they felt the need to improve their English competency if they wanted to produce good work.

Similarly, the participants in the current study talked about the relationship between academic English and native speakership. They, for example, believed that, because they were NNSE, it would be normal and expected to have weak academic writing skills, to not attempt to improve their academic writing skills (for example, Adel and his advisor), to be allowed to plagiarize (for example, Sami's statement), and to helped only by NSE at the writing center (Turki's case). Such perceptions, however, contradict the findings of other studies. Belcher and Connor (2001), for example, presented several cases of highly successful L2 academic writers. Tsai (2001) (a professor of Chemistry who was born and raised in Taiwan), for example, claims that he "write[s] scientific papers better than most of native American student [in terms of] using English to communicate scientific results" (p. 140). Different from the participants in the current study who considered using academic English to survive while they were doing their degrees, Tsai (2001) considered language skills and learning such skills "inseparable from learning anything" which means he did not limit the use of his language skills on his work only (p. 140).

Because the "difficulties typically experienced by NNS academics in writing English are (certain mechanics such as article usage aside) *au fond* pretty similar to those typically experienced by native speakers" (Swales, 2004, p. 52), it can be said that "the native academic writer does not seem to exist" (Römer, 2009, p. 99). This further indicates that the participants of the current study need to be reminded of the need for improved academic writing skills, irrespective of their native language. Therefore, the terms experience and expertise should be introduced to students to be used for those who have good academic writing skills (Römer, 2009).

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Being an international student in a British university (where I pursued my Master's degree) and in an American university for my Ph.D., I have never heard any of my international friends (from my country or from other countries) studying in an ELI, enrolling in writing/composition classes, or studying in majors other than English talking about the terms experience and expertise when it comes to academic writing skills; it is always the (non)nativeness in English that determines how good a person is in academic writing skills. Although there are some researchers who claim that the distinction between native and non-native speakers of English is wearing away (for example, Swales & Feak, 2012), it could be argued that perhaps only people majoring in English or related fields, some expert professors in other majors (for example, Tsai, 2001), and NNES authors who use English to write their books know that this distinction is wearing away. The terms experience and expertise might be used by professors, writing center consultants, and writing instructors while talking with their students and clients to increase their awareness about this issue (non-nativeness in English and academic writing). Not informing students about such misconceptions might make them keep perceiving their non-nativeness of English as a barrier for mastering their academic writing skills.

6.2.3. Academic writing difficulties might not be at the sentence level as the participants claim

Because the participants might have a limited understanding of academic writing, they tend to apply their problematic perceptions of academic writing to their writing tasks when they encounter academic challenges. Although there are different types of difficulties students might encounter while writing their academic papers (for example,

the ability to analyze a topic, poor sentence construction skills, the lack of a mastery of academic writing conventions, inability to research and apply knowledge, and others.), the participants' emphasis on the role of grammar as a sign of good academic papers (for example, Rakan's case), as a difficulty they encounter while writing their papers (for example, Mohammad's case), and as an important issue to be taught to international students in academic writing courses (for example, Adel's case) suggests that having grammatically correct sentences is considered by the participants as an essential indicator of how good their academic writing is.

Since the academic writing conventions within academic disciplines (for example, what should be said and how it should be said) are sometimes not explicitly introduced by professors to their students, students sometimes remain unaware of such conventions and "sometimes, students' difficulties with these issues can be masked, as problems mastering the academic discourse can manifest themselves in surface difficulties with grammar and syntax" (McCune, 2004, p.277). The unarticulated values about good writing in various disciplines might be what make academic writing difficult for non-native speakers of English. Having been asked only to write a few essays, if any, in English, prior to their graduate studies in western universities, and their lack of exposure to and/or familiarity with the two highly valued skills of western criteria for effective education, critical thinking and ability to analyze material (Ballard, 1989; Clanchy & Ballard, 1997), my participants risk floundering.

My participants emphasize language-related problems. However, other problems (for example, problems related to content, to organization, to conventions) seem to have fallen off their radar . The students' perception that language-related problems are more

difficult than the organization and content problems contradicts the findings of Cai's study (2013) and is in line with those of Lee and Tajino's study (2008). Cai (2013) reported that Chinese graduate students experienced difficulties with content and structure (for example, reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space) more than with language-related components (for example, using appropriate lexical phrases). Lee and Tajino (2008), on the other hand, revealed that Japanese students perceived the language-related components (for example, expressing ideas in correct English) as more difficult than structure/content-related components (for example, synthesizing information /ideas). Since the participants were asked to take TOEFL and IELTS tests before they can enroll in their graduate degrees, this perception – the language-related problems are more difficult than the structure and content problems – indicates that the Saudi graduate student participants were not fully aware of their academic writing difficulties. They may not be aware of the fact that the the writing experts who evaluate their writing samples on the TOEFL exam cite problems in structure and content, rather than language-related problems, as the main problems in their writing. Although the participants referred to grammar as one of their difficulties, they were referring to the errors they have with subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and others. The IELTS writing experts, by contrast, claim that the Saudi participants encounter difficulties regarding the inability to use a range of structures in their writing.

Those three reasons: 1- The values about good writing in various disciplines that may not have been articulated to the students, 2- The participants were not fully aware of their academic writing difficulties, and 3- The participants were asked in their primary schools to focus only on grammar (the effect of their educational culture, which

I will address in more detail in 6.4) probably caused the participants to make a connection between having grammatically correct sentences and good academic writing.

Since most of the participants in the current study enrolled in ELIs to study English skills, it could be argued that there is a gap between what is taught to students in the writing classes (in ELIs and in some majors, if any, at the graduate level) and the type of writing required in their majors in terms of content, genre, activities, audience, and context. Maram, for example, pointed out that:

(Excerpt 102)

<div dir="rtl">

"لما كنت في المعهد كانوا يدرسوننا الفايف باراقرافز ... بس لما بديت في الجامعة ... تفاجأت لأنه كان مختلف نهائي ... من ناحية ايش اكتب وكيف أكتب."

</div>

"When I was in the ELI, they [teachers] were teaching us the five paragraphs … but when I started my degree, I was surprised because it [type of writing] was completely different … in terms of what to write and how to write." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 44)

Similarly, Mohammad claimed that:

(Excerpt 103)

<div dir="rtl">

"حتى في امريكا مافي احد يعلمك كيف تكتب الرسالة ... يعني مافي مادة تعلمك اقسام الرسالة وايش تكتب في كل قسم."

</div>

"Even in the U.S. there is no one to teach you how to write a dissertation ... there is no course that informs you about the sections of a dissertation

and what should be written in each section." (Mohammad, Interview

Transcript, p. 25)

Although they studied in ELIs in the U.S., both Maram and Mohammad

complained about the type of writing they were required to do at the graduate level. In

other words, the writing classes that Maram and Mohammad enrolled in, probably, were

not that beneficial to them during their graduate studies. The last two excerpts might

accentuate the importance of having discipline-specific writing courses or workshops to

bridge the gap between what is taught to students in the writing classes (in ELIs and in

some majors, if any, at the graduate level) and the type of writing required in their

majors.

6.2.4. The reasons for the participants' limited understanding of academic writing

As noted earlier, the participants in the current study might have a limited

understanding of academic writing. After reading the interview transcripts, listening to

the audio tapes, and reading the findings for the research questions, I was able to pinpoint

some of the reasons and explanations that might have led the participants to have a

limited understanding of academic writing. One of the reasons for such limited

understanding could be that most of the participants, for example, limited practicing their

academic writing skills to academic assignments only. When the participants started their

graduate degrees, they practiced academic writing only to fulfill their courses'

requirements. Doing that might have led them to see academic writing as only a skill that

they practiced to receive grades in their assignments. Although half of the participants in

the current study were Ph.D. students, I was told by some of them that they did not write

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theses for their Master's degrees. Bhatia (2001) noticed that active participation in the research process had helped him improve academic writing skills. As a result, one can argue that not participating in research might have led to some students to the perceived weaknesses in academic writing. Of course, I did not have the opportunity to ask the explicitly how engaged they were in research or whether they perceived academic writing as closely related to research

Another potential reason for the limited understanding of academic writing by the participants is that they were receiving more feedback at the micro level (for example, grammar) in comparison with the macro level feedback (for example, content and overall organization). All the participants in the current study mentioned that the English classes in their primary schools in Saudi Arabia (6 years at least) and the English courses at the university level (some participants enrolled in English courses while doing their Bachelor's degrees in Saudi Arabia) were mainly about grammar. Some students, therefore, could not go beyond the micro level when they started to work on their academic skills.

Although almost all the participants took some academic writing courses when they were studying in the ELI, they were not given enough opportunities to apply what they had learned when they started their graduate studies. Not being able to practice academic writing in their assignments might have led the participants to start losing the academic writing skills they learned in the ELI and to eventually encounter difficulties when they started writing their dissertations or theses.

6.3. Misunderstanding the role of the writing center

Because most of the participants encounter difficulties in their academic writing, most of them pointed out they sought help from the writing center numerous times. The participants referred to the writing center many times during their interviews whether to be helped with their academic papers or with their theses.

Koncel and Carney (1992) claim that the 60 graduate students in their study liked going to the writing center because it improved their academic papers. Specifically, those students in Koncel and Carney's study (1992) went to the writing center hoping to be helped with the writing process, style and format, use of the specialized language of their field, and grammar. Although most of the participants in my study claimed that going to the writing center improved their work, they were focusing only on the sentence-level issues because those issues were the reasons that made the participants go to the writing center as they claim.

Although "the writing center field has waged nearly a century long battle against the perception that the writing center's role is to 'fix' students' problems" (Fels, 2010, p. 169), most participants in the current study still perceived the writing center as a place where they can ask the consultants to fix the grammatical mistakes in their academic papers. Seeking help from the consultants in the writing center only for sentence-level issues might indicate that some students lack complete awareness about the role of writing centers in improving their writing. North (1984) describes writing centers consultants' main job as "to produce better writers, not better writing" (p.76). By this, North (1984) means the focus is on the students themselves not on their papers. Most of

the participants in my study, however, wanted the consultants in the writing center to check their papers for grammatical mistakes and not with other issues that could improve their writing skill (for example, the writing process).

The findings also indicate that the participants go to the writing center only when they had finished writing their academic papers which is different from the findings in Clark's (1992) and Rafoth's (2010) studies. According to these two studies, students occasionally go to a writing center to discuss with the consultants the topics of their essays, prior to starting the writing process, or to gain feedback on their initial writing outlines. Going to the writing center only when they had finished writing their papers could be another piece of evidence of the participants' limited understanding of the role writing centers. They, probably, considered writing center as the final step before submitting their papers. In fact, some of the participants mentioned that they sometimes did not go to the writing center at their university because they did not have enough time. Considering visiting the writing center as the final step of writing their academic papers probably had prevented the participants from improving their writing skills in terms of with a consultant to brainstorm and organize their ideas, the writing process, the best way to deal with their topics, identifying their own writing strengths and weaknesses, to name a few more productive ways of using the writing center.

Some participants in the current study reported seeking help from writing center consultants more than what consultants are allowed to or can provide. Some participants, for example, did not ask for help at the sentence/content level, but for help at the discipline-specific level. Maram, for example, claimed that:

(Excerpt 104)

<div dir="rtl">

" لما أكتب حاجة عادة راح أعطيها لزميلي الأمريكي اللي في الكلاس لأنه يعرف مو □وعي ...

لما اروح الريتنق سنتر ماراح يعرفون مو □وعي ... ممكن يعرفون قرامر ... لأني أتذكر مرة

رحت هناك وقالوا كل شيء تمام ... بس لما وريتها زميلي الأمريكي في الكلاس عدل فيها

كثير."

</div>

"When I write something, I usually give it to my American classmate

because he would know my topic … when I go to the writing center, they

would lack the knowledge of my topic … they might know grammar …

because I remember I went once there and they said everything was

correct … but when I showed it to my American classmate, he made many

changes." (Maram, Interview Transcript, p. 45)

Similarly, Wolfe (2009) claims that the negative effect of the writing center

consultants' comments is what makes some students avoid going to the writing center.

The negative effect is described by Wolfe (2009) as the consultants' comments being

"bias[ed] toward humanities-based styles and genres and a failure to address the forms of

argument and evidence that our science and engineering students most need to master to

succeed as rhetoricians in their fields" (Wolfe, 2009, p. 352). My findings and those of

Wolfe's (2009) call for collaboration between faculty members in different majors and

the writing center to have discipline-based writing centers to address each student's

personal writing issues.

This reason for not going to the writing center -that the consultants are not aware

of the content of the students' papers because students' majors are engineering or

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chemistry- is different from the reasons mentioned in Alexitch's study (2002) in which students did not go to the writing center because they were not required to do so by their professors. It is also different from the reasons in Vazquez's study (2008) in which the students did not want to appear incompetent in front of their classmates and friends and they were also not interested in writing itself. Additionally, it is different from the reasons mentioned in Rosove's study (2009) in which the students did not like spending a long time on their papers without receiving an A on their academic papers after they have been to the writing center. Therefore, the students in Rosove's study (2009) thought that going to the writing center would not help them achieve good grades. Unlike the reason mentioned by some of the participants in the current study, the reasons mentioned in Alexitch's study (2002), Vazquez's study (2008), and Rosove's study (2009) were not related to the content of the students' academic papers.

Students' expectations about the services that writing center can provide to them might affect their academic papers negatively. Roseove (2009), for example, points out that students stopped going to the writing center because they did not receive an A on their academic papers and some of the participants in the current study stopped going to the writing center because the writing center consultants were not able to help them due to lacking knowledge at the discipline-specific level. Such high expectations from students could be because they were enrolled in other universities and the services provided at those universities met their expectations and those students were surprised about their current writing center services. This means that some writing centers and/or some writing center consultants might not have the same ideas about the types of services they are allowed to provide to their clients.

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Although the writing center "provides an alternative space for learning English writing in an academic context" (Chiu, 2011, p. I), most of the participants pointed out that they go to writing centers to ask the consultants to check their papers, and only Mohammad said that the writing center is one of the sources to improve his academic writing skills. Reem, however, looked at the services provided by the writing center from a different angle. She claimed that it is not important for international students to be good academic writers since there are several ways to improve their academic papers (for example, going to the writing center). Reem's perception might indicate that the writing center would help her with everything related to her paper (grammar, choice of words, and organization, among others).

The type of help the participants in the current study expected from the writing center consultants (for example, fixing the grammatical mistakes in Rakan's case, expecting help at the discipline-specific level in Maram's case, and relying totally on the writing center consultants to correct everything in the paper in Reem's case) could be attributed to the effect of their culture where teachers (the writing center consultants in this case) are the only source of knowledge. Harris (1997) claims that when ESL students come to the writing center, they tend not only to bring their papers, but their culture as well. The result might be a conflict between the students' perceptions and expectations and the writing center's pedagogy and theory. Another possible reason that could be suggested to explain the reasons for the different types of help the participants expected from writing center consultants is that, since the participants were enrolled in different universities and were dealing with different writing centers, probably the precise nature

of the writing consultants' activities in those writing centers differ from one place to another.

6.4. Problematic sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing

In this study, I attempted to explore the possible sources of some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of English academic writing. After interviewing some graduate Saudi students and coding the interview data, I was able to identify several sources for their perceptions. The identified sources included the perceived effects of the participants' professors, of their fields of study/occupations, of their peers, and of the Saudi culture.

Although previous studies included the effects of courses students are enrolled in (Gambell, 1991) and the effects of students' language proficiency (Lee & Tajino, 2008) on their perceptions of academic writing, in the current study, the participants did not report those sources as affecting their perceptions.

Below, I will discuss how these sources could be understood if we place the participants' comments within the larger context consisting of others' related studies.

6.4.1. The negative effects of professors on students' perceptions of academic writing

One of the sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing was their university professors. Because teachers and professors were viewed as the predominant sources of knowledge in Saudi Arabia (Grami, 2012), it was not surprising that the participants' perceptions can be affected by what those professors say and do. Limiting

good academic writing to only writing papers that lack grammatical mistakes (Rakan's case) and not being interested in improving one's own academic writing skills (Huda's case) are two examples of how the participants' perceptions and academic writing skills might have been influenced by their professors. This finding is consistent with that in a recent study by Basterkmen, East, and Bitchener (2014). They noticed that graduate students' supervisors in a university in New Zealand often focused on linguistic accuracy and appropriateness, a finding that they considered to be consistent with the findings from previous studies such as Kumar and Stracke (2007) and Gulfidan (2009). Basterkmen et al. (2014) offered a number of explanations for the widespread use of linguistic accuracy/appropriateness-focused comments. Through providing multiple comments on linguistic accuracy/appropriateness they wonder whether the supervisors may have wished to highlight the need for meticulousness in grammar and expression in order to "underscore the need for precise expression and appropriate phrasing in terms of academic English expectations" (p. 441). They may not wish to take on an editing role, but they "may wish to flag that a thesis needs to be highly articulate and well proofread," according to Basterkmen et al. (2014). In this study, however, I was not able to find out the reasons why the university professors, according to the participants, often focused on grammar and accuracy in their writing. The key finding, however, does speak to the negative effect that such a focus has on the students in this study, something that suggests certain training for supervisors/professors that I will talk about in the next section.

We can also see the effects of professors on their students' perceptions in some published studies. Cai (2013), for example, claims that graduate Chinese students find referencing a very easy task because their professors dedicated many courses to teach

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students how to do that. Bhatia (2001) also points out that the encouragement, participation, and direction he received from his advisors and mentors had affected his academic writing skills positively. In the current study, on the other hand, it was shown that the impact of professors might be different. In particular, the findings indicate that the participants' professors may have influenced the students' perceptions negatively. The participants' professors, for example, led them to stop practicing writing and focusing on analyzing numbers (Huda's case), to perceive good academic papers as the ones that lack grammatical mistakes (Rakan's case), and to lose interest in improving academic papers because of an advisor's being a non-native speaker of English (Adel's case). The above cases are just some examples of the negative effects of professors, at least as seen by the participants, on their students' perceptions. The negative effect of professors can also be seen in the study conducted by Basturkmen *et al*. (2014). In their study, the authors reported that the advisors had given their students very few comments which were focused on cohesion and coherence even though the advisors pointed out that their students encounter difficulties in that aspect of writing.

In the current study, I compared the negative effects of professors on my participants' academic writing skills with the positive effects of professors on the academic writing skills of the narratives because the participants talked only about that kind of effects during the interviews. Similarly, the researchers in the narratives talked only about the positive effects of their professors and mentors in their academic writing skills. Note that the participants in the current study did not claim that some of the sources affected their academic writing skills negatively. It was my interpretation after

comparing their perceptions with the students' perceptions in other studies and with the researchers' perceptions in the narratives.

How the participants perceived the role of their professors and the writing center consultants might be related to the term Banking Concept of Education. This term was suggested by Freire (1970) and it means that students are "receptacles that are to be filled with the content of the teachers narration" (Freire, 1970, p. 1). In other words, students do not take part in the education process. They do not engage in discussion with their teachers and professors.

Not taking active part in the education process and being a receptacle of knowledge only, unfortunately, make students lack critical thinking skills (Freire, 1970). Therefore, Saudi students tend to lack critical thinking skills because the Saudi educational system considers teachers and professors as the only source of knowledge (Alhammad, 2010). Alhammad (2010) claims that:

> Critical thinking is essential to a healthy and progressive education. Unfortunately, this type of instruction is not employed within the borders of Saudi Arabia at the high school or college level. Saudi schools do not emphasize the importance of independent thinking, opting instead to conveniently spoon-feed students information that does not test their mental capabilities. (para. 3)

Regarding my participants, only one participant blamed herself in one occasion while talking about her experience with academic writing. Deema noticed that her classmates wrote more than she did in the term papers. She said:

(Excerpt 105)

<div dir="rtl">

"أحس انه عندي مشكلة ... اني ما أكتب كثير ... لأني أشوف انه الكلاسميتس اللي معاي يكتبون

أكثر مني."

</div>

"I think I have a problem ... I do not write much [in the term papers] ...

because I can see that my classmates write more than I do." (Deema,

Interview Transcript, p. 21)

Deema in the previous Excerpt, I think, was blaming herself for not being able to

write lengthy papers similar to her classmates. The rest of the participants seem to blame

others (their professors and teachers in Saudi Arabia, their professors and writing

instructors in the U.S., writing center's consultants, their universities, their majors, to

name a few) for their weakness in academic writing.

As a result, I suggest that the participants should take agencies. They are

encouraged to learn 'learn/do it yourself' rather than relying on teachers and professors to

teach them. There are some studies in the literature where the writers became successful

academic writers after they started relying on themselves. Most of the successful cases in

Belcher and Connor's book (2001), for example, were self-directed. Bhatia (2001), for

example, started to publish because he noticed that active participation in the research

process has helped him in improving his academic writing skills. Both Liu (2001) and

Hemami (2001) read some books that were not relevant to their majors because, as they

claim, their academic writing skills improved after practicing reading.

Another study that shows that students became successful writers after relying on

themselves is Phillips' (2014). She says that the academic writing skills of her student

Chozin (a pseudonym) started improving when he started developing his own strategies to overcome the writing difficulties he encountered. Phillips (2014) points out that:

> Chozin struggled with writing throughout his graduate career. Instead of simply being discouraged or defined by his failures, however, he seemed to focus on the path that led to the problems he experienced and tried to identify ways that he could shift that path the next time. (p. 88)

These cases are just examples to show that some students should rely on themselves to improve their academic writing skills, and should not wait and rely on others to receive help or knowledge.

6.4.2. Misunderstanding the connection between academic writing and requirements of various fields of study

Some of the participants' perceptions may have also come as a result of the effect of their fields of study. This source indicates that some of the participants, for example, might have misunderstood the connection between academic writing and requirements of various fields of study. Because most of the participants were expected to use numbers, codes, and formulas in their assignments and term papers, they attached less importance to their academic writing skills and, hence, encountered difficulties when they started writing their theses or dissertations.

The students' connection of the role of writing and certain majors is interesting. One may wonder whether such a connection is inaccurate or overly simplistic. For example, Tsai, in a literacy narrative, made such a claim: "Chemistry is an experimental science. Thus, one would think that a chemistry professor should spend most of the time

in the laboratory" (Tsai, 2001, p. 135). Indeed, that seems to be the perception of some of the students in this study, as we can see how they link certain number and code-intensive majors, such as chemistry, with the lack of writing. However, Tsai continues to point out very cogently that "for the right or wrong reasons, I now spent more than half of my time [as a chemistry professor] writing in my office. The proportion of writing in my daily work has been increasing throughout my career" (p. 135). Of course, Tsai concedes that, "at first, it was only recording experimental procedures" something quite similar to what the participants in this study admit in the interviews (p. 135). However, later, writing started to figure more prominently in his career as a chemistry academic. Maybe our students need to take the long view and change their perceptions of the role of writing in some majors, possibly through some courses and training programs, something I will discuss in the next section.

Another possible reason for such a misunderstanding is that the participants may have limited practicing their academic writing skills to only the required writing assignments. Indeed, Tsai acknowledged that he started to make "the biggest progress" as a writer when he engaged in authentic writing tasks, such as thesis and dissertation writing (p. 138). Another way to make students' writing tasks authentic and, possibly, alter their perception of the role of writing is to engage in the research process. In fact, not limiting practicing academic writing skills only to assignments and making attempts to publish could be the causes for the success of the NNESs in Belcher and Connor's book (2001) in academic writing skills and could be the causes for the participants' perceived weakness in academic writing in the current study. Bhatia (2001), for example, noticed that active participation in the research process has helped him see the role of

writing in knowledge creation. He remembered that "whenever [his] advisor took home some of the texts [he] was struggling with and the following day brought back his own analyses and interpretations, however tentative, [he] used to gain new understanding of the discipline" (Bhatia, 2001, p. 44). This interpretation of the role of writing in disciplinary understanding is certainly more positive and more sophisticated than our students' perceptions. It raises interesting questions on whether the perceptions of writing could be changed if instructors first focused on the role of writing and its importance.

Tsai (2001), who majored in Chemistry, and Kubota (2001) who specialized in Education, claimed that learning English and how to write in English is a lifelong process. This commitment, however, was not present in most of the participants of the current study who never talked about a continuous learning of English after leaving English language institutes.

Although some of the participants in the present study indicated that their majors have negative effects on their academic writing skills (because their majors required only using codes, numbers, and formulas in their assignments), we can see many examples of non-native English speakers who are successful in English academic writing in Belcher and Connor (2001). Some of the successful academic writers' majors introduced in that book were similar to those of the participants' in the current study (for example, Tsai (2001) majoring in Chemistry and Hemami (2001) majoring in Engineering). Hemami (2001), for example, claimed that not limiting himself to reading about his major and reading books in literature is what made him a successful academic writer.

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Professors and writing instructors should probably take part in helping students to clarify such misunderstanding. Du (2014) points out that:

> Although the focus of most disciplinary courses is not on writing, explicit instruction about how to approach major writing tasks is still needed to facilitate novice academic writers, L2 learners in particular, to cope with varied disciplinary expectations across the curriculum. (p. 125)

6.4.3. Simplistic understanding of the effect of culture

The final perceived source of the students' perceptions of academic writing was their national culture, including the educational system. The effect of such a source can also be seen in different studies. Kubota (2001), for example, was taught how to read from an early age. Kubota (2001) claimed that being asked to read books in English and starting to write a diary in English helped her become a good academic writer. The participants in the current study, on the contrary, believed that they were not encouraged to read and to write anything in English not relevant to their academic lives. As a result, they believed that their lack of academic writing skills might be attributed to the effect of their culture.

Despite the fact that the participants in the current study had studied for at least two years in the United States (in fact, some of them have been studying in the U.S. for more than eight years), the findings indicate that the participants were still claiming that their culture affected their perceptions negatively (for example, teachers in their country did not teach them the academic writing skills). This can be something very interesting if we consider the more nuanced role culture plays in others' academic literacy

development. For example, Hemami (2001) talked about culture in more complex ways. When he came to the US, he decided to stop using his native language (Persian), even with people from his country. He attributed that to the fact that Persian started to introduce into his psyche "a whole bunch of old memories and reflections and feelings and so forth" that are linked to political conflicts in his country that he did not find very helpful (p. 151). In order to cope with such memories, he started reading books in human behavior and psychology. Hemami (2001) claimed that reading was one of the reasons that made him a successful academic writer.

Liu (2001) pointed out that he did not receive formal training in English composition while he was studying for his bachelor degree in English language and literature in a Chinese university. He also claimed that even when he became a faculty member in the same department, the "lack of the need as well as a sense of self-protection through avoidance had a negative impact on my L2 writing" (p. 127). Liu (2001) mentioned that because his father was an English teacher, the Red Guards would come without notice to inspect their house looking for Western books that might poison their thoughts. Liu and the rest of his family were hiding the English books his father purchased under their beds. He claimed that he enjoyed those days that he did not go to school for being sick because he "could be left alone at home with the doors shut and concentrate for hours and hours on going through all the books underneath our beds" (p. 122). Those English books, Liu pointed out, helped him to improve his academic literacies.

In contrast with Liu, Julia (2001) claimed that she did not like reading and writing in English when she was a student. Although she came from a verbal culture and her

parents valued the skill of being able to write properly, she did not like the encouragement she received from her parents and from her school to learn English. In fact, she considered English as "a school activity, and once out of the classroom, there was no use of it – at home or with peers, anywhere. I never practiced it, in fact, I avoided it" (p. 178). Although she did not enjoy reading and writing in English, at that time, she started to consider them as "a need or as a quality that one should possess, but not as a pleasurable activity. It was always a tool of survival for me" (p. 179).

Finally, it is important to indicate that although the persons in the narratives had complicated and sophisticated views in comparison with my participants because the participants' demographics are different from that of the persons in the narratives and that the participants in my study may have instrumental motivation when they study academic writing, the persons in the narratives were graduate students just like my participants before they (persons in the narratives) become professional. Some may argue that it is not fair to compare the narratives by the highly successful professors with the interview data by the participants. Others may also argue that the students' negative comments may be due to the instrumental motivations some of these students have about academic writing. The instrumental motivations may have caused the students to view academic writing as something that is merely a hurdle to jump through in some cases. Be that as it may. The juxtaposition of these two types of data –the motivational narratives by the successful academics and the sometimes disheartening comments by the students points to this question. Should we encourage our students to move beyond their instrumental motivation to view academic writing as more than just fulfilling course and degree

requirements? Should they aim to be as successful as those who composed the narratives? These are open questions that invite further studies.

6.5. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I discussed three important issues that might have an essential influence on their academic writing skills. Those three issues are misunderstanding academic writing, misunderstanding the role of the writing center, and problematic sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing.

The participants seem to have a limited understanding of the meaning and of the purpose of academic writing. The participants' excerpts led to the following larger issues related to the participants' (mis)understanding of academic writing: academic writing is only for academic survival, viewing non-nativeness in English as a liability and as having a negative impact on academic writing, and difficulties in academic writing at areas other than sentence level concerns. In addition, I provided several suggested explanations as to the participants' arguments about the role of academic writing.

I also noticed that the participants might have a limited understanding of the role of the writing center. They, for example, visited writing centers seeking help at the sentence-level issues and at the discipline-specific level. I argued that requesting help at the sentence-level issues, probably, call for collaboration between faculty members in different majors and the writing center to have discipline-based writing centers to address each student's personal writing issues. The findings also indicated that the participants went to the writing center only when they were done writing their academic papers which is different from the findings in Clark's (1992) and Rafoth's (2010) studies where

students occasionally go to a writing center to discuss with the consultants the topics of their essays, prior to starting the writing process, or to gain feedback on their initial writing outlines. Finally, I attempted to provide some explanations for the participants' misunderstanding of the role of the writing center.

After interviewing some graduate Saudi students and coding the interview data, I was able to identify several sources for their perceptions. The identified sources included the perceived effects of the participants' professors, of their fields of study/occupations, of their peers, and of the Saudi culture. I discussed how these sources could be understood if we place the participants' comments within the larger context consisting of others' related studies. I explained why I highlighted the negative effects of professors on students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. I also argued that the participants misunderstood the connection between academic writing and requirements of various fields of study. Finally, I showed how the participants might have a simplistic understanding of culture.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

A summary of the findings of this study, the contribution of my dissertation to the literature, the pedagogical implications, the limitations of my study, and some suggestions for future research will be discussed in this chapter.

7.2. A summary of the dissertation

It is essential to seek students' feedback on a regular basis if we want to improve their academic writing experience. Such feedback could be used to improve their weakness with academic writing skills. This study aspires to provide information that ultimately can help Saudi students to master academic writing skills and lead to their greater success academically.

Despite the fact that the findings of some studies indicated that Saudi students encounter difficulties with academic writing (e.g., Fageeh, 2003) and although the number of those students has reached 128,014 in 2013 in the United States only (Ministry

of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia, 2014), not much research has been conducted on Saudi students (Shaw, 2009).

Since students' writing performance is often affected by their perceptions, according to Pajares and Valiante (2006), I attempted to address this gap in this study and explore some Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism. The research questions that I tried to answer in the current study were:

1- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive different aspects of academic writing?

2- How do some Saudi graduate students perceive plagiarism?

3- What might be the sources of the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism?

To find answers to these questions, I conducted interviews with twelve Saudi students who were pursuing their graduate studies in American universities at the time of the interviews.

I would like readers to keep in mind that most of what is presented or emphasized in this chapter is my interpretation of the participants' insights gained from listening to the recordings and reading the interview transcripts while writing my dissertation project.

Concerning their perceptions of academic writing, I noticed that the participants perceived the definitions of academic writing in a simplistic manner. They, for example, limited their definitions of academic writing to one or two issues from the following list

(word choice; general organizational conventions such as introduction, body, and conclusion; avoiding the use of first person pronouns; and accurate grammar usage).

Several reasons were provided by the participants to highlight the importance of academic writing. Being graduate students was one of the reasons that made academic writing important for them. They said that being graduate students necessitates having strong academic writing skills to meet their professors' expectations. The participants also pointed out that having good academic writing skills helped them survive academically by taking shortcuts. The participants claimed that the organizations in academic papers helped them to save time by reading the headings and abstracts to evaluate the importance of a paper to them. Another reason is that having good academic writing skills might help the participants to publish their articles in peer-reviewed journals and graduate. Additionally, the participants mentioned that academic writing skills were important because these skills helped them to succeed in their courses, and poor or non-existent academic writing skills might result in failure in the courses they enroll in. Lastly, the participants claimed that having good academic writing skills was important because it would allow them to prove to their professors that there is minimal linguistic difference in writing skills in comparison with other students who are native speakers of English.

The participants pointed out some successful and unsuccessful approaches to learning academic writing. Regarding the successful approaches, the participants revealed that they were: the lexicon-based approach, the genre-based approach, the human-based approach, and the technology-based approach. On the other end of the scale, the participants described several approaches that influenced their learning of academic

writing skills negatively. Those approaches were: rote memorization, the lack of

academic writing resources (for example, writing courses), NNES university instructors,

help from unreliable sources (for example, siblings and parents), and being under

pressure (due to various reasons) while writing their academic papers.

The participants in the current study referred to three areas where they usually

encountered difficulties when they write their academic papers. Those areas were:

difficulties at the lexical level, difficulties with grammar, and difficulties at the

organizational level (for example, IMRaD). Although most of the participants reported

that they encountered difficulties with grammar and some of them mentioned that having

good academic writing skills means the ability to write a term paper that is grammatical-

error free, I argued that the academic writing difficulties might not be at the sentence

level as the participants claimed. I think that there are other reasons that make academic

writing difficult for the participants. One of the reasons is that the participants had been

asked only to write a few essays, if any, in English, prior to their graduate studies in

western universities. Another reason is the participants' lack of exposure to the two

highly valued skills of western criteria for effective education, critical thinking and

ability to analyze material (Ballard, 1989; Clanchy & Ballard, 1997). The last reason is

that the participants were not asked to write many term papers that were composed of

texts.

The findings in the current study indicated that the participants might have a

limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of academic writing. The participants,

for example, perceived academic writing to be mainly useful for academic survival. In

addition, they believed that, because they are non-native speakers of English, it would be

normal for them, and even expected, to have weak academic writing skills, to not attempt to improve their academic writing skills, and to be allowed to plagiarize. Such perceptions, however, contradict the findings of other studies (for example, Belcher & Connor, 2001; Tsai, 2001).

I was able to pinpoint some of the causes and explanations that might have led the participants to have such a limited understanding of the meaning and purpose of academic writing. One of the causes for such a limited understanding might be that most of the participants, for example, did not practice academic writing skills beyond their academic assignments. The second possible cause for the limited understanding of academic writing by the participants could be that they were receiving more feedback at the micro level (for example, grammar) in comparison with the macro level feedback (for example, content and overall organization).

Regarding the participants' perceptions of plagiarism, I noticed that learning about plagiarism by the participants came from two different agents. Those agents were: self-learning and professors and teachers. Regarding the agent(s) that should take responsibility to increase the students' awareness about plagiarism, the majority of the participants (Adel, Rakan, Huda, Maram, Mohammad, and Tala) indicated that the professor should take the main role in teaching students about plagiarism. The focus on professors could be attributed to the effects of the participants' culture, which considers the teacher as the only source of knowledge (Grami, 2012).

Several causes for plagiarism were suggested by the participants. Those causes were: laziness coupled with lack of motivation to study, desire for good grades, lack of

confidence in writing skills, the wish to submit a perfect paper, poor time management skills, prioritizing entertaining activities over studying, desire to complete their degree as soon as possible by overloading their schedule and not having enough time to do the required work, lack of knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism, forgetting to cite the reference, not being aware that plagiarism is a form of dishonesty, and some professors not checking students assignments for plagiarism which might make some students think that it is acceptable to plagiarize.

To avoid plagiarism, the participants revealed that they use four methods. Those methods are: replacing words (lexical level), paraphrasing (syntactic level), consulting human sources (for example, asking their professors about specific information), and technological resources (for example, plagiarism detecting software).

The participants also mentioned several consequences for lack of concern about plagiarism guidelines. Those consequences were: the person who plagiarizes would lack subject-matter knowledge and get unfair treatment and higher grades than others who did not plagiarize, and there would be a lack of contribution to scientific fields.

Listening to the participants' interviews multiple times and reading the interview transcripts recursively allowed me to detect some possible sources for their perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism. These sources are the perceived effects of the participants' professors, of their fields of study/occupations, of their peers, and of the Saudi culture/educational culture.

The participants of the current study reportedly sought help from the consultants in the writing center only for sentence-level issues. The writing center was not

considered by almost all the participants as a place that can help them improve their academic writing skills. Some participants pointed out that they went to the writing center seeking help from the consultants there on matters beyond what consultants were allowed to or can provide. Some participants, for example, wanted to be helped at the discipline-specific level. Not receiving help at that level made some of the participants stop going to the writing center. Students' expectations about the services that a writing center can provide might affect their academic papers negatively. Those who stopped going to the writing center because they did not receive the type of help they were expecting, for example, might have been prevented from receiving some suggestions to improve their academic papers.

Such high expectations from students could be because they were enrolled in other universities and the services provided at those universities met their expectations and those students were surprised about their current writing center services. The participants' high expectations of the services provided by the writing centers might mean that some writing centers and their consultants might not have the same ideas about the types of services they are allowed to provide to their clients.

Regarding the sources of the participants' perceptions, I mentioned that they might be interrelated. The participants' professors were one of the sources of the participants' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. Because teachers and professors are viewed as the predominant sources of knowledge in Saudi Arabia (Grami, 2012), it was not surprising that the participants' perceptions can be affected by what those professors say and do. The participants' fields of study were suggested as a possible source for the participants' perceptions. This source indicates that some of the

participants, for example, might have misunderstood the connection between academic writing and the requirements of various fields of study. A possible reason for such a misunderstanding is that the participants limited practicing their academic writing skills to the required writing assignments only.

7.3. The significance of the study

This study makes its own contribution to the field of academic writing, in general, and to the topics of international students' perceptions of academic writing skills and of plagiarism in particular. In chapters IV, V, and VI, I have demonstrated and discussed the findings of this project. The dissertation's contribution could be illustrated in the following points:

1- First, my study showed how some students might have misunderstood the role of academic writing and limited it to academia only, which is different from the findings of some studies in the literature (for example, Fan, 2014). I also explained how some of the participants lacked interest in improving their academic writing skills because they claimed that they would not be using them in their future careers which is opposite to the findings of Foster and Russell (2002) where professional careers should be used as a motive to improve students' academic writing skills. Such perception indicates that the participants might not be aware of the requirements of their prospective careers.

2- Second, my study is, as far as I know, the first attempt that talked about the sources of the students' perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of

plagiarism explicitly. Through interviewing the participants, my findings have enriched the literature as it identified several sources of their perceptions that could have affected their academic writing skills negatively. Discussing some of those sources, I showed that some of the participants tend to make a connection between the role of writing and certain number and code-intensive majors, such as chemistry and computer. As a result, I suggest that universities and disciplines should provide more writing courses and training programs to enable students to take the long view and change their perceptions of the role of writing in their majors. Such a suggestion could mean that those sources of perceptions should be tackled as well in the process of improving students' academic writing skills.

7.4. Implications

Despite its limitations, this project contributes to the existing literature about EFL/ESL graduate students' experience in academic writing in terms of their perceptions of academic writing and of the issue of plagiarism and the perceived sources of those perceptions. The findings provided in the current study can help ESL/EFL students, writing teachers and instructors, course designers, and researchers who are interested in writing in general, and academic writing, in particular, to be better informed and to be aware of the perceptions of academic writing skills. In this section, I will emphasize some key issues that might improve students' academic writing skills.

Since some students limited the use of academic writing skills only to academia, writing instructors and professors should increase their students' awareness about the

importance of academic writing even after students receive their graduate degrees. Having good academic writing skills, for example, might help them to find better jobs after they graduate. Moreover, writing instructors and professors should inform their students that being non-native speakers is not an obstacle to having good academic writing skills.

The findings indicate that the participants limited their academic world to universities only and their audience to their professors only. Such limitations, as has been discussed, unfortunately, have affected their perceptions of academic writing negatively. Writing instructors and professors, therefore, should introduce their students to other academic worlds (for example, writing to publish in peer-review journals) and to other audience (for example, peer-review journal readers, their colleagues).

Students who visit the writing center should be introduced to the services that the consultants are allowed to provide. As we can see in the findings, some participants were expecting to receive help at the discipline-specific level. Students, for example, should be informed that they should not expect to be told what (not) to do with their academic papers by the consultants. Instead, students should expect the consultants to help them explore their mistakes in their academic papers and improve their academic writing skills. Therefore, educating students about the importance of a new understanding of the writing center, hopefully, would make them have more reasonable expectations of the consultants because any effect caused by students' culture or by previous experience in other writing center in a different university would be removed.

It is suggested that since the findings showed that professors might have a negative influence on the participants' perceptions of academic writing, professors should be informed about how unintentionally that could have negative effects on their students' academic writing skills. Professors, when there are opportunities, should engage in workshops to discuss the cues that could affect students' academic writing skills negatively. Professors should also discuss how to influence their students' academic writing skills positively. Such workshops may not be effective, some may argue, but at least they are a starting point, especially given the effects of the professors may have had on their students' perceptions of academic writing.

Cox (2014) provides several suggestions to help faculty members affect their students' academic writing skills positively. She, for example, points out that one of the suggestions is "to put the faculty member in the L2 writer's shoes" (p. 305). In workshops, Cox says, she would ask faculty members to write in another language. Doing that, Cox claims, will help faculty members to be aware of the difficulties that their international students encounter while writing their term papers in English.

Another suggestion made by Cox (2014) was to introduce faculty members to videos and literacy narratives where NNES undergraduate students, graduate students, and scholars talk about various issues related to second language (for example, second language acquisition and culturally distinct patterns of organization). Cox also encourages faculty members to read about L2 writing development. The purpose of such suggestions, according to Cox, is to make faculty members understand the challenges that their students have to deal with while attempting to improve their academic writing skills.

The findings also revealed that there might be a misunderstanding from the students about the relationship between their writing skills and their majors. Professors and students should make attempts to clarify such misunderstanding. They, for example, should be aware that not practicing writing for a long time might lead students to start losing their academic writing skills. Therefore, professors and students are encouraged to create writing opportunities to improve their academic writing skills. Students are also encouraged not to limit their readings to materials that are only related to their disciplines. As Hemami (2001) pointed out, reading books in literature and in psychology did improve his writing skills. Additionally, students are encouraged to practice writing in English beyond the curriculum.

Because the findings indicated that the effect of culture on the participants' perceptions of academic writing is deeply rooted in the participants and culture tends to be negative mostly, it could be said that writing instructors and professors might need to pay special attention to this source and help their students to overcome the negative effects of such source. Writing instructors and professors, for example, could talk with their students about their academic writing skills rather than grading their term papers only.

Although some readers might argue that the previously mentioned implications might not see the light, I disagree with them. Being a faculty member in one of the Saudi universities would allow me to introduce those implications to my students and colleagues. Since I will be teaching writing courses and organizing workshops to undergraduate and graduate students, I will increase my students' awareness about the importance of academic writing even after receiving their degrees. Additionally, I will

inform students that being non-native speakers is not an obstacle to having good academic writing skills, and I will introduce them to the "native speaker fallacy."

To the best of my knowledge, Saudi universities do not have writing centers. Therefore, I will do my best to have one at the university where I am working. Since a writing center will be a new idea to that community, that will give the chance to introduce students to the specific type of activities and services provided there. Doing that, hopefully, would make the students have reasonable expectations of the writing centers.

I will also encourage professors in my department and in other departments where writing in English is necessary to engage in workshops to discuss the cues that could affect students' academic writing skills negatively. I will also try to inform both professors and students about the students' misunderstanding about the relationship between their writing skills and their majors.

When the students graduate, they will be teaching English to students in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools and to students at colleges and universities. As a result, those students whom I will do my best to change their perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism, hopefully, will be able to change other students' perceptions in different schools and universities.

7.5. Limitations

The current study is useful as it revealed the Saudi graduate students' perceptions of academic writing and of plagiarism. However, the study has some limitations.

The current study was based primarily on only one method of data collection: interviews with the participants. Using different instruments, such as, questionnaires and textual analysis would add more findings and would confirm the findings that the current study has revealed. However, using interviews has helped me become uniquely aware of the participants' perceptions and understand their points of view.

The current study only focused on some Saudi graduate students' perceptions. It would be worthwhile to explore some Saudi undergraduate students' perceptions enrolling in universities in English speaking countries as well. Some of the participants in the current study complained that there were no writing courses for graduate students to teach them how to write their academic papers. Undergraduate students in American universities, on the other hand, are usually asked to enroll in Composition (I & II) courses. Exploring Saudi undergraduate students' perceptions enrolling in universities in English speaking countries, hopefully, may confirm the findings and may lead to new revelations.

7.6. Future research

Being aware of the issues that influence the students' academic writing skills may allow writing teachers and professors in Saudi Arabia and in the United States to provide their students with the necessary practices and strategies to develop their academic writing skills (I talked about how writing teachers and professors can do this in 7.4. Implications). As a result, conducting further studies to explore their academic writing skills and the factors that affect them is very important.

- Looking at the effects of culture on the participants in the current study and on the narratives, it is important to understand why culture plays such a negative role in these students while it is more complex for other students in the narratives.

- Since the perceived sources of perceptions might be interrelated, more in-depth studies of student perceptions and their sources are still needed, because we need a broader picture of how such sources might interact with each other.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. The General Aims and Objectives of Teaching English in Saudi Arabia for the Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary Stages

By the end of the secondary stage and within the assigned structures and vocabulary for this stage students should be able to:

1- Use English language structures and analyze them to understand the relationships among them

2- Learn the assigned vocabulary ,idioms ,and expressions and understand their meanings in context

3- Acquire the ability to listen to comprehend English language and to distinguish between different intonations

4- Participate in conversations and discussions using proper English

5- Acquire the ability to read and comprehend English texts through different reading types (i.e. loud reading) and reading strategies (i.e. scanning, pleasure and reading for all understanding

6- Write a free-essay of three paragraphs using correct English

7- Translate English text into Arabic and vice versa

8- Realize the importance of English in the local job market

9- Be aware of the importance of English as an international language of communication for introducing Islam, our culture, and our cultural achievements to others

10- Be aware of the importance of English as an international language of communication for benefiting from achievements to others cultures in accordance with Islamic teaching ; through texts representing various life situations

11- Gain a reasonable command of English in order to be in a better position to defend Islam against adverse criticism and to participate in the dissemination of Islamic culture

By the end of the Intermediate Stage and after acquiring the assigned structures and vocabulary assigned for this stage, students should be able to:

1- Begin to utilize a basic level of English which would form the foundation for the mastery of the English language in the future.

2- Learn and use English structures assigned for this stage.

3- Learn and use the assigned vocabulary for this stage to enable them to express themselves clearly in different life situations.

4- Listen to and understand simple English.

5- Express themselves orally using proper English.

6- Read and understand written English materials.

7- Write a short paragraph in English.

8- Develop an awareness of the importance of the English language as an international mean of communication in order to be able to introduce Islam, the Islamic nation's culture and the cultural achievements of Muslims to other nations.

9- Develop an awareness of the importance of the English language as an international mean of communication in order to benefit from the achievements of other cultures in accordance to the precepts of Islam.

By the end of the Elementary Stage and within the assigned structures for this stage, pupils should be able to:

1- Learn the basics of the English language that would form the foundation for its mastery in the future.

2- Use the basic structures of English sentences.

3- Learn the core vocabulary assigned for this stage.

4- Listen and understand simple English Language.

5- Express themselves orally using simple English language.

6- Read and understand simple written English language materials.

7- Write simple guided sentences in English language.

8- Appreciate the importance of English language as an international language of communication, for introducing Islam, the Islamic nation's culture and the cultural achievements of Muslims to other nations.

9- Appreciate the importance of English language as an international language of communication to benefit from the achievements of other cultures in accordance with Islam.

Appendix B. Questions for the interview

Background

General information

1- What is your major?

2- Are you a master's student or a doctorate student?

3- Could you please talk about your education in Saudi Arabia?

Learning English

4- Could you please talk about your English learning journey?

5- Why do you write in English (for pleasure or for academic purpose)? Which is easier? Why?

Academic writing

6- Could you define academic writing in your own words?

7- What are the differences, if any, between academic writing and non-academic writing?

Perceptions of personal academic writing skills

8- How do you see yourself as a writer in your major field? Do you see yourself (your writing self) differently when you write in your major and in other subjects? Has your perception changed over time? If so, how?

9- Describe your writing process. Does your process involve peer review? (Why)? If they said yes, what does peer review mean? Whom do you usually ask? If they said no, why?

10- During your writing process, does your process involve revision? (Why)? What kind of instruction do you receive? (Why)?

11- Do you have any concern while writing an academic paper? If yes, what are they?

12- How satisfied are you with your academic writing skills? Why?

13- Do you think academic writing is important for graduate students or not? Why?

14- What problems do you have with writing? Please be specific (e.g., narrowing a topic, conceptualizing a topic, researching a topic, structuring an argument/paper, sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, spelling)

15- Do you think Saudi graduate students encounter difficulties when it comes to their academic writing skills? If yes, what are they? What are the factors behind that?

Perceptions of what constitutes academic writing

16- What do you like/dislike about academic writing in English?

17- What do you think the focus of an academic writing course should be more on? (e.g., language problems or general writing skills). Why?

18- If you are going to teach an academic writing course, what are you going to ask your students to do?

Perceptions of resources of academic writing

19- How did you learn to write academic English?

20- What are your strategies to cope with writing academic English?   (in other words: how do you make sure that what you are writing is academic English)

Perceptions of strategies of improving academic writing skills

21- What are some of the biggest writing challenges you have experienced when completing various writing assignments during your time at university?

a) What were these assignments?

b) What are some of the strategies and/or services you have made use of to address these challenges?

22- What are the factors that could positively or negatively affect your academic writing style?

Perceptions of Arabic writing

23- Do you consider yourself a good writer in Arabic? Why?

24- Do you enjoy writing in Arabic? Why?

25- Describe how you write academic papers in Arabic.

26- Do you face any kind of difficulties in writing in Arabic? If yes, what are they?

27- Do you think being a good writer in Arabic will enable/hinder a person from being a good writer in English? Why?

Perceptions of plagiarism

28- How do you define plagiarism? How did you come up with this definition? When did you learn about it? What was your reaction when you first learn about it?

29- How do you avoid plagiarism?

30- Have you heard of someone who plagiarized? If yes, what was your reaction? Why?

31- Do you think students plagiarize? Why?

32- In your opinion, what are the pitfalls of plagiarism?

33- Describe the muddy, confusing, or difficult-to-understand parts.

34- Who should increase the students' knowledge about plagiarism? Why?

    a) The student him/herself   b) The professors   c) The university's website

Perceptions of the grading methods in the Saudi educational system

35- How are student English writing assignments graded in Saudi Arabia?

36- What do you think of this method? Why?

37- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?

38- What are your suggestions regarding the grading system to help the students improve

their academic writing skills?

* Is there any other thing related to your academic writing experiences that you want to

tell me? Anything that could be useful to my research?

Appendix C. A sample interview with one of the participants

أنا/ أخوي إيش تخصصك وبأي مرحلة؟
Interviewer\ What is your major? And are you a master's or a Ph.D. student?
هو/ أدرس ماجستير engineering management
Interviewee\ I am a master's students ... and I am majoring in engineering management.
أنا/ تكلم لي عن تعليمك من أيام ماكنت في الابتدائي أو الرو□ة وحتى تخرجك من الثانوي أو الجامعه. هل كان في السعودية أو برا؟ مدارس حكومية أو أهلية؟
Me\ Tell me about your education since you were in kindergarten or elementary till you finished high school or college? Was it in Saudi Arabia or abroad? Was it in public schools or private ones?
هو/ طول عمري وأنا في مدارس حكومية ... حتى الجامعة كانت حكومية...جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز بكالوريوس ... بعدين جيت أمريكا.
Him\ I studied all my life in Saudi public schools... even collage I went to King Abdul-Aziz university ... after that, I came to the U.S.
أنا/ متى بديت تتعلم إنجليزي؟
Me\ When did you start learning English?
هو/ شوي أنا الإنجلزي معاي قصته مختلفه ... لكن أنا بديت أتعلم انجليزي في المتوسطه ... أو حتى يمكن قبل لما كنت في البيت ... طبعا أنا والدي طبيب فكان يعني يركز بالإنجليزي شوي ... وكنت مسؤول عن التلفون في

البيت ذيك الأيام ... فكانت تجيه اتصالات دوليه وماكن احد يرد عليها الا واحد يعرف إنجليزي ...وكان هذا

الشخص انا في الغالب...فكان هو يشد زياده لما درسنا في المتوسط والثانوي ... فكان لازم أكون فاهم وواعي

علشان لما أتكلم في التلفون أكون فاهم ... والحمد لله كانت النتيجة أني أفضل في المحادثة ... لكن بصفة عامة

كنت أفضل بكثير من غيري...

Him\ English has a different story with me ... I started when I was in intermediate ...
or even before that ... when I was at home ... of course my father is a physician which
means he pays more attention to English ... I was responsible for answering the
landline ... he used to receive international calls and no one can answer them unless he
knows English ... that person was me mostly ... so when we started intermediate and
secondary schools he asked us to study more for English ... therefore, I had to be
aware of and understand what the international persons say when they call home ...
thank God I was better in conversation ... and generally speaking I was better than
most people around me

أنا/ وبالجامعه هل أخذت مواد انجليزي بحكم تخصصك؟

Me\ Did you take any English classes at university?

هو/ لا بس كانت الجامعه مخلوطة عربي على انجليزي

Him\ No, but the classes were taught in both Arabic and in English

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أنا/ يعني ماكان فيه كورس خاص بتعليم الانجليزي؟

Me\ So there was not a class for teaching you English particularly?

هو / لا ما أذكر اني أخذت كورس بتعليم الانجليزي في الجامعه.
Him\ No, I don't remember taking any class focusing on English particularly.
أنا/ في أي مستوى بالجامعة انت الحين؟
Me\ In which level are you in right now?
هو/ بالأخير
Him\ In the last one.
أنا/ خلال دراستك في الماجستير ايش انواع الواجبات اللي كتبتها؟
Me\ What kind of projects do you usually do in your major?
reports, papers, few summaries, and projects / هو
أنا/ هل تكتب إنجليزي بشكل غير أكاديمي؟
Me\ Do you write in English for nonacademic purposes?
هو / ايوه ... انا اشتغلت لمدة عشر سنين في شركة وكنت أكتب ايميلات وخطابات ويوزر مانويل وغيرها.
Him\ Yeah... I worked for 10 years in a company ... and I was writing emails, user manuals, letters, and other documents.
أنا/ ايهم أصعب الكتابة لأهداف أكاديمية أو لأهداف غير أكاديمية؟
Me\ Which is more difficult writing for academic purposes or writing for

nonacademic purposes?

هو/ الأكاديمية أصعب لأنه له شروطه وقوانينه وبعدين ييجوا يتفلسفوا عليك اي بي اي ستايل ولا شيكاقو والا كذا

... فمن بزنيس بوينت اوف فيو هذي استعباط يعني .

Him\ Writing for academic purposes is more difficult because it has its own rules ...

then they (professors) come and philosophize about the different styles APA style,

Chicago style... from a business point of view this is ridiculous .

أنا/ ليش؟

Me\ Why?

هو/ لأنه شكلها غريب وغير مريح للقراءة أبدا ... ممكن هم يشوفونه مريح بس هو لا ... لما يكون الكلام مكتوب

كله بنفس الطريقة يقل التركيز على النقاط اللي تحاول تبرزها ... لما يكون الخط بحجم واحد معين الى نهاية

السطر فيكون شكله غريب ولا يحمسك أنك تقرأ ... بينما في المقابل لو كنت ابغى اسوي لك مانويل أو حتى

خطاب راح أرتبه لك وهايكون وا ⬜ج وسهل والمعلومه اللي تبيها وا ⬜ج من فين تجيبها ... بينما في الكتابه

الأكاديمية مو زي كذا ابد .

Him\ Because it looks weird and uncomfortable for reading at all ... probably they see

it comfortable but it is not ... when all the sentences are written in one way that will

not allow you to focus on some points that you want the readers to pay attention to ...

when the font size is the same for the whole sentences, it looks weird and does not

encourage you to read ... on the other hand, if I want to make a user manual or write a

letter, I will arrange it to you and it will be clear and easily read and the information

you are looking for will be easy to find ... while in academic writing it is not like this at all.

أنا/ طيب ايش تعريفك للكتابة الأكاديمية ؟

Me\ Ok ... how would you define academic writing?

هو/ من الاسم هي كتابة مخصصة للجانب الأكاديمي وتسلم للجانب الأكاديمي في الجامعة ...هذي كمظلة عامة ... يدخل فيها الستايل حق الكتابة ... ويدخل فيها طريقة اللغة والقرامر ... وتركيب الجمل بشكل معين ... ويستخدموا القرامر المعقد ... طبعا هي تختلف من تخصص لتخصص ... لكنها تهتم بأنها تكون مناسبة للشيء اللي انت تكتب فيه ... واكيد الكتابة الأكاديمية لناس في كليات الآداب تختلف عن الكتابة الأكاديمية لناس في التكنكال أو الانجينيرنق ... والاختلاف بينهم ماراح يكون في القرامر لكن في كمية الكلام.

Him\ From its name it is the type of writing that is designed for academic purposes at the university ... this is as an umbrella ... it includes different writing styles ... formal grammar ... and formal sentence structure ... and they use complicated grammar ... of course each department has its own academic writing style ... but it goes along with the requirements of the major you are studying in ... for sure ... academic writing in the humanities is different from the academic writing of students in technical or engineering ... the difference is not in grammar but in the length of writing ...

أنا/ طيب ايش تعتقد الهدف من الكتابة الأكاديمية؟

Me\ Ok ... what is the purpose of academic writing?

هو/ أظن الهدف هو توحيد الطريقة ... بحيث تكون طريقتهم وحدة ... اي واحد يكتب في هالمجال يتبع طريقة

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وحدة ...مثل يبدأ بمقدمة و خلفية عن المو☐وع ... بعدين يروح للمو☐وع الرئيسي بطريقة معينة ... بعدين

يروح للكونكلوجن بطريقة ثانية ... وهذي هي الطريقة الصحيحة ... لأنه في الكتابة التعليمية... أحيانا ودهم يثبتوا

حاجة معينة أو يشرحوا حاجة معينة... يعني هو مو مقال ولا قصة ... هي حقائق معينة يحطها ... يعني اذا سوا

تجربة لازم يحط التفاصيل والنتايج ... ولا يتشعب كثير في كلامه بحيث يكون بعيد عن المو☐وع ...

Him\ I think the purpose is to unify the method ... so they can have only one method for writing ... any one in a particular field will follow the same method ... for example, he starts with an introduction and a literature review... then he starts talking about the main topic in a particular way ... after that, he writes the conclusion in a particular way... and this is the right way ... because in educational writing ... they sometimes want to prove something or explain something ... it's an article not a story ... he writes about facts ... in other words, if he made an experiment, he would write the details and the results ... and he does not write too much because he might start talking about other issues not related to his topic...

أنا/ حلو ... طيب ايش الفرق بين الكتابه الأكاديمية والكتابة الغير أكاديمية؟

Me\ Ok ... what is the difference between academic writing and nonacademic writing?

هو/ أولا أنا ماني خبير ... لكن ممكن أقول السترركشر حقها يختلف والمطلوب منها يختلف حسب الستاندرايزيشن

حقها... لكن الكتابة الغير أكاديمية ترجع لأسلوب الشخص ... ولهدفه من الكتابه ... فمثلا إذا كان يكتب مقال أو

قصة فراح تكون لها أسلوب معين. فلما تقرأ جريدة راح تحسها مريحة ولا تطفش ... لكن الكتابة الأكاديمية

تطفش كثير ... ماتستمع ... فمثلا انت تسوي بحث بأي مجال وانت جالس تقرأ مقالات علمية ... فأنت تكون

متحمس للنتائج لكن المقالا العلمية ماتحمسك للقراءة ...وتاخذ وقت كثير على بال ماتخلصها للأخير ... واحيانا

ماتفهم ايش جالس تقرأ ... يعني احيانا انت تكون عارف انه المقال كويس وانه في معلومات طيبه بس ماتفهم أي

حاجة في المقال... وقد يكون هذا حاجز بحكم اننا أجانب ... فاللغة الانجليزية مو لغتنا الأم ... لكن أحس انه

الكتابة الأكاديمية صعبة ... وحتى الأمريكي العادي ماراح يستمتع بقرائتها ... لكنك تحاول تسوي هذا النوع من

الكتابة اللي مو ممتع أبدا ...

Him\ First of all, I am not an expert ... but I can say that its structure is different and its purpose varies according to the standardization ... but the non-academic writing depends on the writer's style ... and on his purpose of writing ... for example, if he writes an article or a story there would be a certain style to be followed ... when you read a newspaper, you'll find that it is easy to be read and it's not boring ... but academic writing is very boring ... you won't enjoy reading them ... for example, you are doing a research in any field and you are reading journal articles ... you would be interested in the findings but the articles are boring to read ... it takes so much time to read ... and sometimes it is difficult to understand what you are reading ... sometimes you know that the article is good and has interesting information but you cannot understand anything in the article ... this could be because that we are foreigners ... English is not our mother tongue ... but I feel academic writing is difficult ... even the average American won't enjoy reading it ... but you try to do this kind of writing that is not interesting at all ...

أنا/ ككاتب في مجالك هل ترى نفسك متمكن أكاديميا ؟... في تخصصك يعني

Me\ In your field, do you see yourself as a good writer? In your major I mean ...

هو/ لا

Him\ No

أنا/ ليش؟
Me\ Why?
هو/ أحس اني ماني كاتب في البداية ... مالي في الكتابة الأكاديمية ...اعرف القوانين الأساسية ... لكن ما أحس انه عندي اسلوب مميز جدا في الكتابه ... يعني يميزني ...
Him\ I think I am not a writer ... I am not interested in academic writing ... I know the basic rules ... but I don't think I have a distinguished writing style ... that makes me distinguished
أنا/ طيب في مجالك ... لما يعطيك الدكتور اسايمنت ايش الأشياء اللي تسويها حتى توصل مرحلة تسليم البحث؟
Me\ Ok ... in your major... when your professor gives you a topic to write about, what is your writing process till you submit your paper?
هو/ تعلمت اني اكتب في البداية الأبستراكت حقي كامل ... واكتب بس كذا الكلام اللي عندي ... وبعد كذا اصلحه وأنقحه بالطريقه اللي اشوفها مناسبه ...واحيانا اكتب أكثر من شكل حتى أوصل الشكل اللي يناسبني ...
Him\ I learned that I write my abstract first ... and then I write what I want to say ... after that I revise it to change what I think should be changed ... sometimes I write more than one draft till I am satisfied ...
أنا/ بعد ما تخلص هل تعطي أحد يراجع اللي كتبت؟
Me\ After you're done, do you ask someone to proofread it for you?
هو/ دائما ... دائما أدور أحد يراجع معايا... بعد التنقيح أروح لأحد يقرآه لأنه يهمني انه شغلي يكون كويس ... وغالبا يكون تعديل لغوي بسيط ...

Him\ Always ... I always look for someone to proofread ... after my revision, I go to

someone to proofread it because I want my work to be good... mostly the changes

would be few grammatical mistakes.

أنا/ لمين تروح بالضبط علشان تخليه يقرأ بحثك؟

Me\ To whom you usually go to for proofreading?

هو/ يعتمد على ايش اكتب ... اذا كانت الكتابه متخصصه جدا وكانت المراجعة لازم تكون علمية في الأساس

هيكون واحد متخصص أو واحد اشتغلت معاه ... اذا كانت المراجعه للغة والكتابه ففيه عندي أكثر من شخص أثق

برأيهم وأحاول أتابع معاهم ... وطبعا واحد من أهم الأماكن الأساسية في الجامعه عندي الرايتنق لاب ... هذا

مكان جدا مهم وهو مكان اساسي بالنسبة لي لتعلم الكتابة ... لكن أحيانا الرايتنق لاب صعب الوصل اليه ... لكن

جامعتي ماتهتم فيه ابدا ... يعني هو عليه ⬜غط لان عدد الطلاب يزيد لكن عدد اللي يشتغلون فيه مازاد ...

واحيانا طلبة البكالوريوس والماجستير والدكتوراه مع بعض ... فيكون فيه ⬜غط ... فييجوا يحددوا انه الرايتنق

لاب مايراجع لك أكثر من أربع صفحات ... حبيبي أنا الاسايمنت حقي فيه 20 صفحه ... فبدل ما اجي لك كل

شوي في اربع صفحات من الافضل انه نشوف الاسايمنت كامل ... علشان يكون فيه تناسق في الكلام اللي انكتب

... احيانا لما اروح الرايتنق لاب اخليه يقرأ وأشوف ايش فهم من البيبر حقتي ... واذا لقيت انه ماهو 80 بالميه

فاهم ايش اقول في البيبر حقتي معناته أنا ماوصلت المعلومه بشكل سليم ... هو شغلته التصحيح اللغوي ... واذا

هو مو فاهم من البداية فمعناته راح تعيده وترجع تصيغه من جديد وبعدين ترجع له تشوف هو فاهم أو لا ...

Him\ It depends on what kind of writing I'm doing ... if my paper contains technical

information, I will go to someone in my field or to someone I worked with ...if the

proofreading was only for language problems, I have several persons whom I trust on

their opinions ... of course one of the essential places in the university is the writing

lab ... it is a very important place and it's an essential place to me to improve my

writing skills... but sometimes it is difficult to go to the writing lab ... but my university does not care about the writing lab ... there is so much pressure on the writing lab because the number of the students is increasing and the number of the people who work their doesn't... sometimes all the students (whether they're doing their bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D.'s degrees) come at the same time ...which means there is a big number of students ... as a result those who work in the writing lab would revise only 4 pages of your paper ... my assignment is 20 pages ... so instead of coming to the writing lab every hour with only 4 pages to be proofread, it is better to proofread the whole paper ... so the ideas are linked in a coherent way ... sometimes when I go to the writing lab, I ask him to read my paper ...if he did not understand 80% of my paper, this means that I was not able to deliver the ideas in a successful way ... his job is to correct the language problem ... and if he did not understand from the beginning, this means that you have rewrite it and bring it to him again to see if he is able to understand it or not ...

أنا/ طيب ... لما تكتب بيبر ايش ابرز المشاكل اللي تواجهها ... يعني أحيانا مثل ماقلت انت قبل شوي صياغة الجملة ... فايش هي المشاكل الثانية اللي تواجهها.

Me\ Ok ... when you write a paper, what are the concerns that you have? For example, you just said that you encounter difficulty with sentence structure... what are the other difficulties?

هو/ احنا تواجهنا مشكله ان الكلمات حقاتنا قليله ... ماعندنا التنوع في الكلمات اللي يخليني أشرح فكرتي ... لما اخلص كاتب البيبر ارجع اقراها واحصل انه فيه كلمة ركيكة وابغى أغيرها فا☐طر أني أبحث عن سينينوم علشان أحسن الكتابة ... في كثير احيانا اشوف بيبرز ثانية وأحاول اقتبس منها في الطريقة أو بعض الجمل ...

والاقي جمل واقول هذي الجملة بدل الجمله اللي عندي ... فتلاقي انه فيه اقتباسات من هنا ومن هنا ... وطبعا هذا

مو□وع معقد لأنك راح تقتبس فمعناته لازم تعرف نظام الاقتباس كويس واللي هو البليجرزم

Him\ Our problem is that we know only few words ... we do not have many words that
allow me to express my idea ... when I'm writing my paper, I start revising and I find
out that there is a word that has to be changed ... so I start looking for a synonym to
improve my writing ... sometimes I start reading other papers and I start borrowing
some words and phrases ... I find sentences and I say to myself that it's a replacement
for the one I have in my paper ... so you'll find that I borrowed many sentences and
words ... of course this is a complicated issue because you are borrowing sentences so
you need to be careful not to plagiarize ...

أنا/ راح نتكلم عن البليجرزم بعد شوي ... طيب بحكم أنك طالب دراسات عليا هل هو مهم أنك تكتب كويس؟

Me\ We'll talk about plagiarism soon ... since you are a graduate student, is it
important to write well?

هو/ جدا مهم

Him\ Very important

أنا/ ليش؟

Me\ Why?

هو/ لأنه ممكن يجي يوم بعد مايتخرج ويبغى يكتب حاجة ويغفل عن كثير من الأمور الأساسية في الرايتنق ...

فالمتلقي كيف راح يتلقى مثل هالكتابة ! لأن الكتابة ماراح تكون مفهومة وغير متناسقة ... هذا بيق ايشو ... وقتها

المتلقي راح يقول ان الكاتب غير متعلم ... وايضا هي مهمة في التعليم العالي لأنه قايم عليها وبخصوصا

الدكتوراة ... فكيف تخرج وهو مايعرف يركب كلمتين على بعض ...

Him\ Because one day after graduation you might need to write something and probably you do not know how to write well ...how do you think the audience will receive such writing?! Because what has been written will not be understood and coherent... this is a big issue ... the audience would say that the writer is not well educated ... also it is important in higher education because grades are mostly based on writing papers especially in the Ph.D. program ... how did he graduate and he does not know how to write a simple sentence ...

أنا/ هل تعتقد أنه طلبة الدراسات العليا السعوديين يواجهون مشاكل في الكتابة الأكاديمية؟

Me\ Ok ... do you think Saudi graduate students encounter difficulties when it comes to academic writing?

هو/ أظننا جميعا نواجه صعوبات في الكتابة الأكاديمية ... لأننا طلاب دوليين أولا ... ويمكن يكونون طلبة الدكتوراة أكثر معاناة لأنهم يكتبوا كثير مقارنة مع طلبة الماجستير ... لكن في الدكتوراة أنت مطالب أنك تكتب كثير ولا راح تتخرج ألا بعد ماتكون متمكن فيها ...

Him\ I think we all encounter difficulties regarding academic writing... first because we are international students ... perhaps the Ph.D. students suffer more with academic writing because they write more in comparison with the masters students ... but as a Ph.D. students you are expected to write more and you'll never graduate till you have good academic writing skills...

أنا/ حلو ... طيب ايش أبرز المشاكل اللي يواجهونها ؟
Me\ Ok ... what are those difficulties?
هو/ الكلمات والقواعد ... والأسلوب الكتابي ... يعني لما أجي أشوف أولادي بالمدرسة . يعني يمكن ماوصلوا للكتابة بشكل عام ... بس هم جالسين يتعلمون القراءة ... بس هم جالسين يتعلمون عن الستركشر حق الكتابه وأنواع الكتابة والأمثلة اللي ياخذونها في الكتابة أكثر بكثير من اللي أخذناها لما كنا في الابتدائي والمتوسط والثانوي ... فبالتالي هم تعر□وا لمعلومات عن الكتابه جدا كثيرة ... فالسنتين الأولى من الدكتوراه يكتبوا فيها الطلاب كثير ... حتى يصلوا لمرحلة يكتبوا فيها كويس ...
Him\ Vocabulary and grammar ... writing style ... when I see my kids at school here, may be they are not writing yet, but they are learning how to read ... they are learning the types of writing and its structure ... and the examples they are taking now are much better than what we took when we were in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools ... as a result, they've read more about writing ... therefore the first two years of the Ph.D. program, students write a lot... till they are able to write good papers...
أنا/ حلو ... انت ذكرت سبب للضعف أنه ما تأسسنا مثل ماهو جالس يصير لأبنائك بحكم أنهم جالسين يقرأون عن الكتابة وأنواعها. فهل تعتقد أنه فيه أسباب ثانية للضعف في الكتابة الأكاديمية ؟
Me\ Good ... you mentioned as one of the reasons for the academic writing weakness is that we were not taught when we were kids how to write just like what is happening with your children now because they are now reading about writing and its kinds. Do

you think there are other reasons for the academic writing weakness?

هو/ ايوه ... بس ماتقدر تلوم المدرسة بس ... اللوم الأساسي هو البيت ...احنا مجتمع غير قاريء وغير كاتب
كمان... فلا تتوقع أنه يكون عليك علشان تقرأ وتكتب مثل المجتمعات الثانية ... فهنا في امريكا مثلا هم يقرأوا
ويكتبوا فالبيانات جالسه تتخزن عندهم ... وراح يجي وقتها يحتاجونها فهم قادرين على استرجاعها ... بينما عندنا
الطلاب اذا قراوا حاجة فراح يقرأون الكتاب المدرسي فقط ومو كامل كمان.

Him\ Yeah ... but you cannot blame school only ... the first place to be blames is home
... we are a society that does not read and does not write as well ... so, do not expect to
be like other societies ... here in the U.S. they read and write so they are saving the
information ... and one day when they need it, they will be able to restore it ... while
students in our country read only textbooks and even not the whole textbooks ...

أنا/ طيب أخوي من خلال حديثي معك ذكرت عدة أشياء سلبية عن الكتابة الأكاديمة ، طيب ايش هي الأشياء
الإيجابية عن الكتابة الأكاديمية؟

Me\ Ok brother ... during the past answers you've mentioned several things that you
dislike about academic writing. But what are the things that you like about academic
writing?

هو/ الايجابي فيها هو السترکشر ... سواءا الاي بي اي او شيكاقو او غيرها ... صراحة السترکشر مريح سواءا
للمتعلم ... انك مثلا ماتعرف تكتب فتقدر تمسك اي بيبر وتلاقي كلها ماشية بنفس السترکشر

Him\ The thing that I like is the structure... whether APA or Chicago or else ... in fact,
structure makes the paper easy for the learners ... so if you don't know how to write a
paper, you can get any paper and you'll see that they follow the same structure ...

أنا/ ايش تقصد بالستركشر؟

Me\ What do you mean by structure?

هو/ التقسيم حقها ... فين مكان العنوان وايش ينكتب في المقدمة وكيف تقسيم المين بودي وكيف يبدأ الباراقراف وكيف ينتهي وايش الفرق بين الباراقراف الأول والثاني والثالث. انت تلاحظ بعد فترة انه البيبرز كلها نفس التقسيم.

Him\ The way it's structured... where the title should be written, what should be written in the introduction, how would you divide the main body, how would you start a paragraph, how would you finish it, and what is the difference between the first, the second, and the third paragraphs. You would notice after a while that all the papers follow the same structure.

أنا/ طيب لو طلب منك انك تسوي كورس عن الكتابة الأكاديمية فراح يتكون من ايش بالضبط؟

Me\ If you were asked to teach an academic writing course, what is going to be the focus of that course?

هو/ ممكن احتاج اسوي بحث بالأول لكن ممكن ابدأ بأنواع الكتابه ... علشان يكون وا□ح ايش الأنواع الموجوده ... وهذا اصلا درسوه في كل المعاهد الأجنبية ... بعد كذا هنتكلم عن كل نوع وتفاصيله ...بحيث يكون شرح للفروقات بينها ... بعد كذا هندخل على أنواع الكتابة الأكاديمية مثلا ... وأنا من الناس اللي أتعلم بالممارسة والمحاكاة ... فراح اجيب أكثر من مقال وأخليهم يشوفوا ايش الأشياء المختلفه وايش الاشياء المتطابقة ... وبالتالي يكون عند المجموعة تصور عن كل نوع وايش الفرق بينها ... فالجريدة تختلف عن الكتابة العلمية ... والكتابة العلمية لها هدف انها تكون كذا ... لأن الحصول على المعلومات عن طريقها يختلف عن الحصول على

المعلومات عن طريق ثاني ... وراح اتطرق في الكورس عن الستايل وانواع الستايل ... واهم حاجه راح اتكلم

عن البليجريزم بشكل مفصل ودقيق لأنه من أكبر المشاكل اللي تواجهنا هنا لأنه مو موجود بثقافتنا .

Him\ I might need to do some research first, but I think I'll start with the types of

writing ... so it could be clear to them ... of course, they have studied such information

in the ELI ... after that, we'll talk about each type and its characteristics ... so the

difference can be clear to them ... then, we'll talk about academic writing and it's

types ... I'm from those who learn through practice ... so, I'll bring more than one

article and we'll see the points they share and the ones they differ in... hence, students

will have an idea about each type and the differences between them ... newspaper for

example is different from scientific writing... and scientific writing has a specific goal

... because getting an information from this type of writing is different from other

types ... and I'll talk about writing style and its types ... and the most important thing

is that I'll talk about plagiarism in details because it's one of the biggest difficulties

students encounter because we don't have it in our culture ...

أنا/ جميل ... كيف تعلمت الكتابة الأكاديمية؟

Me\ Good ... how did you learn to write academic English?

هو/ برفض البيبرز من الدكاترة وإعادتها مرة ثانية ... هذا أكثر أسلوب هاتلاقيه مستخدم مع الطلاب هنا ...

Him\ Through the rejected papers by my professors ... I had to rewrite my papers and

apply my professors comments ... this is the most used method by students

أنا/ طيب أنت مالك أنت طرق خاصة غير هذي؟

Me\ Ok ... do you have other sources for learning academic writing?

هو/ ممم أنا درست في المعهد هنا لمدة شهرين ... طبعا أخذت فكرة عن الكتابة الأكاديمية لأن المعهد كان مهتم في الكتابة أكثر من أي شي ثاني ... طبعا المعهد كان يدقق بزيادة في الرايتنق ... فكنت متضايق جدا وكنت أسبهم يعني ... أنا أفهم أنه التدقيق الزايد يمكن يكون لمصلحة أنت ماتعرفها انت اليوم وتعرفها بكرا ...

Him\ mmm I studied in the ELI here for two months ... of course I took a general idea about academic writing because the ELI was focusing on writing more than anything else ... of course the ELI was focusing on every mistake we make in our writing ... and I was upset because of that ... but now I totally support them because you might not understand what they do now but you will in the future

أنا/ انت قلت لي انه علشان تخلي كتابتك أكاديمية فأنت أحيانا تروح الرايتنق سنتر أو تسأل أحد زملائك ... هل لك طرق ثانية علشان تتأكد أنها أكاديمية؟

Me\ You said that to make sure that your paper is written in an academic writing style, you go to the writing center or you ask one of your friends ... are there other methods you follow to make sure that it is written in an academic writing style?

هو/ أيوه جربت كثير أشياء ... جربت بعض المواقع اللي ... اللي توفر خدمات زي كذا ... جربت ارسلها اونلاين وهم يردو عليك ... وطبعا ماستغني عن برنامج الوورد والتصحيح الالي حقه ... سواءا كان في القرامر او في السبلينق ... بالنسبة لي هذي اشياء اساسية ما اقدر أكتب بدونهم ... يعني لو كانت الكتابه باليد مثل ايام زمان كان رحنا فيها ... احنا فينا والناس اللي اخذوا الماجستير والدكتوراه قبل 20 سنة فين ... كمان جربت اتعاقد مع ناس

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من برا الجامعه علشان يراجعوا الأوراق حقتي ...

Him\ Yeah I tried many things ... I tried some websites that ... that provide such services ... I tried to send it online and they will do it for you ... of course I always use Microsoft word program and its auto correction feature ... whether in grammar or in spelling ... to me, it's an important tool I can't write without using it ... if we had to write without this program and this feature, we wouldn't do great ... we are much way behind in comparison with those who did their masters and Ph.D. degrees 20 years ago ... I also went to see proofreaders off campus ...

أنا/ هل فيه عوامل ممكن تأثر ايجابا أو سلبا على كتابتك الأكاديمية ؟

Me\ What are the factors that could positively or negatively affect your academic writing style?

هو / اظنه للأسف انه ... بصفه عامه ... انه نشتغل في آخر دقيقة ... يعني ... ماحنا .... ماعدنا تخطيط للأشياء كويس ... هذا يسبب في كثير من الأحيان انه مانشتغل الا في اخر دقيقة ...والكتابه اذا بتكتب 20 صفحة ... او حتى 10 صفحات ... لايمكن أنك تكتب في يوم او في ليلة وحدة... ممكن انا اقدر اكتب 10 صفحات في جلسه وحده ... لكن هل هي الكواليتي اللي تقدم ؟ ...لا ... فلازم تراجعهم وتعدل فيهم وتزيد المعلومات ...وتظل تراجعه حتى تشوف انه كواليتي يستحق الإرسال.

Him\ I think unfortunately ... generally speaking ... that we start writing our papers in the last minute ... which means ... we ... we don't plan carefully ... which makes us start working in the last minute ... and if you want to write 20 pages ... or even 10 pages ... you can't write them in one day or in one night ... maybe I can write 10 pages ... but they won't be of such good quality ... you have to proofread them and change

and add some information ... you'll keep proofreading till you are satisfied and then submit them ...
أنا/ طيب اخوي... نطلع من الانجليزي ونتكلم عن العربي شوي ... هل لك كتابات بالعربي؟
Me\ Ok brother... let's stop talking about English and start talking about Arabic ... do you write in Arabic?
هو/ أكتب بالعربي
Him\ I do write in Arabic.
أنا/ مثل إيش؟
Me\ Like what?
هو/ في الأساس كانت أشياء خاصه بالعمل ... ومؤخرا أهتميت أنه يكون لي مدونه وأكتب بعض المقالات فيها ... إحساسا بأن مستوى اللغة العربية في الإنترنت □عيف ... وبأحاول اني أترجم بعض المقالات من الإنجليزي ... بحيث أنه يكون فيه رسورس للي يدور في العربي ...
Him\ It used to be only some stuff related to the company I used to work in... lately, I started my own blog where I write some articles ... because I think Arabic in the internet is not common ... sometimes I try to translate some articles from English into Arabic ... so for those who do not understand English can find some resources there ...
أنا/ هل تستمتع بالكتابه بالعربي ؟
Me\ Do you enjoy writing in Arabic?
هو/ في البداية كنت أحس أنها صعبة ... بالذات لما كنت أكتب اليوزر مانويلز بالشركة ... صعب أنك تتقيد

بقواعد اللغة العربية بشكل كبير وبنفس الوقت تكون لغتك تكون بسيطه ومفهومة لكل الناس ... لكن مع الوقت حبيتها .

Him\ At the beginning, it was difficult ... especially when I write user manuals for the company ... it is difficult to follow all the grammatical rules and write in a simple language that could be understood by all people ...but with the time passing by I started loving writing ...

أنا/ حلو ... طيب هل تواجه صعوبات أثناء الكتابه باللغة العربية؟

Me\ Good ... do you encounter difficulties while writing in Arabic?

هو/ والله أواجه من حيث هل أكتب بالعربي أو العامية ... وكمان اختيار الألفاظ المستخدمة ... وغالبا ما اسوي نشر لأي مقال في مدونتي الا بعد ما أخلي شخص واحد على الأقل يقرأه وبعدين يقول لي هل هو مفهوم أو لا ... هل فيه جمله غامضه أو لا...

Him\ Yeah I encounter difficulties like do I write in standard or in slang ... also which vocabulary to use ... mostly before I publish an article in my blog, I give it to one person at least to read it and tell me if it is clear or not ... is there an ambiguous sentence or not...

أنا/ طيب بحكم كونك كاتب متمكن باللغة العربي هل تحس أنه هذا راح يأثر سواءا ايجابا أو سلبا أو ماله تأثير على كتاباتك في اللغة الإنجليزية؟

Me\ Ok ... since you are a good writer in Arabic, do you think that will enable or hinder you from being a good writer in English or it does not have any effect?

هو/ أظن أنه يأثر ايجابا ... أظن أنه تكون تكتب بأي لغة ... راح يكون له تأثير على اللغات الأخرى ... لأنه الكتابه لها جوانب مره كثيرة ... واحد منها القرامر ... لكن يبقى الأسلوب والطريقه والستركشر حقت الكتابه ...

هذي هتكون عامة في كل اللغات ...

Him\ I think it has a positive influence ... I think when you write in one language it'll has an influence on the other languages ... because writing has many aspects ... among of which is grammar ... but grammar and structure ... would be the same in all the languages ...

أنا/ ايش تعريفك للبليجريزم ؟

Me\ How would you define plagiarism?

هو/ هو في الأساس المحافظة على الحقوق الفكرية ... مو أي أحد يجي ياخذ كلام أو شغل أحد ثاني ويحطه بأسمه ... وهذا علم فأي حاجه تكتبها لازم يكون لها مصدر ... وبالتالي الاقتباس والرفرنس والمراجعه كلها مره مهمه ...

Him\ essentially, it is protecting the copyrights of others ... no one can come and steal the work of someone else and claims that it is his ...this is knowledge so anything you write has to have a resource ... therefore, quoting, referencing, and revision are very important.

أنا/ كيف قدرت تعرف البليجريزم بهالطريقة؟

Me\ How did you come up with this definition?

هو/ أكيد اني قريته في أحد الكتب ... لأني سبق وسويت بحث عنه ...

Him\ I read it in a book for sure ... because I wrote a paper about it...

أنا/ أول ماسمعت عنه هل كنت في السعوديه أو في أمريكا؟

Me\ When you heard about plagiarism for the first time, were you in Saudi Arabia or in the U.S.?

هو/ سمعت عنه وأنا في السعوديه ... لأنه لي أصحاب سافروا ... ولي صاحب طردوه من الجامعه علشان بليجريزم ... وأظنه كان في هولاندا ...

Him\ I heard about it when I was in Saudi Arabia ... I have some friends who travelled abroad to study ... I have a friend who was expelled from university because of plagiarism ... I think he was in Netherlands ...

أنا/ طيب ايش كانت ردة فعلك لما سمعت بالمو□وع هذا؟

Me\ What was your reaction when you heard about it?

هو/ قلت له أنت مجنون ... ماعرفت نظامهم ... ولا قريت ولا راجعت مع أحد ... لكن عندنا كثير من الناس يراها ومقتنع أنه عادي ... ويرى أنه ما تعدى على حقوق احد ... لأن ماعنده تصور ثقافي عن فهم الحقوق بشكل وا□ح ... وبعضهم يكابر لما يمسكونهم بليجريزم وبحكم اني رئيس النادي السعودي فشفتها كثير ... ويجلسون يقولون انه ماسوينا شي ... وهم موفاهمين انه فيه برامج للبليجريزم ويقدروا يعرفوا كم النسبة ... أعرف واحد كانت نسبة البليجريزم عنده 98% وكانت من بيبر هو كاتبها من قبل ... فبحكم أنه احنا درسنا هنا فلازم نهتم بثقافتهم ... وهذا من وجهة نظري أحد أسباب قوتهم العلمية ...

Him\ I told him you are crazy ... didn't you know their policy ... didn't you read and talk to anyone ... but there are many people who think that it's ok ... and he thinks he didn't steal someone else's ideas or work... because he does not have a cultural consideration about the copyrights ... and some of them add insult to injury ... they not only plagiarize but also deny that they have plagiarized ... being a president of the Saudi students association, I have witnessed many cases ... they don't know that there

are programs that can detect the percentage of plagiarism ... I know one person whose

the percentage of the plagiarism in his paper was 98% it was from another paper that

he wrote before ... since we are studying here, we have to respect their culture

regarding this issue ... and this is one of the reasons for having good education here in

the U.S…

أنا/ طيب برأيك كيف يقدر الطلاب أنهم يتجنبون البليجريزم؟

Me\ How do you think students can avoid plagiarism?

هو/ أهم حاجة أنهم يتعلمون ايش هو البليجريزم علشان يعرفوا كيف يتجنبوه ... وأهم حاجه اذا غلط وسوى

بليجريزم لا يتمادى في الغلط وينكره غلطه ... من الطبيعي انه كلنا نغلط ... واحنا جايين هنا نتعلم ...

Him\ The most important thing is that they have to learn what plagiarism is so that

they can avoid it ... and the most important thing is that if he plagiarized, he should

not deny it ... we all make mistakes ... we came here to learn

أنا/ طيب بشكل عام ... هل تعتقد أنه الطلاب يسوون بليجريزم؟

Me\ Generally speaking, do you think students plagiarize?

هو/ اظنه كل الناس بطريقه أو باخرى يسوو بليجريزم ...

Him\ I think all people plagiarize in one way or another

أنا/ ايش الأسباب اللي تخليهم يسوو بليجريزم؟

Me\ What are the reasons that make students plagiarize?

هو/ الأسباب ... ممكن تكون من عدم معرفة النظام أولا ... استسهال البليجريزم ... يعني كوبي بيست أسهل بكثير من البحث ... يعني كسل منهم ... وعدم معرفة حدود البليجريزم ... يعني فرق بين كوبي بيست وبين اعادة الصيغة ...

Him\ Reasons ... could be that they don't know the system here regarding plagiarism ... thinking that plagiarism is an easy work to do ... it is just copy-paste work and not doing a research ... you can say they are lazy ... they do not know the limits of plagiarism ... there is a difference between copy/paste and paraphrasing ...

أنا/ طيب ايش مساوئ البليجريزم؟

Me\ ok ... what are the pitfalls of plagiarism?

هو/ اولا الناس تعرف انه حقوقها ماراح تضيع ... علشا كذا هم يشتغلوا ويبدعوا ...

Him\ First, people know that their ideas and work will not be stolen ... therefore, they work and discover new things ...

أنا/ طيب هل مهمة توعية الطالب عن البليجريزم هي على الطالب نفسه أو على الدكتور أو الجامعه أو على شخص آخر ؟

Me\ Ok... who should increase the student's knowledge about plagiarism? Is it the student him/herself, the professor, the university, or someone else?

هو/ أظن المسؤولية الأساسية هي مسؤولية الطالب نفسه... المسؤولية الثانية تقع على الجامعه عن طريق توفير محا□رات او رسورسس اخرى تساعدهم على تجنب البليجريزم ... وكمان مسؤولية البروفسورز انهم ينبهوا

الطلاب ... لاحظت على بعض البروفسورز سلوك غريب شوي ... انه من اول درافت اذا اكتشف بليجريزم يروح يحطها في السيستم ... بينما الصحيح انه هو موجود هنا علشان يوجهك ... وبالتالي يقول لك انه اللي انت سويته مو صح ... انت المفروض تسوي كذا ... وخذ هذي الرسورسس واقراها ...

Him\ I think the main responsibility lies on the student himself ... then university comes after that through providing lectures or other resources to help them avoid plagiarism ... also it is the professor's responsibility to enlighten students ... I noticed that some professors have a strange behavior ... when he discovers plagiarism in the first draft, he would write that in the system ... in fact, he is here to guide you ... and therefore he should tell you that what you did was wrong ... you are supposed to do it this way ... take these resources about plagiarism and read them ...

أنا/ حلو ... طيب لما كنت في المتوسط والثانوي هل كان يطلب منك تسوي واجبات في مهارة الكتابة في اللغة الإنجليزية؟

Me\ Ok ... when you were in intermediate and in secondary schools, did the teachers ask you to do writing assignments in English?

هو/ اظن ماكد طلب مننا اكثر من نص صفحة...

Him\ I think we weren't asked to write more than a half page.

أنا/ وتصحيح المدرسين كان يعتمد على ايش ؟

Me\ And the grading process was based on?

هو / على القواعد

Him\ On grammar.

أنا/ وهل تعتقد انه هالطريقة راح تطور مهارة الكتابه عند الطلاب؟

Me\ Do you think this way could improve the students' writing skill?

هو/ ماراح تساعدك على التطوير ... لكن فيه طريق ثانية ... مثل انك تكتب اشياء لاصفيه وتوريها المدرس علشان يراجعها ... وهذا راح تدعم أكثر مهارة تطوير الكتابه...

Him\ This not going to help you improve ... but there are other ways ... like non curricular activities where you write something and then show it to your teacher to read it and provides you with some comments ... this is going to improve the writing skill…

أنا/ طيب انا اسئلتي انتهت حاليا ... لكن هل عندك اشياء ودك تضيفها وترى انها ممكن تطور بحثي أو ملاحظات أو اسئلة كنت تتوقع اني اسئلها ولا سئلتها ؟

Me\ Ok ... I'm done with my questions now ... do you have anything to say or you might have an interesting point that you think I should add to my research ... or you might suggest some questions that you think I should ask

هو/ انت غطيت نقاط كثيرة ومجالات كثيرة ... فما اعتقد انه عندي اشياء ثانية

Him\ You covered many issues in different fields ... so I don't think I have something to add

أنا/ شاكر لك جدا على اجاباتك ووقتك

Me\ Thank you for your answers and for your time
هو / العفو
Him\ You're welcome

Appendix D. Approved forms by Oklahoma State University's Office for Research Compliance

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, September 17, 2014

IRB Application No AS1494

Proposal Title: Graduate Saudi Arabia Students' Perceptions of Academic Writing

Reviewed and Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 9/16/2017

Principal
Investigator(s):

Ahmad Alhojailan   An Cheng
247 N Univ Pl Apt 205   205 Morrill
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix E. Informed consent form for social science research

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Graduate Saudi Arabia Students' Perceptions of Academic Writing

Investigators:
Dr. An Cheng, Department of English
405-744-9470; an.cheng@okstate.edu
Ahmad Alhojailan, Ph.D. candidate, Department of English
(405)762-3672; ahmad.alhojailan@okstate.edu

Purpose:

This project will explore Saudi male and female graduate students' perceptions of academic writing.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you questions about learning academic writing, issues and problems related to academic writing (e.g., good/bad experiences, writing process), the purpose of academic writing, criteria for good academic writing, the most challenging issue/s in academic writing, your strengths and weaknesses in writing academic papers, and plagiarism, among other issues related to academic writing.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks or embarrassment associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

Although you may not benefit directly from this study, findings can be used to expand the theoretical understanding of writing as a social practice and to provide some assistance to the English language institutes to improve the academic experience of the students. Moreover, findings can lead to a more understanding of the Saudi students' perceptions of academic writing with respect to their educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed.

Compensation:

In return for your participation, you will receive NO compensation.

Contacts:

You may ask any questions about the research procedures, and these questions will be answered. If you have any question and/or if you want to obtain the results of the study, you can contact Dr. An Cheng, Department of English 405-744-9470; an.cheng@okstate.edu or Ahmad Alhojailan, (405) 762-3672, ahmad.alhojailan@okstate.edu

For additional information about the research and your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:

Your participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

Signatures:

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

VITA

Ahmad Alhojailan

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: GRADUATE SAUDI ARABIA STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC

WRITING

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in English at
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at University of
Essex, Colchester, England in 2009.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English and Translation
at Qassim University, Buraydah, Saudi Arabia in 2005.

Experience:

2000 - 2003 working as a translator at Alhadaf est. as a part-time job.
2003 - 2005 working as a tutor at an orphanage as a part-time job.
2003 - 2007 working as a teacher of English as a foreign language in two
             secondary schools.
2005 - 2006 working as prices investigator for the Ministry of Economy as a
             part-time job.
2007- 2010   working as a teacher assistant then as a lecturer at Qassim
             University.
2009   working as an interpreter for the Chamber of Commerce &
             Industry as a part-time job.
2014   working as sponsored students program assistant, international
             students & scholars office, Oklahoma State University as a part-
             time job.