AN ODYSSEY TO THE SELF: VOICES OF L2 ARAB WRITERS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

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AN ODYSSEY TO THE SELF: VOICES OF L2 ARAB WRITERS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2019
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation is an arduous labor of our most blossoming, intellectual thoughts. To this end, I acknowledge Dr. Ruth Trinidad-Galván and Dr. Cristyn L. Elder, my co-chairs, for providing encouragement and support in areas of research, constant feedback, and being available any time I needed help at the University of New Mexico. Your wisdom, caring, emotional and academic support, and kindness have truly impacted me and will stay with me throughout my career.

I also thank my committee members, Dr. Lucretia (Penny) Pence and Dr. Bethany Davila, for their challenging questions and encouragement that allow this entire dissertation process to transform me as a researcher, educator, and a life-long learner. Additionally, I extend my gratitude to Dr. Robert Kohls, who, as a scholar in Second Language Writing, provided me with insightful suggestions and ideas, and always asked about my progress. I am also indebted to Dania Ammar for her support editing this work and helping me co-think some emerging themes.

I am also thankful to my research participants for their time and cooperation. This project would not have been possible without their help.

I would also like to acknowledge the love, Dua’as, and support of my family—especially my mother, whose persistent understanding, support, and encouragement has been my greatest sources of willpower along this journey.
DEDICATION

For my first life mentor and teacher,

For the one who taught me love and perseverance,

My mother,

Whose faith and optimism guided this project!
AN ODYSSEY TO THE SELF: VOICES OF L2 ARAB WRITERS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

By

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ABSTRACT

The term ‘voice’ has been a pivotal metaphor in the fields of composition studies and applied linguistics, and it still has a strong implicit and/or explicit presence in the U.S. classroom. This critical case study examines 6 Saudi graduate student writers’ voices in various U.S. universities. Data were collected by analyzing texts of students’ papers and in-depth interviews with each participant. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an overarching framework and analytical tool, this study examines the voices of Saudi students as they resist and/or perpetuate dominant ideologies both in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia when writing in their L2 in the US and eventually in their home context. Thereby, the voicing and/or silencing shift they experienced in L2 writing, especially in US universities, engenders vital questions of identity, power, and ideology.
This study is, thus, key for reforming the educational language policies and sociopolitical situations that shape and/or constrain these voices. The study of these voices is particularly intriguing as such writers—myself included—come from an authoritative educational system (i.e., banking system) and often collective communities.

Findings of this study reflect how institutionalized powers, ideologies, and practices are vital factors, which have significant and complex effects on L2 writers’ voices. Writerly voice in almost all cases was found to be multiple and, for most participants, conflicting across situations and genres. In particular, writers in this study exhibited complex, juxtaposing voices shaped by their identities and their professional background and resisted the pedagogical practices in their home context. Through the course of their academic journey, participants of this study (re)constructed and negotiated agentive identities to ideologically become proactive members of their U.S. academic communities. These representative acts of their voices and discursive practices they inhabited were constrained and limited by some larger institutional factors. The implications of this study suggest a need for a theory of silencing and a pedagogy of voice in both ESL and EFL contexts.
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Chapter One

Introduction

All our writing is influenced by our life histories. Each word we write represents an encounter, possibly a struggle, between our multiple experiences and the demands of a new context. Writing is not some neutral activity which we just learn like a physical skill, but it implicates every fiber of the writer’s multifaceted being. (Ivanić, 1998, p.181)

Exchanging information, persuading others, and expressing feelings are core functions of human communication, which is almost never barren of bits and pieces of the self. Daily, we use language to identify ourselves to each other, to align ourselves with them, or to distance ourselves from them by underlining our differences (Fina et al., 2006). In this sense, the voice we embed in our linguistic codes plays a major role in constructing and negotiating our identities as language users and/or language learners.

For instance, as writers interact and communicate with their audiences, they can define themselves through language (e.g., lexical choices, stance, and mode—to name a few) and also have certain identities ascribed to them by readers. These choices that writers make mirror the discursive practices that have shaped their voices. Because of the myriad of factors involved in writing—such as linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural factors—writing, among other means of communications, is often perceived as a strenuous task: the writer has to organize thoughts, carefully choose the appropriate words, and logically put ideas in a rhetorically effective sequence.

Nonetheless, writing is a powerful tool for thinking. To me, it is also a journey of identity discovery. When I hold a pen and a piece of paper, I feel curious about the surprises or even
heartbreaks down the writing road. With every thought that I come across while wandering in the excitingly mysterious labyrinth of my mind, I feel I am finding another missing piece of my identity as a human and my voice as a writer. Therefore, I would define writing as the whole process of conception, growth, pains of labor and then birth of ideas, which be might be called “the daughters of the mind” in Arabic!

Composing could even be more demanding for L2 writers (Kohls, 2013), for not only do they have to learn the structural patterns of the language, but they are also expected to conform to many other, more subtle norms, which could be academic or associated with their respective disciplinary specializations. Among these norms is “voice,” which is an indispensable concept in the discussion of English writing. L2 writers develop an L2 identity, an awareness of the L2 discourse community, and more likely a sense of voice in their texts (Shen, 1989). These L2 voices that are discursively constructed are inseparable from writer’s L1 voices, L2 writers’ identities and the previous educational and sociopolitical practices they have experienced (see “Key Terms” page 208). Thus, it is important in this introductory chapter to clarify what voice and identity mean. In Chapter Two, I explain broadly how voice can be a tool that enable writers to transform their values, views, and practices to voice themselves and others as well. Also, voice can be seen as a process, a representation of discursive and non-discursive features, a product, a presentation of stance, a representation of self, and an ability to resist. However, the contextual meaning of voice in this study, according to the data, can mean a sociopolitical site of struggle where writers discursively represent their ideologies through alignment and resistance, thus ideologically fashioning and negotiating agentive identities. These representative acts of writing can be constrained by some larger institutional factors (for more in-depth discussions of the definitions of voice and identity, refer to Chapter Two). Moreover, the concept of identity has been given
more attention in recent years (e.g., Norton, 2000; Block, 2007; Young, 2014). For L2 writers, Ortega (2009) proposed that the study of identity and L2 learning is one of the most thought-provoking research areas in humanities and education. Moreover, Schmitt (2010) stated that identity, especially in applied linguistics, is an important social factor because linguistic patterns could signal not only social and individual identities but also people’s awareness of these identities. Scholars from various disciplines proffered other definitions of identity. To provide a more lucid understanding of identity as an evolving topic in humanities and education research, Norton (2000) stated that identity—as it can be part of writer’s voice in writing—deals with “how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p.12).

In coherence with this social definition of identity, Ivanič (1998) elaborated on writers’ identity as constructed through struggles with the powerful ideological and discoursal dominations in society, namely as members construct their identities as a result of social interaction with and affiliation to a certain community. For Ivanič (1998), “Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs, and interests which they embody” (p. 32). Also, Hyland (2012) in Disciplinary Identities Individuality and Community in Academic Discourse, Hyland (2012) referred to writers’ identities as pre-established and innovative reflections of their repertoires, academic discourses, social values, and personal experiences.

With the rise of mobility, globalization, world Englishes, and translingual writing practices, researchers in the field of second-language writing have been giving more attention to L2 writers to understand the nature of their written identities and appreciate the Englishes that they bring to
the classroom (Matsuda, 2001 & 2002). For instance, Cox et al. (2010) described how researchers in the field of L2 writing have been trying “to reconcile the identities students bring with the identities their instructors expect them to occupy—or at least perform—as they develop into academic and professional writers” (p. xvii).

For the purpose of this study, examination of Saudi Arabian students’ identities in an L2 context raises questions of othering, marginalization, and empowerment, which—in turn—might affect their literacy development, especially in writing. For example, Giroir (2014) stated in his narrative inquiry that post-9/11 discourses shaped how Saudi Arabian students saw themselves in relation to the larger L2 community. They had expectations of being treated unequally and positioned on the basis of their assumed religious and ethnic identity. A close look at L2 Saudi writers in empirical studies reveals that they have been sometimes pigeonholed as substandard and deficient writers (e.g., Rass, 2011; Wege, 2013; Barry 2014). This study seeks to challenge such assumptions by exploring how Saudi L2 writers voice themselves across various genres and social events. To further explain the design of this study, this section explains my personal connection to voice, the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the methodology I adopted, and the limitations of the study.

**Coming to Voice: A Personal Connection**

Central to this inquiry and the main motivation for my research topic is my personal experience as a 32-year-old Saudi graduate student, whose life experience straddles both the United States as a graduate student and Saudi Arabia. In fact, my elementary, middle, and high school as well as my undergraduate education were in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, ever since I was enrolled in school in Saudi Arabia, the word ‘voice’ has never—to my knowledge—existed in my academic journey and is still tricky to translate into Arabic. As a child, I would go to school
every day carrying a lot of books assigned by the Ministry of Education. These books were loaded with drills that promote passive rote learning and discourage the role of students as co-creators of knowledge. For instance, one recurrent assignment in L1 Arabic composition I still so vividly remember asks students to copy exactly a provided paragraph without any chance for creativity, a window for questions, or a touch of imagination. While I acknowledge that modeling can be a significant way to help young writers get their foot in the door, these mimicking experiences were not supplemented with ones that encourage students’ agency as independent, critical, or imaginative writers.

The teacher on the other hand, held the main funds of knowledge—he was the banker (I was only taught by men throughout my schooling experience in Saudi Arabia). A daily scenario would go like this: the teacher sees the student as a receptacle of learning: the student has to memorize the provided textbook and act in a mechanical manner. That is, it was a scene of what Freire (1970) calls in his instrumental book Pedagogy of the Oppressed “depositing” because teachers were controlling and regulating the way students learn about the world and reality. For instance, we as students were not allowed to question the statements of the teacher or even provide other perspectives—the teacher would not allow that; he even would think that we were challenging and belittling him as “the only source of information.”

To add insult to injury, the educational system in Saudi didn’t—in my experience—encourage the pedagogy of writing across the curriculum. Actually, writing in the L1, Arabic, was rarely practiced. To move from one grade into another, most of the students would take mid-terms and final exams, rather than think up a project or write a reflection. These exams would include memorization-based questions, including define, mention, and justify (the justifications were always provided by the teacher and rehearsed by students before the exam).
Even in literature classes, texts were chosen from the Arabic and Islamic cannon and were dealt with as nonnegotiable sources of literary craft and exemplary, didactic culture; thereby, students were supposed to memorize portions of these texts, memorize the definitions of the archaic and formal vocabulary they included, and memorize the biography of the writers, rather than interact with the texts creatively, or get involved in an at least simplified form of critical literary theory that consciously examines the ideologies underlying the text and thus inspiring society with its norms, or write in response to the texts.

The only composition class I took throughout my education journey in Saudi Arabia was called “Tabeer” (i.e., expression), a very basic class that encourages students at the age of 13 or older to write short paragraphs in Arabic. However, the problem with this class was that students had no choice to write about what they chose. In fact, the teacher would pick a stock topic for students and ask them to write about it. These topics included, for example, the four seasons, your family trip, the importance of patriotism, the religious holidays, or any other topics that are likely to keep any challenge of religion, politics, or traditions at bay, and which pre-supposes a homogeneous body of students and reinforces a monolithic ideology.

Another factor that has motivated my close investigation of Saudi students’ voice is the hierarchal social, religious, tribal, and political structure in Saudi Arabia, which can seep deeply into issues related to voice. By virtue of perpetuating these power structures in the Saudi society, there is a great emphasis on adhering to the collective voice in behaviors and opinions. For example, humbly listening to and respecting the father—who is normally the provider for and the be-all-and-end-all in the household—is obligatory and praise-worthy, even if his decisions are at odds with one’s free, non-harmful choice. With the virtual subdual of the individual voice, the
overwhelming fear of being blamed, shamed, or labeled as defiant of religion, the royal family, or tradition can constrain many individuals from being themselves.

The aforementioned educational and social practices cannot be separated from the political practices in Saudi Arabia. For example, voting in Saudi Arabia is virtually absent; in fact, I have never voted in my entire life. The appointment of a new leader is a decision of the king. Even though recently the government has launched a municipal voting system where citizens can vote for a municipal leader, this practice is an illusion of voice—I believe. I have observed that the authorities always make the final decision, and so not many individuals care enough to vote. These political, educational, and social norms do shape Saudi students’ writerly voice and identity in academia, as I soon learned as part of my own educational experiences in the U.S.

In 2009, the King Abdullah Scholarship program granted me a fully paid scholarship to further my graduate studies in the United States. I was fortunate to be part of this great program, and I landed in the United States on January 20, 2011. I initially took classes at different schools, such as the University of Oregon, University of Denver, and University of Arizona. These classes were mostly for cultural preparation. Then, I was admitted to the Master’s program in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at Murray State University in Kentucky. When I—as an ESL student—was introduced to writing as a central part of the US classroom, I was intrigued by how writing helped me reflect on new concepts and understand my own thinking more clearly. Even today, my experience with writing in the US classroom at the graduate level has been molding my identity and voice. For example, the writing-intensive assignments, the demand to critically discuss authors and articles, and the daily often voice-encouraging classroom discourses have indeed inspired me to express my voice and to further pursue my dissertation project on voice and identity.
Nevertheless, I have to confess here that my journey with voice is still evolving; even today I feel hesitant sometimes to express my genuine view when an authority is present (i.e. teachers and professors). Bringing myself to use “I” instead of “the researcher” can be the simplest case in point for this struggle. As humble as they might be, my experiences and struggles echo those of many other Saudi students who are trying to make meaning of themselves in academia, which renders the topic of these writers’ voice worthy of investigation.

**Statement of the Problem**

The field of L2 writing has recently shifted towards a multidisciplinary mode of inquiry; and in general, the sociocultural perspective on education in the humanities emphasizes that knowledge is socially constructed, and research paradigms are shifting to recognize individual subjectivity as an indispensable part of the broader social and political context (Trimbur, 1994). This shift of focus makes the study of writerly identity and voice key for understanding the composing process and pertinent issues of intercultural ideologies. The linguistics and social diversity that international students confront on US campuses can involve tensions, negotiations, and reconstruction of differences in language, identity, power, and culture. For instance, since writing is required across curricula in U.S. universities, Saudi students, among other international students in the US, are encouraged to bring their voices into their writing, challenge the authorial voice (i.e., propose critical arguments in response to established writers/teachers), and critically take an authoritative stance in their papers, despite, as exemplified with my own experience, this perhaps being contrary to an international student’s experience in their native country.

When they arrive in the United States, international students are asked to adapt to common Western writing practices, which can include claims to objectivity, challenging the author, and deconstructing social myths (Shen, 1989). He argued that writing in English was
somewhat hard for him; he found his strong Chinese background in clash with the rules of English composition. Growing up in China, Shen was forced to think as an individual writer with a unique voice such as the usage of “I” as contradictory to his collective background. Although Shen’s article “The classroom and the wider culture: Identity as key to learning English composition” might be a bit problematic for leaning towards linguistic determinism and non-dynamic boundaries between cultures, his narrative can be a case in point for L2 writers’ voice struggles in the United States. As a second-language international student, Shen had to negotiate for visibility in the text as he felt bound to voice practice that resulted from political and social elements in his home country, China.

These pedagogical practices (e.g., claiming objectivity, challenging the author, and deconstructing social myths), which can allow writers to transform their perspective towards life and influence the formation of their identity, can pose some challenges since they are not the types of literacy practices taught in their L1 home education, especially in writing (Barnawi, 2011, Shen, 1989). Influenced by the teacher-dominant environment, their perception of writing can simply mean how to produce a text that is error-free. In a Saudi Arabian context, another important factor is the absence of English composition as well as L1 composition practices in high school curriculums, which makes it even more challenging for Saudi ESL writers to master L2 writing in an L2 context.

Although L2 identity can be operationalized as how L2 students bring their voice into the text, some prominent L2 scholars see the notion of identity and voice for L2 writers as problematic. They underestimate the value of the concept of voice and believe that it is irrelevant to academic writing (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). Other researchers have also argued that the concepts of voice and identity and their convention are Western characteristics; thus, it can’t be
researched in other contexts, such as high-context cultures (i.e., communication tend to be implicit and social interactions and norms are more collective). That is, voice, in their perspective, is always tied to “the ideology of individualism” (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Nevertheless, other researchers have paved the way for the discussion of L2 voice and suggested that voice and identity is multicultural, multifaceted, and ever-changing across time and space, hence exploring how different writers from different contexts and cultures voice themselves in the text can promote a pluralistic view of the field of L2 composition and in education generally (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Matsuda, 2001). (For a more in-depth discussion of the history, definitions, and conflicts about voice, see Chapter Two).

As previously noted, the ability to express one’s voice may pose a challenge for some Saudi Arabian students, as many are products of authoritarian educational and sociopolitical systems that do not preach democracy or individuality. However, the value of individual agency is heightening with the rise of the so-called Arab Spring, which inspires the rationale for this study. The issue of voice, especially after the unrest in the Middle East, is growing. Here, writerly voice is not only a matter of literacy; it is also a social practice that can seep deeply into one’s psyche and may eventually affect relevant practices such as political and social change. (I explain the sociopolitical relevance more in Chapter Two). The ecology of community in this study, such as how voice is being practiced in the first place, can shed light on the reasons why Saudi Arabian writers choose to be visible or invisible in an academic text.

A critical investigation of previous research conducted on/with ESL Saudi Arabian writers reveals that previous empirical studies have never sufficiently explored how L2 Saudi writers construct and maintain their writerly identities in response to the Western conventions of

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1 The revolutions against some Arab dictators starting in 2011 in Tunisia and followed by other countries in North Africa and the Middle East.
writing (e.g., Wege, 2013; Barry 2014). Rather, most empirical studies on the topic of L2 Saudi writers approach their writing as deficient. These studies are rife with references to features of Saudi Arabian students’ writings as negative transfers and linguistic errors; they overlook large-scale sociocultural issues in favor of the minutia of mechanism and look at students’ writings as substandard (Rass, 2011).

**Statement of Purpose**

Undoubtedly, one’s writing is a portal to a treasury of one’s most complicated thoughts. Writing is an utterly invaluable tool, and it is essential for the understanding of human individual thoughts as well as social phenomena. The ultimate goal of researching identity and voice in written discourse is to find with reverence the souls and worlds behind the words, and to empower writing students to unabashedly bring their voice into L2 discourse in ways that are meaningful to them. Claiming that the writer has only one voice or identity is contradictory to the nature of identity, which is dynamic in different rhetorical situations. Instead, researchers should look, as Hirvela and Belcher (2001) suggest, for the “the plural rather than singular nature of voice.” (p.45). From this stance, researchers should sort through L1 as well as L2 discourses and acknowledge their interactions and how they transfer or affect L2 writers’ voices.

Cultural schemata and writing practice can affect how writers write and perform their writerly identities. In other words, L1 linguistic, social, and rhetorical conventions can interact when international students compose in a language other than their first tongues (e.g., English) (Connor, 2004). In addition, the conception of bringing one’s voice(s) and writerly identity can vary across cultures, and the inability to see one’s voice in writing might also result from a monolingual lens that only accepts how voice and one’s writerly identity should be composed in a Western way. This conflict between how L1 and L2 students’ ways of voicing can perpetuate
monolingual/monocultural ideologies in composition studies, which perceive voice as a construct that exists only in so called “individualistic” societies (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Hence this study aims to show how different rhetorical as well as linguistic features can be used by ESL writers to express their voices; this also can make the notion of voice look different from the mainstream U.S. perspective. This is because voice is neither unique to a certain culture nor local to a particular speech community. Rather, it does exist in every language and is manifested through different discursive features. Thus, ESL writers can learn the techniques of voice expression in English, which can showcase the dynamics of identities they shape throughout the development of their writing competence and their L1 voice-related practices.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Saudi Arabian ESL/L2 students construct their writerly identities in response to the Western conventions of writing at different universities in the United States. More specifically, the study explores how/whether L2 Saudi graduate-student writers bring their voices into the academic text, utilize unique rhetorical styles in their written discourse, take a critical authoritative stance and agency in their papers, and identify themselves in relation to others.

**Research Questions**

This study explores the voices that L2 Saudi graduate writers express in their academic texts and the effects of the institutional practices on these writers. The study provides insights into how Saudi L2 graduate students identify themselves in relation to others and how institutional polices contribute to the formation of these identities. This study attempts to answer the following questions: 1) In what ways do Saudi writers voice themselves in U.S. L2 writing? And to what extent (if any) do these voices interplay with writers’ identities? 2) What are L2
Saudi writers’ perception of institutional practices, with a focus on those with educational and sociopolitical impacts or overtones, that may shape their writerly voice or expressions?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the conversation on how Saudi Arabian L2 writing students can develop their selves and voices in the process of gaining L2 literacy and capital. Most importantly, this research shows how these writers can manage their unique, multiple semiotic resources to bring their voices into the text, use language-specific features to take a position, and negotiate the meanings that eventually affect their identity construction. Moreover, this empirical study addresses issues of linguistic inclusivity and the appreciation of the culture-relevant rhetoric so that policy makers and curriculum designers can consider such diversity in education and include more multilingual etiquettes of composing. Doing so can help researchers not only grope for a glimpse of L2 writers’ identity contours, but it also helps in designing a healthy classroom environment that promotes students’ voices. Unequivocally, such a broader application allows educators to examine how individuals express themselves distinctively and, more importantly, how L2 writers perceive their writing to stand out from particular conventions (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001). The findings also bring up a healthy discussion about the rhetoric of differences and reverence for L2 voices in US universities, which has consequential repercussions in today’s globalized world. The findings can inform L2 writing theories and enrich the discussion around L2 writing experiences, especially in terms of how L2 voice can be manifested, altercated, and changed over the course of gaining L2 capital. Understanding voicist-related issues also adds more texture to the conversation around self, subjectivity, and identity in composition and L2 writing. This study challenges the deficit model
that researchers have labeled most of the Saudi L2 writers and explores how L2 writers can creatively and critically express their voices across contexts and genres.

**An Overview of the Methodology**

Using a critical qualitative research methodology, this study investigates how Saudi graduate student writers construct their L2 writerly voice when they study at graduate programs in the United States. To do this, I attempted to understand their positioning, voice, resistance, and authority in academic writing, which can reflect the writing challenges they experience with academic writing tasks in English-dominant L2 context, by collecting two samples of their previously written assignments (e.g., namely academic papers and reflections) and conducting two sets of interviews. Specifically, data were collected through sample texts and in-depth interviews with six L2 Saudi Arabian graduate students who are pursuing a graduate degree in the United States. These six participants were different in terms of their professional careers, majors, academic experiences in the US, gender, and linguistic abilities. This variation in the participants helped me dissect how some of these writers utilize different rhetorical and linguistic styles to bring their voices, positions, and authority into the text. Then, the data were analyzed and interpreted by thematic coding, selecting, and categorizing emergent themes that addressed the above-mentioned research questions.

**An Overview of the Following Chapters**

The following chapters are divided as follows: Chapter two provides a thorough examination of relevant literature about the concept of voice and identity, as they are frequently referred to as one term or two different concepts. I also explain in detail the interplay of these terms with larger institutional practices. Chapter three describes the methodology of this research and the inclusion criteria of the participants’ selection. Chapter four and five present the data
analysis and discussions of the two research questions asked in this project. In particular, chapter four answers the main research question about voice and the influence of writer’s identity on voice. Chapter five describes the participants’ reflections on the effects institutional practices have on their voice in writing. Finally, chapter six concludes with limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and pedagogical implications for L2 writing teachers.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

While the literature in composition, especially the field of L2 writing, has thoroughly studied the linguistic features of writer’s voice (Hyland, 2002, 2012), Tardy (2012) called for an in-depth analysis of extra-textual components that shape the writer’s voice and identity. She states that “While scholarship has drawn attention to the ways in which voice (as self-representation) is constructed through text, we still know little about how aspects of a writer’s identity beyond the text (e.g., sex, age, and race) may influence voice construction” (p. 65). Such a demand for critically studying individuals’ respective identities and voices in the social sciences and education can reflect the Western capitalist discourse, which draws heavily on individualism (Geschiere & Meyers, 1998).

In this section, I will start with basic concepts: I will contextualize the history of voice and its definition in composition studies, which has been a controversial topic since the 1970s in the United States. Also, to have a deeper understanding of these constructs (voice, identity, and the effect of Saudi sociopolitical institutional practices), I will shed light on the relation between voice and identity and how these two interact with institutional practices. Then, I will explore relevant historical background: I will highlight the US historical transition from writing as a product-based to a process-based pedagogy and, thus, a voicing opportunity. I will follow this up with a historical account of how composition studies started to give more attention to individual rights. After that, I will narrow in on the Saudi context: I will explain why Saudi writers an important population to study are, especially in terms of their composing process. I will also supplement this section with a rundown of the status of education and teaching of writing in
Saudi Arabia. Finally, I will present examples of empirical studies that can illuminate the concepts of voice and identity in composition studies.

**History of Voice in Composition Studies**

In this section, I introduce a glimpse of prominent figures and works in the historical development of voice both in mainstream composition and L2 writing. Historically, the spark of voice in composition begins to be visible in the 1970s; specifically, in 1972, writers such as Donald Stewart, in *The Authentic Voice*, shed light on the undeniable fact that a writer can have a voice because of their self-discovery. These voices, as Stewart suggested, are what make writers unique, especially when they tell a story about their lives. Seventeen years after Stewart’s comments on voice, Lisa Ede (1989), in *Work in Progress*, adopted a more courageous view of voice—she states that each writer writes differently for each occasion. She contended that writers develop or bring different situational voices for various genres in different settings. Following Ede, writers such as Elbow, who has been a prominent advocate for students’ voices in their writing, started to publish books and articles on voice and students’ empowerment during the process of writing and revision; for instance, Elbow (1998), in *Writing with Power*, stated that voice can empower writers to use their objective and subjective lenses during the revision process. In other words, Elbow echoed Steward’s (1972) ideas that writers construct their voices when they know who they are, and, thus, they start to trust their voices in writing.

Moving on to a broader horizon of voice, Prior (2001) suggested that voice is a result of our sociohistorical experiences and the roles/identities we play in specific settings. He categorized voice into three different perspectives: *individual, social, and personal social ones*. His intention of this categorization was to “offer resources for getting beyond the binary of the
personal and the social, for taking a complex view of agency as distributed across persons, practices, artifacts, and cultural activity systems” (p. 79).

Prior (2001) explicated that voice can be personal when the text can reflect some personal textual qualities tied to the writer’s choices; it also can be social in a sense as it reflects writers’ social identity or membership in a community. These choices of voices are molded by social and cultural forces and mediated through language. Prior (2001) further contended that voice can be social as it is “performed in practice when people speak as members of some group—projecting what they hope will be a recognizable voice of an ethnic or regional group, of a male or female, of a child or old person, of people who are well educated or not, of people who have some specialized knowledge” (p. 60). Writers can also draw their discourses from their previous backgrounds, experiences, and different social situations; thus, voice, as Prior contended, can be both personal and social. He describes that voice “is simultaneously personal and social because discourse is understood as fundamentally historical, situated, and indexical” (p. 55). Interestingly, the social and personal dimensions of voice resonate well with the Bakhtinian (1981) notion of “heteroglossia,” which views writers’ voices as a reflection of previous interactions and discourses.

Later, more pedagogical discussions about voice and its applications in the classroom emerged among compositionists. For example, in his article “Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries,” Elbow (2007) reconciled two conflicting perspectives on voice: how to use and overlook it strategically. He admitted that voice can be a very crucial tool in writing while it can also be misleading to readers since it can be highly influenced by the writer’s history and culture and, thus, it constrains writers’ objectivity. His main arguments were to encourage teachers to
Other scholars addressed the need to conduct more research on how L2 writers use voice (Matsuda, 2001; Tardy, 2012; Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Kohls, 2013). For example, Kohls’ (2013) “Distinctive, identifiable, or original? Defining, assessing, and raising awareness about a writer’s voice” introduced 6 strategies to introduce voice to L2 student writers. Incorporation of voice through these steps is not only meant to develop their writing skills but also to empower them as writers and as individuals. Kohls also expanded the concept of voice and includes readers (e.g., teachers, peers, etc.) as constructors of the writer’s voice; he asserted that voice is dialogical and grows “in the interaction between the two” (p.61).

**Voice: An Elusive Term**

In this section, I map out various definitions of the term voice from different scholars and fields. Then, I follow that up with my own operational definition of voice in L2 writing. The term “voice” is a pivotal metaphor in the history of the mainstream composition classroom since the 1970s and still has a strong presence explicitly or implicitly in the US classroom (Steward, 1972; Bowden, 1995; Zhao & Llosa, 2008; Yancey, 1999). Scholars from various backgrounds acknowledge the agonistic, fluid (Bakhtin and Voloshinov, as cited in Keane, 1999), and polysemous (Tardy, 2012) nature of voice as it has been the subject of debate in the fields of linguistic anthropology, applied linguistics, L2 writing, and composition and rhetoric.

Defining voice in writing is not an easy feat, as Leggo (1991) explained: “as a poet and a teacher, I am constantly reminded that language is a slippery affair.” He adds “I am not at all sure that I know what I mean by voice [in written discourse]” (p. 145). Even expressivists...
confess that sometimes people celebrate voice without really defining it. Elbow (1994) stated “the term has been used in such a loose and celebratory way as to mean almost anything. It becomes a kind of warm fuzzy word: people say that writing has voice if they like it or think it is good or has some virtue that is hard to pin down” (p. 2).

Moreover, the conflict around voice has attracted researchers to further explore its definitions, applications, and dimensions pedagogically and culturally (Matsduda, 2001; Tardy, 2012; Kohls, 2013; Elbow, 1998; Boweden, 1995). While much of the definition around identity, ideology, and subjectivities are multiple, shifting, and contradictory, voice and its definitions can also be in a state of flux and overlapping. In “The Rise of a Metaphor: ‘Voice’ in Composition Pedagogy,” Bowden (1995) highlighted that there has never been a consistent methodology for how to define voice or even research it. Vandenberg (1996) commented on how voice is illusive in composition studies:

The term voice in composition theory and pedagogy marks a profoundly wide intersection of meaning. It has been variously deployed as a rallying cry for expressivism (Stewart, 1972), a symbol for the range of maturity in a schema of women’s intellectual development (Belenky et al, 1986), as a marker for resistance to political oppression (hooks, 1998), and as a metaphor or replacement term for style, naturalness, persona, authority, essence, and a variety of other abstraction. (p.236)

Voice can also be simply a sincere presentation of the writer’s critical stance on a subject. Hanauer (2015) explicated and expands the multidimensional interpretations of voice as “a metaphor that encompasses the ideas of agency, identity, authorship, ownership, writing style, linguistic register, rhetorical stance, and textually embodied self” (p. 69). Ivanic and Camps (2001), illustrated that voice does exist in written language, and it is “the heart of the act of
writing” (Kirby, Kirby, & Liner, 2004, p. 76). Similarly, Hyland (2002) argued “writing always has voice in the sense that it conveys a representation of a writer” (p. 5). Moreover, Matsuda (2011) asserted that voice can be defined as the writer’s ability to bring their authentic ideas—autonomy of thought—that distinguishes them from other writers. Autonomy of thought can be translated into the “expressions of the writer’s own views, authoritativeness, and authorial presence” (Ivanic & Camps, 2001, p.7). These expressions of voice are drawn from the discursive features that shape, construct, and reconstruct the writer’s reality.

Voice can also transcend the mere textual choices and be seen as a social empowerment tool. For instance, hooks (1989), in Talking Back, highlights the importance of finding one's voice in society. She stated that “the idea of finding one's voice or having a voice assumes a primacy in talk, discourse, writing, and action,” and she contended that voice is an act of resistance to the hegemonic discourse (p.12). In such a case, voice can become a tool that transforms the self and moves one from being an object (passive receiver of institutional practices) to be a subject that is defined by oneself, not by others. hook’s perspective on voice is somehow similar to Elbow’s: they both assert that each writer can carry a voice that mirrors their ability to make their discourse visible in society and that reflects either individual or social concerns (Kinloch, 2010; Brooke 2012).

**Voice and Identity: A Complicated Relationship**

In this section, I shed light on the relationship between voice and identity, which are terms that are sometimes used synonymously or differently. While I acknowledge the interaction between voice and identity in writing, I created this section since as I have observed that some authors did not provide a crystal-clear explanation of the relationship between the two terms.
Elbow (1994) pointed out the interaction between voice and identity as he states that the notion of voice is seen as the identity marker of the writer—each individual’s voice can make them stand out from others. The dialectical relations between the two terms are also a product of socialization, historical events, power-relations, and imitation (Barnard, 2014).

Other scholars such as Tardy (2012) and Canagarajah (2015) highlighted that voice can be seen as one aspect of the writer’s identity. Tardy (2012) tied voice to identity and suggests that the choices of voice that writers make in their writing are decisions of the writer’s identities. Morita (2004) provided a more expanded view on voice by incorporating audience as co-constructers of one’s voice and identity in writing. Morita (2004) stated that voice can be seen as an ascribed identity, projected by readers through the writer’s choices. These voice choices can also be telltales of previous social and historical practices that molded the writer’s identity (Rubin, 1995; Moore, 2002).

The link between identity and voice can also be best described as follows: voice is a process through which “social identities are represented, performed, transformed, evaluated, and contested” (Keane, 1999, p. 271). Moreover, Keane points out that “voices not only construct identities but also play them off against one another” (p. 272). That is, every writer has rhetorically, linguistically, ideologically, and socially available repertoires of representing themselves that coalesce into their voices.

So, while I perceive voice as a sociopolitical site of struggle where writers discursively represent their ideologies through alignment and resistance, thus ideologically fashioning and negotiating agentive identities, I refer to writer’s identities as aspects that are related to the “author’s name, gender, race, nationality, linguistic background, perceived personality, or even
life story” (Tardy, 2012, p.68). That is, I conceptualize identity as an overarching umbrella and analytical tool in education and the humanities, which is broader than voice in writing.

**The interplay of Voice, Identity, and Institutional Practices**

Since I am drawing on critical language studies—specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)—which also are influenced by poststructuralists and postmodernists ideas, these schools of thought contend that voice is in a state of flux, relational, and constructed through power dynamics. However, voice, as Canagarajah (2004) asserted, can be perceived as the manifestation of one’s agency through the use of language. This voice, which is rhetorically and socially constructed, has to be negotiated in relation to our historically defined identity, relevant institutional practices, and ideological subjectivities. Importantly, these macro, extra-linguistic elements—identity, institutional practices, and ideological subjectivities—can affect our choices and voice in the text and can be imposed on us or ascribed to us (Canagarajah, 2004).

Nevertheless, the conflict between finding one's voice and identity and their relationship with the larger institutional practices is explained by Foucault (1972). He explained that there is always a conflict between instinct and institutions: the macro-social, institutional practices can shape our selfhood, which in turn might affect and mold our identities and voices. These institutional practices can either suppress or encourage certain types of voices and discourses. However, as Canagarajah stated (2004), discourses and institutional practices are not deterministic; we can always resist, reconfigure, or negotiate dominant discourses in the text. This can be done through creative, constructive processes that are relevant to the established discourse. To provide a visual understanding of the interplay of voice, identity, and Saudi institutional practices, I have created Figure 1. It explains how the institutional practices can shape the writer’s identity, thus contributing to their voices and choices in the text.
Figure 1: The interplay of Voice, Identity, and Institutional Practices

In Figure 1 voice, identity, and institutional practices can interactively and dialectically affect each other. The discursive practices of the writer’s voice are influenced by his/her identity, which can be inspired or designated by institutional practices. In other words, institutional practices can perpetrate unequal structures that either value certain voices/identities or devalue others (hooks, 1994). A writer might be a product of a certain macro system that shapes his/her realities through institutional practices such as the banking educational model and the restricted political participations.

Therefore, in this project, the role of institutional practices is key for us to understand sociopolitical and educational institutional factors that have played a role in how Saudi students express themselves. These expressions of voices are best understood through "the ecology of communities, in which there is frequently inequitable access to social, educational, economic, and political power" (Norton, 2010, p. 2). Also, Simon and Dippo (1986) emphasized that the production of knowledge cannot be understood apart from personal histories and larger institutional contexts. Understanding the influence of institutional practices can aid me to capture ways in which language practices and ideologies are structured and situated within a particular...
social site and how institutional relations of power can offer different channels where Saudi L2 writers can express their voices. Sociopolitical and educational institutional practices can be ecological variables that may influence Saudi students’ discourses and their voice choices. So, I think that understanding the institutional practices of Saudi society can help me understand how Saudi students express their voices and identities in the United States.

For instance, in Saudi Arabia, the political system takes place in the context of an absolute monarchy, where the king is both the head of the state and the head of the government. Also, public decisions are, to a large extent, made on the basis of consultation among the senior princes of the royal family and the religious establishment. Since I am trying to understand the possible connection between macro and micro voice-related issues, voting, to a great degree, can affect individuals’ voice ideologies in a society. In Saudi Arabia, voting mostly does not exist. The appointment of a new leader is a decision of the king. As a matter of fact, I have never voted in Saudi Arabia because such a practice is virtually absent, which in turn might have affected my voice in my initial stages of L2 writing without this practice of agency. Even though recently the government has launched a new municipal voting system where citizen can vote for a municipal leader, this practice is an illusion of voice. I have observed that the authorities always make the final decision and so not many individuals care enough to vote.

The absence of a voting culture is only a case in point—a drop in the ocean of other voice-muting institutional practices that a “rentier system” breeds. Saudi Arabia is reliant economically and politically on a rentier system, whereby the government sells oil and feeds the masses. The masses wait for their morsels as they are held in the hand of the government—the hand that controls resources of power. Without contributing much to these resources through—for instance—taxation, the layperson develops almost no sense of entitlement for voting or for
any other macro sociopolitical voicing practices. These large-scale voice ideologies seep and run deep into other venues of life—including students’ voice in writing.

Furthermore, socially, Saudi society is seen as a collective culture. Social practices, sometimes, encourage students to maintain harmony with each other and to conform to the collective norms. This can indeed affect how these populations challenge the authorial voice and bring students’ voices and identities into the text. Moreover, the educational system can be authoritative. In my experience, the teacher’s authority is unquestionable, and the student often has no voice or right to voice any opposing concerns (Barnawi, 2011). In other words, the scenario goes like this: teachers are told to place heavy emphasis on rote learning and lessons are very repetitive. Passive leaning is possibly the backbone to the Saudi educational system, which results in having student who are dependent on objects of authority (Prokop, 2003).

These practices (whether political, social, or educational) can undoubtedly construct Saudi students’ identities and affect their visibility when they express themselves (i.e., voice). That is, Saudi students, for instance, might experience challenges to express their voices due to the institutional practices that promote hierarchy and an absence of voice. We should, nonetheless, keep in mind possible factors, such as class, that can render some of these students immune to the voice-muting institutional practices. My upcoming analysis in this project will either confirm the abovementioned assumptions of these students’ background practice as merely voice muting or show that they can possibly be voice encouraging as well. It will also illuminate connections and disconnections between these practices and my participants’ identities and voice choices in the U.S. context.
Voice and Linguistic Diversity

Ortega (2009) proposed that the study of identity and language socialization is one of the most thought-provoking research areas in the field of applied linguistics. Moreover, Schmitt (2010) stated that identity, especially in applied linguistics, is an important social factor because linguistic patterns signal not only social and individual identity but also people’s awareness of their personal identities in language use.

In the United States, the heterogeneous population of students throughout the twentieth century was manifested in the college classroom with the entrance of students from multi-geographical and racial groups, including non-traditional students as well as first-generation college students (Young, 2015). In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication issued a policy statement in response to the linguistic diversity of the U.S composition classroom. This statement advocates the appreciation of students’ diverse linguistic resources and, thus, identities. The statement, titled Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL), “affirm[s] the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style” (CCCC, 1974, p. 2). As a result, a number of compositionists started to explore the possibilities of different identities students might bring to the classroom. Scholars such as Smitherman (1977), Heath (1983), Shaughnessy (1977), and Bartholomae (1985) shed light on language use from a social lens, which may help ease students into formal educational settings (Young, 2015).

While the CCCC’s SRTOL statement covered native English varieties, Horner et al. (2011) go beyond that to include non-native users of English. They called for a new translingual approach in teaching writing to “develop alternatives to conventional treatments of language difference” (p. 304). Horner et al.’s article “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a
Translingual Approach” reinforced that viewing language differences should help teachers to “honor and build on, rather than attempt to eradicate, those realities of difference” (p.313). A translingual pedagogy approach allows teachers to discover the heterogeneous, fluid, and negotiable identities within a writer. The section below explains how writing as a process can be seen as a “voicing” avenue for writers, especially L2 writers.

**Contextualizing Writing as a Voicing Process**

Undoubtedly, one’s writing is a portal to a treasury of one’s most complicated thoughts. Writing is an utterly invaluable tool, and it is essential for the understanding of human individual thoughts as well as social phenomena. The invention of writing reflects a transformation of human consciousness by addressing fictionalized or non-present audience and responding to social exigencies with non-ephemeral discourse. From this perspective, it is important to address how teaching writing is perceived and what is the common practice that many compositionists follow. Murray (1978), in “Write before Writing” addressed writing as “the process of using language to discover meaning” (p.124). He emphasized that one should understand the journey of discovery (i.e., the ongoing process of prevision, vision, and revision that a writer experiences to produce a meaningful piece of writing). Many other writers seem to concur with such a perspective. Elie Wiesel said, “I write in order to understand as much as I want to be understood” (as cited in Cooper & Odell, 1978, p. 90). The poet Toney Connor articulated that one should “invent a jungle and then explore it” (as cited in Cooper & Odell,1978, p. 88). These statements should be the mantra of writing teachers as well as researchers of writing and identity, and they should be translated into a practical philosophy in the classroom and in research. To understand how writing should be researched as a process, the following paragraphs briefly explain the concept of process-based pedagogy in teaching and researching writing.
Unlike English literary studies, which historically came to dominate over and replace classics in the university by the end of the 19th century in the United States and England, the opposite happened in the field of rhetoric and composition (RC). By the middle of the 20th century in the US, scholars in English departments who were interested in classical rhetoric (the Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, etc.) decided to bring classical rhetoric back to the writing classroom (the practice in imitating the writing of others) (Lauer, 2006). In the 1970s and 80s, with open admissions, more students went to college, many of whom were perceived to need help with their writing skills (Shaughnessy, 1977; Bartholomae, 1985). In response to this demand, more scholars started researching theories and pedagogies of composition courses and how writers write. The growing literature, in turn, kept changing how writing was taught in the classroom.

Unlike the newer process-oriented philosophy of teaching writing, the teaching of writing in the past was focused on correct grammar and style, and little attention was given to audience, invention, and feedback; depending on how it was taught, in other words, the product-based approach was a pedagogy that hijacked allowed less agency to students’ voices and perpetuated the ideology of “feel nothing, say nothing language” (Macrorie, 1970, p. 18). However, in the late 60s and early 70s, the process approach, which encouraged student’s voice, expression of one’s thoughts, and creativity and denies the heavy emphasis on the ideology of correctness, was a reaction to the product approach (Crowley, 1977; Stewart 1972; Murray, 1970; Emig, 1971; Zamel, 1976).

Starting in the mid-1960s, many rhetoric and composition researchers had a distaste for the current traditional method of teaching writing since it dealt with writing as a product that is merely assigned, submitted, and evaluated and does not give much focus to assisting learners to start, explore thoughts, revise, write drafts, get feedback, and bring their voices to the text
(Lauer, 2006). These scholars include Murray (1972) and his “Teaching Writing as a Process Not Product” and Hairston (1982) in her breakthrough article “The Winds of Change,” which echoes Murray’s philosophy of teaching writing as a process and aims to promote comfortability, free speech, individuality, and voice in academia. Hairston’s article supports Murray’s perspective in many other ways, too: she called for a transformative paradigm that shifts the field from a product-based pedagogy to a process-based one. She also contended that the theory of writing then was resisted by many writing teachers, and that the product-based pedagogy surely “will dissipate when its advocates can demonstrate that it will solve problems that the traditional paradigm could not solve” (p.77). She also believed “that composition theorists and writing teachers can learn from Thomas Kuhn if they see his theory of scientific revolutions as an analogy that can illuminate developments that are taking place in our profession” (p.77). Both scholars, Murray and Hairston, perceived writing as a way for self-discovery, through which students can grow. Their ideas also resonate well with each other’s; they almost agree, as Hairston (1982) stated, that “writers write, plan, revise, anticipate, and review throughout the writing process, moving back and forth among the different operations involved in writing without any apparent plan” (p.85).

So instead of the product-based approach to writing, many researchers have started to prefer thinking of writing as a composing process that starts by perception and entails, for example, phases of prewriting and planning (lists, outlines, etc.). Then, more researchers became interested in issues like investigating writing as an inquiry, analyzing the writing process of novice writers, and establishing social or cognitive theories of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Moreover, in the last decades of the 20th century, composition scholars have been giving more attention to particular areas of writing, such as invention and audience, modes of discourse and
genres, style, voice, ethos, logos, pathos responding to, revising, evaluating texts, literacy
development, writing dysfunction, and writing diversity (Lauer, 2006). Hence, new theories
suggested that students need to find their authentic voice, which is the self-actualization or
personality that is not only shown by the writer’s choices of vocabulary, structure, etc. but also
can be developed through experimenting with writing processes involved in journals, meditation,
and analogy, just to name a few.

**Why Saudi Arabian Writers?**

According to Redden (2016) in *Inside Higher Education*, the number of Saudi students
enrolling in US universities has dramatically increased. In specific, *Inside Higher Education*
announced that the number of Saudi students in the United States has increased by 11%, bringing
Saudi students to nearly 70,000. The journal also reported that this population represents the
fourth largest group of international students by country of origin in U.S. universities, after
students from China, India and South Korea. In 2015, the Institute of International Education
reported that the Saudi government is sending tens of thousands of Saudi students to the United
States to develop a globally competent workforce. This exchange is part of a promising program
that King Abdullah launched in 2005 and that is scheduled to continue through 2020.

One of the most significant and current discussions of the Saudi student population in the
U.S. is that an analysis of these students’ identities and voices raises questions of othering,
marginalization, and empowerment, which—in turn—might affect their position, voice, and
literacy development, including writing. For example, Giroir (2014) stated in his narrative
inquiry that post-9/11 discourses shaped how Saudi students saw themselves in relation to the
larger L2 community. They had expectations of being treated unequally and positioned as writers
on the basis of their religious and ethnic identity.
A major problem among Saudi students is that when they arrive to the U.S., they are asked to adapt to common Western writing practices, which can include objectivity, challenging the author, and deconstructing social myths. These practices, which can allow them to transform their perspective towards life, can pose some challenges since these critical skills are not the types of literacy practices taught in their L1 home education (Barnawi, 2011). Moreover, influenced by a teacher-dominant environment in Saudi Arabia, their perception of writing can simply mean how to produce a text that is error-free. Another important factor is the absence of English composition as well as L1 composition practices in high school curriculums in Saudi Arabia, which makes it even more challenging for Saudi L2 writers to master L2 writing and in a western context.

Additionally, Saudi students in the U.S are an underrepresented group in identity research (Song, 2016). Unfortunately, most of the previous studies that have been conducted on Saudi writing learners overlook how these populations can see themselves as writers, and how the different practices that are not promoted back home can help crystalize their possible L2 identities and voices. Instead, many of these studies analyze students’ texts from a traditional lens of contrastive rhetoric that “tends to ignore the multiple factors that contribute to the process and product of L2 writing, such as L1 writing expertise, developmental aspects of L2 proficiency, and individual writers’ agency reflected in their intentions and preferences” (Kubota & Lehner 2004, p.12). Indeed, most of the research conducted on the nature of Saudi writers’ L2 writing mainly results in “Othering” their linguistic practices, labeling them as substandard writers of English, and analyzing their texts as product, rather than vessels for ever-growing identities (e.g., Wege, 2013; Barry 2014).
Writing in Saudi Arabia

To understand any phenomenon, it is significant to examine its ontogenesis, for we “need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.64). In this sense, situating the Saudi context of teaching English and writing can be a cornerstone for voice analysis. In Saudi Arabia, educators do not give much attention to composition classes. For example, in high school, only one hour a week is allocated for writing, and no other writing assignments are required to pass any other classes. Therefore, the writing-intensive curricula in the U.S. might be quite a shock for many of these students.

The perception of English writing in the Saudi context is focused on vocabulary and grammar rules. Students in English classes are encouraged to parrot vocabulary and mimic grammar rules in order to supposedly be effective users of English (Al-Semari, 1993; Aljamhoor, 1996; Jouhari, 1996). For instance, Liebman-Kleine (1986) investigated forty-six essays by Arabic-speakers in their L2 to better understand their writing style and ability. She concluded that Arabs were taught a great deal of grammar but few process techniques, such as planning, organization, and support. This can create a challenge when they study abroad.

Moreover, Saudi students are influenced by the rhetorical styles of the Arabic language, their mother tongue. The Arabic rhetorical style is strongly influenced by a poetic oral tradition (Abu Rass, 2011). Historically, oral poetry on the Arabian Peninsula has played a major role in Arab culture, and is still alive today. The rhetorical style in Arabic writing tends to be repetitive, narrative-oriented and flowery, for oral poetry was the primary means of telling stories in the tribal nomadic societies of the Middle East (Borrowman, 2008, p. 348). However, in Western societies, to a certain degree, the culture of writing tends to be entrenched in early stages of
literacy development, which can affect the rhetorical style of western writers who have been trained to follow certain writing conventions.

In the same vein, the nature of communal relationships typically impacts Saudi students’ writing style. In societies with collective values (e.g., Saudi society), communication tends to be more emotionally interdependent and less direct (Fox, 1994), whereas in individualistic societies (e.g., American society) written communication tends to be more direct and emotionally independent (Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988). These norms of communication influence the writers’ voice, identity, and rhetorical style. According to Al-Zahrani and Kaplowitz (1993), “Western cultures assign priority to the goals and identity of the individual, whereas non-Western cultures place a higher value on loyalty to the ... ethnic ... group” (p. 224). Since Saudi ESL students generally belong to collectivist cultures, the value of collective voice might seem obvious in their writing styles as the desire to maintain social harmony influences how students write, learn, and think (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). As a result of these students’ tendency to hold on to the tradition of the group, some scholars such as Cummings (1991) suggested that writing teachers might look at Arab student writers as knowledge tellers, who report information, but not as knowledge transformers, who synthesize information into personal and critically meaningful concepts. This is because they “perceive writing in the traditional style where it abides by rules, and a certain structure” (Shukri, 2014, p.191).

However, some scholars look askance at such comparisons between the rhetorical style of Saudi students and the Western convention (e.g., Wege, 2013; Barry 2014). In his pivotal, yet criticized, work, Kaplan claimed that Arabic, as a Semitic language, “is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative” (1966, 6) as opposed to English’s linear style. Although Kaplan’s work was only on structural
elements of the text, some writing scholars such as Matsuda (1997) called for a more multidimensional view of rhetoric, among which are the “textual features [that reflect] the personal background of the ESL writer” (Matsuda, 1997, 51). Similarly, Kubota and Lehner (2004) challenged essentialism. They problematized the differences of rhetoric in writing, for such established differences have “perpetuated static binaries between English and other languages” and promoted viewing students “as culturally lacking” (p. 7). This stance I think might blind future researchers and teachers of writing. They further pointed out that cultural differences in writing should be critical and should “reject ahistorical, fixed, and simplistic definitions of cultural rhetoric, calling attention to multiple factors that may affect the structures and interpretations of L2 texts or texts in various languages” (p.12).

**Empirical Studies on Voice**

What we know about voice of the writer is largely based on empirical studies. Many researchers who investigated voice and socialization have employed varieties of theoretical frameworks and methodologies to unpack how voice is constructed, negotiated, perceived, and projected in the text. Indubitably, a large body of literature indicates that some researchers deem the output of voice construction in a text/or a society as a development of writer’s linguistic, cultural and social capital. Insights from other theoretical and methodological approaches, such as post-structural theory, feminist theory, sociocultural theory, narrative inquiry, and critical discourse analysis, have all influenced voice related issues and addressed issues of identity construction and negotiation pertinent to writing and writers (Young, 2014; Vandenberg, 1996).

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2 It refers to how ESL instructors may be placing a value judgment on students based on their lack of knowledge of the rhetorical constraints of English.
In this section, I frame this literature review section into five thematic categories: social visibility, language ideology, universality of voice, intercultural influence on voice, and voice through peer-reviewed journals. These studies vary in their analysis as each researcher analyzed voice by conducting qualitative case studies, ethnographies, narratives, and corpus- and text-based analysis. Although I do not claim to cover the full gamut of empirical studies on voice, I do consider a range of studies that may be considered representative of the main methods that have been used to address questions pertinent to the relationship between voice and macro institutional practices. A caveat, however, is due here: the following studies undoubtedly overlap in their scope for they deal with the same topic, and each tends to give more attention to certain relevant concepts, frameworks, contexts, and/or populations.

**Voice as a Means to Social Visibility**

Drawing on a feminist epistemology, Annas (1985) in *Style as Politics* underlined women students’ discovery of their own voices and investigation of “the stylistic strategies that various women essayists have used to deal with the problem of writing as women in an authentic female voice in a context that often does not value what women have to say …” (362). Such an attitude will help students, regardless of their gender, to see why certain students, genders, or populations employ others’ discourses as in the case of Kathy in “Composing as a Woman,” who realized “other voices and external truths were more powerful than her own” (Flynn, 1988). In the same vein, Moore (2002) observed how voice in her composition and gender class could empower her female students and how amazingly they connected voice to their real life. Carrie, one of her participants, stated that “the voice I describe [in the paper] is the one that enables me to be confident in my writing and successful in life” (p.17). Carrie also confirmed how classroom discourse about voice has empowered her outside of the classroom. In the bar where she works,
she explains how some comments from males made her take the initiative and defend her position. As she explained, “Everyone calls me cutie or sweetie. And I tell them, my name's not sweetie; it's Carrie. I tell them all the time. And so now I've started calling them sweetie back!” (p.17). These instances suggest that teachers as well as students, especially L2 writers, need to pay attention to voice-related issues that make students feel authoritative, empowered, and integrated in the discourse community (Moore, 2002).

Unequivocally, negotiating and constructing one’s voice in the text can be a messy process—a recursive path. Building her study on a poststructuralist perspective that views language as site of social and political struggle, Fernsten (2008) utilized critical discourse analysis to understand the identity construction of her Korean student, Mandy, and the macro social and political world that molded her perceptions. The study explicated Mandy’s multiple subjectivities and showcased how voice shifted from one situation to another to negotiate the complexity of her identity. Fernsten examined Mandy’s journal entries and conferences with her throughout the semester. The study’s findings revealed that Mandy was struggling to express her ideas and voice in writing. These fears were due to the teacher’s authority and language ideologies toward “good writing.” Mandy also felt that teachers have killed, with their power, her creativity in expressing her voice by making her align to the dominant discourse.

It is clear that Mandy was living a conflict between what she believed and what her teachers wanted her to be. In other words, Mandy was resisting having her differences pigeonholed as “inferior” or “incorrect.” She stated that “It’s just a language difference. …You know it is nothing more than that” (p. 50). This example shows how struggle over “correct” discourse can reveal ideological power-relation dynamics, which can play a vital role in the classroom. The chance to express one’s voice is enabled and constrained by the social,
ideological, and political factors through which access can be provided or denied to certain groups (Ivanič, 1998).

**Language Ideology and Voice**

Building on a previous large qualitative study, Olinger (2016) investigated how eight groups of relatively advanced writers (for example, advisers and advisees) from different fields perceive and practice disciplinary identities and voices. The researcher collected her data through literacy–history, text-based corpora, and interviews with the participants. One of her participants is Debojoy Chanda, a 30-year-old PhD student in English at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC). Olinger examines the written interactions between Debojoy and several people in his committee of study. Debojoy confessed that writing literacy was rarely practiced in his home country—there were only quizzes and end-of-the-year essay exams.

Olinger (2016) stated that Debojoy’s identity as a writer is highly influenced by the “British colonial” language ideology that developed over 20 years in India. Debojoy describes his pre-US writing style during an interview as “bombastic,” “stiff,” “stilted,” “flowery,” “ornamental,” and “archaic” (p. 128). Debojoy also asserted that his writing style and identity as a writer are affected by the so-called “Queen’s English” even though no one speaks it in India. He believed “the more bombastic you were able to make your English [in writing], the more you were able to use highfalutin words in a manner that makes it difficult for the reader to understand, the better it is” (p.128).

This writing style, as Olinger contended, has also encouraged him to employ wordiness and superficial writing that are aimed only to please his professor, but not to express his true writerly voice/identity. He clearly stated that “the more material you write, somehow, the better it’ll be considered, it’ll just show you have learned more,” and, “by extension, the more wordy
you are, the better your paper will be” (p. 129). Olinger described that these typified meanings of Debojoy’s discourse are influenced by “powerful language ideologies” about good writing and “about the very existence of Queen’s English” (p.129). His identity was manifested clearly in his writing and narrative as Debojoy utilized a plethora of signs that reflect his writerly persona, which include “the passive voice, wordiness, [and] the overuse of quotations” (p.129).

Moreover, Debojoy intentionally avoided the usage of “I” in order to keep his self-ego at bay and, thus, seemed more objective in his writing. His professor in the US, as a co-constructor of his identity, has also noticed this phenomenon and encouraged him to bring his voice into the text so that his agency would prevail as a scholar.

This resonates with Hyland (2002) in his corpus-based study titled “Disciplinary Identities: Individuality and Community in Academic Discourse.” He analyzed a corpora of 64 cross-disciplinary project reports (PR) written by final-year Hong Kong undergraduates. Aiming to find how student project self-reference in the text and how these choices can explain different communicative practices, Hyland focused on the frequency of first-person expressions as manifestations of students’ discoursal identities. Hyland confirmed also that the purpose of these final reports is to help the students enliven their academic voices; “apply theories and methods learned in their courses”; and “demonstrate the ability to effectively review literature, conduct research, analyse results and present findings” (p. 1096).

Hyland found that L2 students from Hong Kong did not feel comfortable using first-person pronouns because they were taught through their L1 literacy practices to avoid the authorial “I” or any self-projection in the text. The lack of voice and identity manifestation in student’s writing, as Hyland argued, springs from the social and educational practices that restrict students from projecting their authorial self in the text and downplay their role as writers
and researchers in the field. Results showed that experienced writers, unlike students, were able to use first-person expressions four times to explicitly utilize rhetorical options and ensure personal presence, thus showcasing their authority in the field. In a similar study, Shen (1989) explained how long it took him to manifest his “self” in writing. His previous cultural and institutional practices affected his authorial voice in writing. For Shen, writing with voice meant reconstructing his identity because—in his home country, China—it is hard to write using the pronoun “I.” Instead, he used “we” as an effect of the collectivist norms.

Indeed, voice can also be traced in the form of narrative. The use of “I” is not only a subject or a pronoun but—most importantly—an act of constructing a self in a text (Journet, Boehm, & Britt 2011). In the field of composition, scholars such as Gilyard (1991), LeCourt (2004), and Villanueva (1993) have utilized “I” to “interrogate the relationship between identity and language by unpacking the historical, social, and language and literacy contexts that have shaped their lives and informed their own theorizing of writing” (Young, 2015, 90).

These examples offer evidence of how writerly voice/identity is dynamic and co-constructed by audience, textual choices, and institutional practices. Many of the students in these studies ultimately were able to change their L2 writing identity somehow by accepting the comments given by their audience or by interacting with other Western texts in academia. These experiences that they witnessed have constrained and/or nurtured their self-conception as writers, which proves that writerly voice/identity can form, sediment, and evolve over time.

**Intercultural Influence on Voice**

Although she did not explicitly address how students construct and negotiate their L2 identities/voices in the writing classroom, Helen Fox (1994) presented in her ethnographic narrative book *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing* the struggles of
writing, identities, voices and participation experienced by international students, especially non-Western ones, when studying at US universities. These students, as Fox argues, might have been intelligent, hard-working, and successful writers back home, but they—unfortunately—may very well fail to meet the expectations of their American professors because both cultural, institutional, and linguistic differences can greatly affect how they interact in many ways. The purpose of Fox’s study is to explore how international, especially Eastern, students “express themselves through writing” and how “instructors often misunderstand them” (p. xiii). In order to do this, Fox interviewed seven professors as well as 16 graduate students from various countries. She also uses teaching journals as a reflective tool for understanding the dynamics of student identities in writing. The results of this study showed a great frustration, different composing styles, rhetorical strategies, and unique writerly voices. This result is not a shock, as Fox tends to draw on a rhetoric of misunderstanding and difference, as quoted above, rather than on how L2 writers might actively find unique channels to express their identities regardless. Fox’s labels, in my opinion, are similar to the “colonial dichotomies between the colonizer and the colonized” (Pennycook, 1998). Such rhetoric of differences might inevitably perpetuate the Othering of students L2 writing. Instead, taking on a critical approach can help researchers in L2 writing, such as Fox, as well as students to see how L2 writing students subjectivities are formed and transformed across time and space though their writing practices.

For instance, Fox finds that the indirection in students’ writing sometimes stems from the students’ L1 culture and rhetorical practices. According to her, these writing styles differ from the US writing style, which should be “short, logical and to the point” and “whose tone should be polite and reasonable rather than strident or badgering” (p. 12). In other words, she contends that L2 students employ different strategies in their writing in order to avoid directness. For instance,
Shu Ying, who tries to avoid any directness in his writing in order to preclude any potential insult to the audience, omits some elements from the text or adds too much information or stories that seem irrelevant to the assignment. Also, Fox explicates how international students, especially those who come from a collective culture, passively stick to collective voices in order to show harmony and unity.

**Universality of Voice**

Some scholars in the field of composition don’t believe that voice exists in collectivist cultures. Instead, they believe that voice is linked to the individualist ideology that can only be found in an individualistic society. In his article “Voice in Japanese Written Discourse,” Matsuda (2001) studies voice through discursive features. That is, he examines aspects of writing that are pertinent to the use of language itself. Such features may include orthography, diction, grammatical choices, and so on. This focus should be distinguished from other non-discursive approaches to examining voice, which he implements later on in his research to dissect the concept of voice (e.g., Matsuda & Tardy, 2007).

Through this discourse-oriented point of view, Matsuda tries to prove a more panoramic message about the relationship between voice and culture. Taking Japanese students as a sample of non-Western writers, Matsuda investigates the concept of the universality of voice—the fact that it is equally shared by Western and non-Western writers. The goal of this paper was to examine how Japanese students can create their voice through an online diary. Problematizing the notion of voice, Matsuda believes that this notion is not necessarily tied to the ideology of Western discourse. As a response to Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999), he states that voice is not foreign to students who belong to collectivist, high-context cultures. The voices of such students are constructed in written discourse through language-specific features and discursive practices,
which are hard to transfer to English. For instance, Nanae (one of the participants in the study) was able to construct her Japanese written voice via independent choices and decisions related to Japanese orthographical systems. Hence, when Japanese or L2 students experience difficulties constructing their voice in English, it is not necessarily due to their language deficiency or their incompatible cultural orientation; rather, it could be because of their lack of familiarity with the strategies available in English.

Through writing examples from some Japanese students, Matsuda points at the more general picture: different rhetorical as well as linguistic features used in the first language of L2 writers to express voice can make the notion of voice look different from the mainstream American perspective. Therefore, voice is neither unique to a certain culture nor local to a particular speech community. Rather, it does exist in every language and is manifested through different discursive features. In a different article, “Coming to Voice,” Matsuda (2001) explicates also his own experience as he has experienced difficulties bringing his voice into academia. For him, voice was a process to negotiate his socially and discursively constructed identity with the expectation of the readers of his writing. The universality of voice is also founded in Hirvela and Belcher’s (2001) study. Hirvela and Belcher believed that plurality of voice exists in all cultures. But, these voice-related issues are influenced by students’ L1 background practices. Thus, they might be problematic as voice often conflicts with the existing voice that the writers have in their L1.

**Voice in Peer-Reviewed Academic Journals**

As stated above, voice can be socially constructed in a sense, as readers can ascribe a certain identity to the writer (ethnicity, gender, profession, and the like). Matsuda and Tardy (2007) argue that different voices can be observed in high-stakes genres of writing too, such as
research articles. The authors start by pointing out that voice and identity have been treated in some literature as irrelevant to academic writing. Although the authors used the terms identity and voice interchangeably in this article, they draw a line between the two terms. They believe that identity is only a part of voice; voice, on the other hand, is what we can more generally capture upon reading a text: it is the overarching essence of written discourse. Moreover, this article builds homogeneously on Matsuda’s definition of voice: “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” (2001, p. 41).

The purpose of this study—Matsuda and Tardy ones—was to examine how readers can ascribe a certain identity to the writer. That is, the study seeks to disentangle how peer reviewers in a simulated blind manuscript review can create an image about the author’s identity for an academic journal—a genre of high-stake writing—in the field of rhetoric and composition. The methods used in this study include the analysis of the written reviews as well as two interviews (post-task interviews and confirmatory interviews) with the reviewers (one of whom is an experienced reviewer, and the other is a novice one) at different times. The results of this analysis indicate that “the reviewers’ constructions of the authors’ voices are related to their stance and the socially constructed view toward the authors. The findings suggest that voice does play a role in academic writing and that there is a need for further research into the issue of identity construction from the perspectives of both writers and readers” (p. 235).

Both reviewers in the above study reported that repetitions and awkward phrasing were clear signs of inexperienced writers and newcomers to the discipline. They also agreed that they could identify extra-linguistic elements that indicate “progressive,” “white,” and “male” writers. Therefore, we can come to the conclusion that by mimicking these socially-constructed elements,
Conclusion

In this chapter I discuss the widespread and diverse use of voice (e.g., sometimes as synonymous with identity) and how voice can reflect the forceful expressions of individuals (Moore, 2002) or be the intangible rhetorical quality that conveys the author's uniqueness (Olinger, 2016). Through previewing a number of empirical studies, I lay out different scenarios of looking at how writers construct and negotiate their writerly voices via language use. Particularly, the primary aim of this paper is to contextualize the interaction of voice, identity and the institutional practices. The results of the hallmark articles previewed here highlight the complexity of voice as it interacts with the dynamics of identity construction, performance, and negotiation.

Researchers in the field need to understand that individuals have many different and dynamic identities; visiting how the concept of voice and language use is constructed/negotiated suggests a need for more balanced, in-depth research in the area since the nature of voice changes constantly; voice can be dialogical, something that emerges between the writer and the reader and something some scholars argue is unique to the discourse of a discipline. Moreover, findings of the literature above suggest that students would shape, construct, and negotiate their voices without subversion if teachers and professors are cognizant of and sensitive to students’ cultural backgrounds and are able to value and deal effectively with socio-cultural, rhetorical, and linguistic differences of their students (e.g., Olinger, 2016; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007).

As a Saudi researcher, I argue that little work has been done to study Saudi L2 writers’ voices, for most of the empirical studies approach their writing as deficit (Panos & Ružić, 1983;
Fakhri, 1994). For instance, such studies are rife with references to phenomena in student writings as negative transfers and linguistic errors. Others are blinded from discourse by the minutia of mechanism and pigeonhole their voices as those of “Others” (Wege, 2013; Barry, 2014). Instead, future studies should move from a traditional epistemology of differences to challenge deficit, assimilationist, and essentialist orientations in looking at Saudi L2 discourses. In this pursuit, critical inquiry into student minorities’ texts gives educators more insight about linguistic diversity and empowers L2 writers to develop their voices “as [they] resist assimilation and appropriate the rhetoric of power to enable oppositional voices” (Kubota & Lehner, 2004,15). Researchers in the field should deconstruct the taken-for-granted compartment of L2 and L1 discourse and investigate how L2 writing practices reflect complex power relationships in our world today. Matsuda (2015) heralds an upcoming point of departure: “The development of [voice], then, may also involve … an awareness of how the self is situated in complex relations of power” (p. 154).

Considering the gap in the aforementioned studies, I think that it is indispensable to expand this research on Saudi voice in L2 writing. In fact, understanding how Saudis bring their voices can help us explore how L2 Saudi writers express their ideologies and views, which is not necessarily located in or limited by local practices, but ones that can rather forward our understanding about how individuals write and why they write through an awareness or even unawareness of who they are, want to be, and are perceived to be.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the rationale for and description of the research methodology for this study, including the research setting, the participants, the data collection methods and the data analysis procedure. A qualitative research methodology, namely a case study, was applied to aid in the understanding of Saudi L2 graduate writers’ voices, the development of their writerly identities, and how their voice and sense of identity intersect with Saudi and United States institutional practices (whether sociopolitical or educational). The purpose of this study, then, is to examine how Saudi L2 graduate students construct their writerly voices in response to the Western convention of writing across different US universities. More specifically, the study explored how/whether Saudi L2 graduate students bring their voices into the text, utilize unique rhetorical styles in their written discourse, and take a critical authoritative stance or conform to the dominant ideologies in their papers. The analysis of this study added to the potential to provide insights into how Saudi L2 writers identify themselves in relation to others and how institutional policies contribute to the formation of their identities and voices. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do Saudi writers voice themselves in U.S. L2 academic writing? And to what extent (if any) do these voices interplay with writers’ identities?

2. What are L2 Saudi writers’ perception/reflection of institutional practices, with a focus on those with educational and sociopolitical impacts or overtones, that may shape their writerly voice or expressions?

The following sections explain several methodological steps relevant to how I conducted this study, particularly the rationale for the methodology, the theoretical framework, the research methods, and trustworthiness.
The Methodology and Its Rationale

This qualitative study sets out to explore L2 Saudi writers’ voices and identities in relation to sociopolitical and educational factors. For an in-depth analysis, I employed several qualitative case studies. To collect as much in-depth data as possible, I focused on micro and macro analyses of the linguistic, social, and rhetorical forms used by each writer.

Unequivocally, qualitative research is a unique research form that can help researchers understand how different people make meaning of experiences in their natural settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). In the same vein, Creswell (2009) pointed out that a qualitative study involves an inquiry process aimed at understanding a social or human problem based on building a holistic picture and reporting detailed views of information. Furthermore, researchers in the humanities and social sciences, especially in composition and rhetoric studies, argued that a qualitative empirical study can provide the researcher with rich information and data, for the qualitative analysis can provide the inquirer with the capacity to gain in-depth and interpretive understandings of the composing process that L2 writers employ in different contexts for different genres (Creswell, 2007).

In fact, qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena and is based essentially on a constructivist/critical perspective and other paradigms (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Relying heavily on context where the phenomena is taking place, qualitative research is pragmatic and highly focused on how to interpret and explain people's experience in a certain context where the data is complex and emerging from different resources (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, p. 44). Qualitative inquiry seeks also to understand the “what” as a holistic picture and “tries to conceptualize the matter under the investigation as a whole by describing, communicating and explaining the ‘what’ knowledge” and why (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, p.
That is, in qualitative research, the researcher, as a primary medium of collecting data, is striving to understand and describe the meaning constructed by the participants. Since “there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time,” qualitative researchers are interested in comprehending what those interpretations and worldviews are in a particular context or at a particular time (Merriam, 2002, pp. 3-4). I harvested the benefits of the qualitative method through directly using quotes—interview and textual data—from participants and richly describing the context in which it happens. As opposed to sheer numbers and statistics, the emphasis on context in critical qualitative research was key to demonstrating interrelationships between subjects, socially constructed realities, and texts.

Therefore, Creswell’s definition of qualitative research best highlights its operationalization. He defined it as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (1994, pp.1-2). To add more texture to the conversation, I adopted Maanen’s (1983) definition of qualitative research as an umbrella term to cover an “array of interpretive techniques that can describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p. 520). Thus, qualitative research allowed me as a researcher to understand my participants’ experiences and their constructed meaning by looking at and analyzing their texts and their experiences in academic writing in both contexts: The United States and Saudi Arabia. These interpretive and analytical techniques can be practically translated into my study in the following ways:
1. I collected data through both interviews and the students’ texts. At the same time, I was reflexive: As a Saudi graduate student writer, myself, I tried to be aware in my analysis of what is influencing me internally and externally while looking at my relationship to the research topic and the participants.

2. I attempted to deeply and critically—inductively and deductively—describe why these students express their voices in certain situations/social events, and why they do not in some other contexts. Moreover, I considered how these writing practices are affected by their identities and by local institutional practices.

3. After that, I created concept maps and broader themes based on the collected data and the intersectionality that emerged as I analyzed them.

To this end, the tools I utilized in this empirical research guided me to delve into an array of factors that affect what, how, and why L2 Saudi writers opted to bring or subvert their voices, challenge or submit to the authorial voice, and construct or deconstruct their identities. In particular, I explored the challenges/opportunities that L2 Saudi writers encounter as they enter the context of American higher education, in which voice is considered central possibly because of the ideology of individualism.

**A Case Study Approach**

I chose to use the case study approach because I believe it is compatible with my research purpose as it can be a handy tool to “examine educational reality" (van Lier, 2005 p. 195). To preface the conversation about the case study approach and why it fits this project, it is important to first define what a case study approach. Stake (1995) defined qualitative case study as a “study of the particularity and complexity of a single [or multiple] case[s], coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Later, Merriam (2001) expanded this definition
and stated that the case study approach is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii).

More specifically, my motives for choosing a case study approach are as follows: First, the case study approach allowed me to focus, in detail, on how the participants function in the natural context of their classroom writing and their responses in the interviews. Second, the case study was most conducive to the exploration of specific details, so it vivified my understanding of how my participants viewed voice as not only an academic construct but also how larger factors (i.e., social, educational and political institutions) have affected and silenced their choices and voices. Also, the case study approach was open to including multiple participants, thus supplementing the robustness of the results (Yin, 2009); and the greater the variations across the cases, the more likely the interpretations would be compelling (Merriam, 2009).

By using the typologies of Stake (1994) and Yin (2009) respectively, my case study approach operationalized as “collective” and “exploratory”– collective as the “researcher may study several cases jointly to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Stake, 1994, p.237) and explorative as the questions addressed to the participants guided me to trace important patterns or propositions for further inquiry (Yin, 2009). Thus, I was able to provide a thorough inductive and deductive description of the setting, analyze data at multiple levels, sort out different themes and sub-themes, and compare them (Bloor & Wood 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Most importantly, this case study is also a critical one. Questions regarding who holds the power, maintain the elite ideologies were vital key points during my analysis. Also, how knowledge is distributed, negotiated, and constructed were critical, leading pathways to my
inquiry. In a critical qualitative case study, the researcher’s mission is to unpack what the participants believe, which may reinforce the status quo; a critical qualitative study also helped me investigate how a certain phenomenon takes place—not only in the context of education—but in the social and political realms. In general, critical qualitative research was key for me to understand whose agenda is being served and the nature of power and knowledge construction (Merriam, 2009). Indeed, the case study approach allowed me to use direct quotes from my participants and present a holistic image of the settings where the research project, interactions, and critical incidents take place (Patton, 2002); it made it possible for me to glean data from different individual experiences, thus attaining a somewhat holistic understanding of “real-life processes” (Yin, 2003a, p. 2).

**Research Methods**

This qualitative empirical study utilized different tools and methods to capture the multitudes of writers’ voices. To collect the data, I asked my participants to email me a copy of their recent class papers. I then interviewed the participants and asked them to reflect on their papers (the ones that they emailed me) they wrote in the United States. I also thematically analyzed these samples of their academic writing, such as their reflections and final course papers (see more details in Table 2) along with the interviews later. These pivotal sources of data helped me find answers to the aforementioned research questions. In the following sub-sections, I will discuss my study’s research setting, the participants, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures.

**Research Setting**

This study took place across several American universities. I recruited six L2 Saudi graduate students who are currently studying in the United States—five of them were doctoral
students and one was a master’s student. I first asked them to provide me with at least two samples of their academic writing for the textual analysis and potential interview questions on their writing. These samples included final academic papers, a literature review, critique papers, and critical reflections in which writers were asked to quote other authors to support their arguments or respond to a certain article or argument in class. I chose the academic setting because the pressures of conforming to a standardized convention (which might suppress or encourage the students’ voice expression) are greatest for L2 students in an academic setting.

As for the interview settings, I interviewed these participants through means convenient to them (e.g., mainly by phone calls or Skype). Since qualitative research is naturalistic in nature, the selection of a site at which participants feel comfortable was a critical decision (Erlandson et al., 1993). Being able to access the participants in an appropriate place provided me the opportunity to maintain contact with research participants and gain more in-depth insights about the data given by the participants (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, I carefully followed the procedure of protecting individuals’ rights; to protect their anonymity and their private stories, I emailed them a written consent form.³

The Participants

For this study, I obtained permission from UNM’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gain access to the target group, and I used purposive sampling of participants as a means of “selecting specific units (e.g., events, people, groups, settings, artifacts), or types of units, based on a specific purpose rather than randomly” (Tashakkori & Teddeu, 2003, p. 713). The primary aim of purposive sampling is to “select information-rich cases for the study in depth” (Patton, 1990, p. 169).

³ UNM IRB approval number: 07717
The participants of this project have been learning English and also have been immersed in the American education system for more than one year for each that has allowed them to catch up with the American academic conventions as detailed in the inclusion criteria stated below. I recruited six Saudi Arabian graduate student participants from different universities across the United States who voluntarily shared their experiences, stories, and texts. For some participants in the study, I have a fairly prolonged relationship with and who met the inclusion criteria stated below. These Saudi writers were purposely selected to ensure that data was collected from a group of students who are currently pursuing a graduate degree in the United States. Believing “all sampling is done with some purpose in mind,” I used purposeful sampling methods in selecting the Saudi participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, p. 199) I ensured that these writers meet the following criteria:

1) Participants must be enrolled in a U.S. graduate program.

2) All participants must have L2 writing experience in English and must have been living in the States for more than two years.

3) They must have finished their undergraduate studies in their home country (i.e., Saudi Arabia).

4) Participants should be enrolled in the fields of humanities, social sciences and/or education.

Along with the participant criteria stated above, I used my personal connections to recruit participants. Once I had the required number of participants (i.e., six writers), I followed these steps:

1. I invited the participants to communicate for the first interview by phone, Skype, email or other means they find convenient and discuss the nature of the study, obtained their
consent, why they were chosen, the possible benefits of participating, and the ethical issues involved.

2. I explained to the participants the topic and the purpose of the project and the documents needed for this study. Then I asked them to sign a consent form and email it back to me.

3. Once they submitted their papers, I read each participant’s’ paper thoroughly twice and then was able to generate some potential questions for the interview.

4. To protect the anonymity of the participants in the study, each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

5. After multiple coding of their texts, I asked each participant for an interview about their conception of voice, and how it is manifested in their writings. The interviews were conducted through different means including: phone conversation and Skype.

6. Most importantly, the participants’ time and convenience were taken into account; thus, I asked each of them about their preferences of time and place for holding the interviews (I interviewed each participant once for a more than one hour)

The study found uniqueness in each student with regard to each theme. To make sense of this uniqueness, I will provide a thick description of each participant’s account in the following paragraphs. To protect the confidentiality of participants, but also allow for an understanding of the relevance of identity positions and patterns among groups of people, I assigned each of the participants a pseudonym. Table 1 displays each participant’s pseudonym, along with their general identity positions.
Table 1

Relevant Personal Information of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Areas of Expertise</th>
<th>Years in the United States</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saleh</td>
<td>Comparative Education</td>
<td>Critical Social Theory</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manea</td>
<td>Literature and Criticism</td>
<td>Postcolonial Theory</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>Critical Theory</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled</td>
<td>Composition and Rhetoric</td>
<td>Rhetorical Theory</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Metacognitive Theory</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reem</td>
<td>Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, to further understand the participant’s papers, length of the interview, and the purpose of the paper they wrote in their graduate courses, readers can use Table 2 below to understand the context of the writers and can make my analysis more meaningful in the upcoming paragraphs.

Table 2

Breakdown of the titles, type, and purposes of the written data provided by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Purpose of the Paper</th>
<th>Title of the Paper</th>
<th>Type of the Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaled</td>
<td>1. To see how social media has sparked the revolution during the Arab Spring era. 2. To put rhetorical theory into practice and to dissect how rhetorical tactics were used to make a change in society regarding the issue of planned parenthood.</td>
<td>1. How Writing Shifted from Covering the News to Creating the News in Social Media During the Arab Spring 2. Rhetorical Aspects of The Planned Parenthood Debate: The Demonizing Language Used as a Rhetorical Tool</td>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manea</td>
<td>1. To apply postcolonial theory into his own context, the so-called third-world countries (as he believes others perceive the Middle East and North Africa), and</td>
<td>1. Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts</td>
<td>Critique and Analytical Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Course Focus</td>
<td>Literature Review and Reflective Papers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ali** | 1. To apply some aspects of critical theory to his own context, Saudi Arabia, by questioning the accreditation units as western imported concepts that lack sensitivity to the Saudi context.  
2. To reflect on personal experience in education and try to link it with educational theory and the readings covered in class. | 1. **Problematizing Quality and Assessment in Education**  
2. **Theory and Research in Curriculum and Instruction** |
| **Saleh** | 1. To gain enough understanding of the concept of agency from a critical lens and then try to problematize it in relation to the larger structure.  
2. To apply some aspects of critical teacher intervention in education in the Saudi context and try to localize it and offer some hands-on solutions. | 1. **Problematizing Agency**  
2. **Critical Intervention for Teacher Alienation** |
| **Reem** | 1. To put language acquisition theory into practice by reflecting on her personal journey.  
2. To explore one or two effective ways to prepare future English language teachers in her home context of Saudi Arabia. | 1. **Language Learning Theory: A Personal Reflection**  
2. **Language Teacher Preparation** |
Sarah
1. To investigate empirically how different genders can learn in certain ways, especially in ESL reading skills.  
2. To examine how her cultural experience has shaped her identity and how her society contributed positively or negatively to her learning journey.

1. Metacognitive Strategies for ESL Learners  
2. Cultural Autobiography  
Empirical and Reflective Papers

Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Understanding the structure underlying the inquiry of this study is the backbone of critical qualitative research. Carefully choosing a theoretical framework can be helpful because it helps researchers see “the system of concepts, assumptions, beliefs, and theories that support and inform [the] research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 66). Also, this study is critically-oriented to illuminate the intricacies and nuances of these students’ voices and the intersectionality of their identities and local institutional practices.

Writing is inevitably a social act in which writers draw from a plethora of semiotic, discursive, and social practices—the writer does not write in separation from the society in which they participate (Lillis, 2013; Brodkey, 1987; LeFevre, 1986). Thus, writing in this study is perceived as a form of social action; in fact, several compositionists encouraged researchers to look for alternative and critical lenses to understand the semiotic resources and driving forces of diverse writers (e.g., Lewis, 2006; Huckin et al., 2012; Miller, 1997). The multidisciplinary nature of the field (Leki, 2000; Matsuda, 2013) was a driving force for me and a legitimate reason to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a mode of inquiry, analytical tool, and as a framework
to make sense of my data and to go beyond the text and understand other driving forces such as social and political ones.

In this study, I utilized Fairclough’s CDA as an overarching framework to understand and explore students’ discourses, power dynamics, and contesting ideologies. CDA is an important philosophy in this study as it provided a way of closely examining the use of discourses and unpacking the social, cultural, and political influences that are produced/mediated through written or spoken language. There is a proliferation around the term “CDA” that reflects multiple influences on the development of CDA. However, Fairclough’s definition is comprehensive and practical. He defines CDA as

   to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (1995, p.132).

   Because this study lends itself to the investigation of realities and factors that affect students’ voices and identities, CDA provided the framework and the relevant analytical tools for my methodology. CDA is a systematic approach that is fundamentally focused on unpacking the opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of power dynamics, control, resistance, and dominance that are manifested in language. These features, as Huckin et al. (2012) stated, “make CDA a powerful new methodology for rhetoric and composition, leading to unusually rich and versatile research” as they can aid the researcher in unpacking the nuanced ideology embedded within the text (p.110). Thus, CDA is as an instrumental tool in writing research that helped me to move beyond traditional analytic modes of interpretation. It in fact provided me with a
systematic analysis for studying the relationships between text, ideology, power, and discursive and social practice (Lewis, 2006).

Seeking to combine textual analysis with the broader social and political analysis—the micro with the macro without the downplaying of either one of them—is what made CDA a suitable lens for my project. Discourses (whether written or spoken) are a form of social practice that is inseparable from the larger social and cultural contexts (Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, when conducting critical discourse analysis, researchers should go “beyond the boundaries of the syntactic or semantic form of the utterance, while aware of the lexico-grammatical resources of the language-system” to include opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifested in the texts (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p.63). CDA also helped us question patterns within the text, such as “the stylistic, verbal, syntactic, and figurative structure” and consider “the ways in which such discursive and semiotic structures circulate or articulate with ideology” (Huckin, et.al, 2012, p.118). Through these discursive practices, I was able to find out patterns that reproduce, create, reinforce, and circulate societal norms and institutional ideologies (Huckin, et.al, 2012).

Additionally, in composition studies, the power of discourse and its relationship to the institutional practices are crucial. By taking into account “textual silences, implicatures, ambiguities, and other covert but powerful aspects of discourse” (Huckin, e.al, 2012, p.110), I was able to notice why certain writers make deliberate or even unconscious choices on the representation of knowledge (i.e., whose discourse is being represented and whose is not), the incorporation of other voices, and the implementation of naming and wording. I implemented this method because I believed that CDA can reveal a dialectical relationship between how the students’ identities and the institutional practices can influence their voice tactics. In the
following section, I briefly discuss the relation between discourse, ideology and institution to get a better undersetting of how these three constructs dialectally shape each other.

**Discourse, Ideology, and Institutions**

There is a mutually constitutive relationship among discourse, ideology, and how they are mediated, maintained and reproduced through institutions. As the nature of this research focuses primarily on discourse and ideology and its relationship with institutions, I will lay out the meaning of discourse, and its relations with ideology. Then I will briefly discuss the impact of institutional practices on discourse production and consumption in relation to ideology.

Ideology is a very elusive term. Ideology according to Althusser (1971) has a material existence—*Repressive State Apparatuses*—and thus it can guard human action and behavior and make them subject to a certain system. However, it also can be covert—as with *Ideological State Apparatuses*—and thus it can guard human actions and belief systems. In this sense, writers manifest different ideological stances such as being a critical scholar, or poststructuralist, by projecting their systems of belief, ideas about certain topics in the text, which can be affected by their past experiences, political stance, and disciplinary affiliation. For writers to be ideological means that they align themselves with a group members who share their ideologies, specific beliefs about the world, and can eventually guide them to interpret social events, and monitor their social practices (Habermas, 1973). Often, ideologies are not simply social or group practices and can in fact arise from group conflict and struggle. Therefore, ideology is in a constant state of changing on the basis of social situations, social interests of groups, and social relations between groups in complex social structures (van Dijk, 1998). Ideology, moreover, can be formed by institutions and always is in state of changing by various social events. As Fairclough (2010) stated,
Ideologies arise in class societies characterized by relations of domination, and in so far as human beings are capable of transcending such societies they are capable of transcending ideology. I do not therefore accept the view of ideology in general as a form of social cement which is inseparable from society itself (p.67).

Moreover, the representations of ideas, values, perceptions, and practices are all contextually bounded. Equally important, the concept of hegemony is critical when studying ideology and discourse—a concept always associated with the Italian Marxist Gramsci (1992). Hegemony is important because it helps researchers understand how exploitative societies, institutions, or a ruling class dominate all other subordinate groups. Context is also critical in understating ideologies as it plays a central role and a symbolic sphere where individuals make sense of the world (Gramsci, 1992). These symbolic images and context are important in studying ideology as they “intersect with relations of power” (Thompson, 1990, p. 56). Thus, I understand ideology as “a general science of ideas, the study of how we think, speak and argue” (van Dijk,1998, p. 6).

The relationship between discourse and ideology is dialectical and they constitute each other. Discourse, according to Foucault (1972), is a way of constituting knowledge, a way of thinking, and making meaning that involves power relations and frequently institutionally based. In the same vein, Fairclough (1995) defined discourse as “a particular way of constructing a subject matter” (p. 128). The construction of subject matter is impacted by the systems of ideas of the writer or speaker. Thus, ideologies are formulated, reproduced, and reinforced through the selections of ideas in discourse and other semiotic practices. Discourse is also socially constitutive and includes systems of ideas and choices that language users make (Chouliaraki, 1998). The selections of any idea and representations of reality is necessarily selective, entailing decisions as to which aspects of that reality to include and how to arrange them. Language use
and discourse have the potential for speakers and writers to acquire the tools and learn to change, resist or maintain certain ideologies. Thus, most of our discourses are ideologically loaded, which can have stratified patterns of social meanings often called ‘norms’ or ‘rules,’ to which people orient when communicating.

Furthermore, as discourse and ideology can serve and maintain each other, institutions and the practices of it can greatly guard, maintain, and reproduce the ideologies of the ruling class through discourse. In particular, Fairclough (1992) emphasized “each institution has its own set of speech events . . . its cast of participants, and its own norms” (p. 38). Fairclough (1995) also suggested it is necessary to see the institution as simultaneously facilitating and constraining the social action of its members: it provides them with a frame for action, without which they could not act, but it thereby constrains them to act within that frame. (p. 38).

Fairclough is explicit that discourse is rooted and embodied in institutions which are structured in terms of social power relationships. The process of dominance through the institutional effects is the exercise of power that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality. This reproduction of ideological process may involve different modes of discourse, legitimation, denial, or concealment of dominance. Harkin (1991) also suggested that institutional ideology can regulate students’ discourses to the institutional standards, which can result in unequal relations of power and maintenance and reproduction of the dominant ideologies. Institutionalization of discourse, indeed, involves “mechanisms that associate nonconformity with increased costs in several different ways as it reduces legitimacy and the access to resources that accompany legitimacy” (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000, p. 28).
Instruments of Data Collection

To gain more insights and in-depth information about the participants, I collected data via multiple methods, for it is necessary to unveil different angles about the phenomenon being studied (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Therefore, the sources of data collection included critical textual analysis of the students’ previously written assignments and individual in-depth interviews with a focus on their reflection on their voice in the paper. Interviews and textual analysis were two main sources of information I utilized to answer the research questions. The following passages include descriptive steps of how I analyzed my data.

**Interviews and Textual Analysis**

**I. Interviews**

To understand my participants’ worldview, the interview is a valuable tool to unpack how they voice themselves, why they do what they do, and how they understand their world as they consistently face a variety of conflicting ideologies. My qualitative interview questions were flexible, iterative, and continuous (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). (See Appendix A for interview questions). The interview targeted writing experiences, voice, and their viability in the text. The interview questions were semi-structured with the intent of collecting specific information yet allowing for the participants’ own thoughts to emerge (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Moreover, I read students’ texts and was able to tailor questions for the interview—ones that my participants might answer to help me develop my understanding of the factors that propel them as writers to make these choices.

Through interview questions, I was able to understand their unique past experiences, their current views of the world, and their potential selves as they manifest in writing. I used this data to elaborate on specific issues such as voice, writerly identity, power dynamics, textual
borrowing, and positioning. Throughout the course of the interview, the interviewees and I were able to dynamically move back and forth in time, interrogate and ponder over the past, critically understand the present, and predict the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Each interview was recorded with prior permission from the participants. I pre-informed the interviewees that I had to turn on the digital-recorder, make sure that they have signed the consent form, and then let the conversation start. In the interviews, the option of using Arabic and/or English was up to the preferences of the participants. Allowing such leeway of code switching was convenient as my participants were able to easily use English to express the applications of voice in writing. Also, Arabic was used by some of the participants to express their intimate feelings and personal narratives. After each meeting, I transcribed the interviews in their original languages and kept them in a secure place to save students’ personal narratives and stories. The discourse of our conversation was transcribed verbatim with some intonation being noted. After completing the transcripts, I carefully and critically read the discourse to scrutinize it for emergent themes.

II. Interview Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argued that data analysis is a process where the researcher is involved in a systematic searching and arranging of the data derived from the interview transcripts, textual analysis, and other qualitative data collection methods. Thus, in order to make sense of the recorded interview data, I critically read the manually transcribed interview, coded the emergent themes into different categories, and used CDA as an analytical lens. After reading participants’ texts, along with my semi-interview questions, I developed some extra probing questions about some aspects of their writings for the one-long interview I had with them. In particular, I adopted what Polio and Friedman (2016) called ‘stimulated recall’ interview by showing and reading some part of their texts and asked them to reflect on it. After transcribing
the interviews, I read the whole texts with open coding mode; then I read the data again by considering ‘a presentational orientation’ (Freeman, 1996, p. 734, as cited in Polio and Friedman, 2016). Then, reading the transcript for the third time, data was thematically categorized into different themes and sub-themes. I then read my data recursively to find recurrent themes and sub-themes and then eventually bring organization to a large unwieldy data set and make connections across the interviews and other data sources.

To make sense of the data, I used CDA, specifically Fairclough’s (1992, 2001) model of *language as a social and political means of struggle* (more discussion about this will be addressed later in the upcoming textual analysis section). By adopting this model, I recognized that communication is always ideological. Most interactions (which, in this case, include students’ texts and their discourses in the interview) are influenced by each individual’s range of linguistic and social access, which are in turn shaped by unequal social, educational, and political power dynamics. Thus, the way interviewees voice themselves or view voice is constrained by power relations—i.e., what Hyland (2012) terms as ‘invisible context’. In the interview, I was able to see the extent to which interviewees appropriate other voices, subdue others, jostle for dominance, or surrender to authority (Lemar, 1995; Bakhtain, 1986). Indeed, CDA allowed me to delineate between a micro and macro analysis and bridge the gap between context, discursive practices, and language use and the understanding of the ideologies and power dynamics embedded in the text.

I used different-colored highlighter pens to organize the data into different related themes that affect the students’ voices and identities as L2 writers (i.e., ideological, linguistic, sociocultural, sociopolitical forces, etc.). I also examined their self-identified challenges in voicing themselves in academic writing, factors affecting these challenges, driving forces behind
their choices, and their perception of themselves as L2 writers. I then revisited the transcribed interviews as a group with the aim of exploring common and conflicting themes (i.e., axial coding). The reexamination of the data paved the way for me to neatly organize the data into subcategories in relation to the larger classifications.

In the interview, I primarily focused on the following steps that helped me answer my research questions: the first round I focused on students’ perceptions of voice, how their awareness of critical writing infused their voice and their identities as expressed in their texts. I then, in the second round, tried to highlight relevant educational and sociopolitical institutionalized practices and perceptions of writing academic papers in Saudi Arabia and the United States.

III. Textual Analysis

To document how these students voice themselves in the text, I believe that textual analysis plays a significant role in the understanding of the elements that reflect the participants’ voices and their identities through their writing practices. In the text, I investigated how these students position themselves as writers, and how they establish and maintain voice in their papers, and how that intersects with their identities and larger institutional practices.

I compiled a corpus of 12 paper samples written by Saudi graduate students enrolled in the fields of education, humanities, and/or social sciences. These samples were electronic copies in order to facilitate running the analysis of these students’ discourses. To do the textual analysis, I focused on the rhetorical situation and the purpose of these texts, as Hyland (2008) asserted that writers construct reality and voice in their writing via using rhetorical devices that convey their ideology, engagement, and credibility. Before conducting the textual analysis, I read each students’ text and was able to delineate the purpose, context, topic, year and stage they wrote
these papers. Although my intention was not to focus solely on lexical choices, it was imperative to consider them as they can be telltales of these writers’ voices and ideologies. I read each text twice (the written papers and the transcribed interviews) while acknowledging the possibilities of other interpretations with the focus on the following elements/steps:

1. I looked at the numbers of rhetorical moves or devices as non-neutral ones.

2. I considered the linguistic elements such as *hedges, self-mention, attributors, and emphatics* as they can explain author’s “epistemic assumptions, their assessments of possibilities, and thus indicate their confidence in the truth of the propositions the devices accompany” (Hyland, 1999, p.8).

3. At this layer of examination, I considered two questions: Why and why not Saudi students bring their voices to the text, considering their ideological stance and power dynamics? Also, How these voices interplay with student’s identities, and the institutional practices at home?

4. I also used the following questions: Does the author speak for the dominant part of dominant discourse? Are these authors aligning themselves more with western discourse in their argument, or are they resisting and opposing mainstream writers? Does the author feel that they are muffling their voices or are they trying to be more strategic/ rhetorical, and appropriate why and/or why not? What is being said and not said and why?

5. I also incorporated Fairclough’s (1992) interpretive questions: what power relations at the institutional and societal levels help shape this discourse? What elements of the text carry ideological meaning? How is this discourse positioned in relation to struggle at institutional and societal levels? Are these struggles overt
or covert? Does this discourse contribute to sustaining existing power relations, or transforming them? (p.138).

Critical Discourse Analysis as Analytical Tool

Fairclough’s work on critical language studies is central in this project. His work focused primarily on how ideology and power are embedded in language and society. As stated above in the framework section, CDA is the primary, leading analytical lens that helped me examine issues related to power, resistance, and other ideological forces in the students’ texts. Considering both sources of students’ data as a discourse—the interviews and the papers—and looking at them as a holistic text, Fairclough (1995) defined discourse as “a particular way of constructing a subject matter” (p. 128). His view suggested that discourse simultaneously involves three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice. Therefore, partially adopting Fairclough’s (1992, 2001) three-dimensional model for thinking about critical discourse analysis, I adopted the overarching dimensions of looking at discourse: language as a social and political practice and struggle. According to Fairclough (1995), “Social and Political Practice” involves analysis using explanation whose “objective is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social [and political] structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can commutatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them” (p. 163). That is, the students’ writing are social forms and practices and involves types of ideologies that reflects political and social effects or a hegemonic struggle that can reproduce, restructure or challenge any existing orders of discourse in its social contexts. This perspective can include form, function, meaning of the discourse, institutional practices, and ideology. This scaffolded me to further my understanding of why they made certain choices and voices represented in the text and in the interviews and what implications follow. Critical textual
analysis (CTA) guided me also to explore ways in which language use and choices reflect certain voices and stances that underlie ideological factors. That is, CDA explicated how discourses in the social and cultural milieu of students’ lives can contribute to their understanding of themselves and their worlds (Hyland, 2012).

Along with these thoughts about CDA, to eliminate the arbitrariness of the analysis and ensure a more systematic interpretation, I focused on the following concepts: discursive ideological representations, resistance, and voice as a process of ideological becoming. I also focused on two aspects that answer my second question which includes institutional avoidance and silencing. These constructs helped me “[emphasize] the micro-social level of everyday life and linguistic interactions that one is able to resist, modify, or negotiate the larger social structures” (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 268). I read each participant’s text—their final papers and transcribed interviews—as holistic discourse, in which I segmented, defined, and questioned certain moves and nuances of their discourses that answer my questions. Then, I connected the emergent themes with my critical analysis concepts mentioned above (the why and how) The data collection and analysis methods—as corresponding with my research questions—are demonstrated in (Table 3).

Table 3
Research Questions and correlated methods of data collection and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Method of Data Collection</th>
<th>Method of Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In what ways do Saudi writers voice themselves in U.S. L2 writing? And to what extent (if any) can these voices interplay with writers’ identities?</td>
<td>Textual Analysis and Interview</td>
<td>• Segmentation and coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identification of emergent themes related to voice and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Transcription of interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Apply CDA concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are L2 Saudi writers’ perception/reflection of institutional practices, with a focus on those with educational and sociopolitical impacts or overtones, that may shape their writerly voice or expressions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textual Analysis and Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transcription of interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identification of emergent themes related to impact of institutional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply CDA concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trustworthiness**

The methodological soundness of the study relies on the trustworthiness of the naturalistic inquiry. So, to assure that I was able to avoid any biases as much as possible, it was important to establish trustworthiness. To this end, I transcribed the data verbatim in the original languages used during the interview to avoid any distortion of the information. Also, to ensure the validity of the research, I utilized several techniques: long interviews, two samples of textual analysis, consulting an expert in the field, and then conducting an in-depth analysis of the collected data holistically in line with the conceptual framework of this study. These techniques were key functions in my analysis to compare, check, and cross-check emergent patterns or categories. Along with these techniques, sharing some of my misconception or understating of their meaning-making helped me to be more reflexive of my analysis; it also paved the way for me to do cross-interpretations and establish a reciprocal relationship with my participants in the research process.

**Conclusion**

This study explored how Saudi students voice themselves and challenge/maintain authorial voices and how these practices intersected with their identities and institutionalized practices and ideologies. My criteria for selecting Saudi students were meant to facilitate gaining insight into voice-related issues in academia and critical writing. Moreover, the method and techniques described in this chapter showed the different phases and procedures that I utilized to
collect my data. In my qualitative case study, I collected the data via interviews and textual analysis to dissect voice-related issues and their intersectionality with writers’ identity and institutionalized practices. These sources and perspectives allowed me to analyze my data from many angles and trace the genesis of the students’ discourses.
Chapter Four:

Findings and Discussion: Participants’ Voices in L2 Writing

In this section, the topic is to discuss how the participants in this study expressed their writerly voices in diverse texts and interviews. These data were collected through different discourse communities, social situations, and events. Additionally, the goal of this chapter is to answer the main question of this study and its sub-question, posed earlier in Chapter 3. To remind the readers, the first question targets ways L2 Saudi graduate writers voice themselves in a U.S. classroom, and the sub-question explores how identity can influence their voices that emerged in the text and in the interview.

Through analysis of the text and interviews, I was able to ascertain the various ways in which these Saudi writers negotiated different voice constructions in L2 academic writing. The different voices and expressions were shaped and negotiated in relation to a complex network of student’s identities—as professionals in their fields, Arabs, Muslims, and graduate students, currently pursuing their graduate degrees in U.S. institutions of higher learning. Thus, this chapter answers the following questions: In what ways do Saudi writers voice themselves in U.S. L2 writing? And to what extent (if any) do these voices interplay with writers’ identities?

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework and an analytical tool to understand the nuances of these writers’ voices and identities, several themes and sub-themes emerged during analysis and coding of the data. Within the analysis, I utilized pertinent concepts of CDA, grounded in the main concept: language as a site of social and political struggle. Throughout the first and second rounds of data analysis, three primary themes emerged in the data: discursive ideological representations, resisting the status quo, and voice as a process of ideological becoming. Please note that these themes overlap in some ways, especially
in terms of power dynamics and ideological representations. Moreover, each theme from the findings of this study includes discussion throughout the remainder of this chapter. While there are many layers of similarity in these stories, each voice enhances the study with its unique aspects. In the following paragraphs, I give short biographies of the six participants regarding their interview and writing analysis.

**First Participant (Saleh)**

Saleh is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Comparative Education at a Midwest University. He has been living in the United States for about 6 years; he earned his master’s degree from a different institution in the United States. My conversation with Saleh lasted for about 2 hours. He sees himself as a social advocate and a teacher who aspires to change Saudi society through education—mainly by applying critical pedagogy. His ideological stance as a critical theory researcher is influenced by Freire’s model of standing against “the culture of silence,” where different strata—certain social classes—are each given unequitable levels of access. As a male Saudi novice scholar, he seems to acknowledge the power of the Saudi government and the politicized educational system in his home country, as he is aware that “social reality is based on the dominant discourse that [is] controlled by the government”. Before interviewing Saleh, I asked him to provide two writing samples of his final papers so that I could develop questions and conduct some textual analysis on these papers. These two samples (see Table 2), were a reflective assignment and literature paper on topics related to his courses.

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4 I chose to give each participant a first name because last names are easily identified in the Saudi context.
Second Participant (Manea)

Manea has been living in the United States for about 8 years. Manea’s experience in the United States is unique with studying in different educational institutions and exposure to two different educational contexts in the United States: a liberal school and a conservative school. My interview with Manea, lasted for 70 minutes. Being a graduate student in the field of Literature and Criticism, he perceives himself as a post-colonial researcher. Having studied in different American institutions, he realizes that different graduate schools shape how students, especially those who come from “Third-World” countries (as he believes others perceive Saudi Arabia), can or cannot voice themselves and critically see the nuances of power dynamics. He also thinks that the spark of his critical consciousness journey started since he joined his current Northeastern school. I asked Manea to provide two samples of his previously written final assignments, which he willingly emailed me: a critique paper and an analytical paper (see Table 2).

Third Participant (Ali)

Ali spent 5 years in the United States, one year as an ESL student and four years as a graduate student in a doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at a Midwest university. I reached out to Ali though a friend of mine; Ali willingly agreed to email his papers. Ali, a critical theory researcher, participated in an interview that lasted for 80 minutes. Ali aligns himself with social theorists. In his papers, he argues for a liberal, democratic education that promotes equity and justice among all strata of society. Ali’s two papers allowed me the ability to generate many questions about his thoughts in writing and his voice as well. Similar to Saleh, his papers were mainly reflective, with some literature about the course he was taking at that time.
Fourth Participant (Khaled)

Khaled is a third-year doctoral student in the field of Composition and Rhetoric at a Mideast university. He experienced some unique cultural and educational experiences in the United States, living in the United States for about 9 years. His areas of interests revolve around rhetorical theory and multimodal writing and teaching. Khaled is intrigued and affected by the unrest taking place in the Middle East and U.S. social media, as he chooses to write about how language can be a rhetorical tool to shift and transform societies. Interestingly, he chose to speak English during the interview. I had to ask him some questions in Arabic to get the main point of some culturally-relevant voice issues, and he consistently answered in English. As illustrated in Table 3, Khaled provided me with two thought-provoking papers in which he used his professional identity to dissect issues pertinent to language, power, and rhetoric.

Fifth Participant (Reem)

Reem was a female participant pursuing her doctoral degree in a Northeast school. Unlike many female Saudi students, I attempted to contact, she willingly agreed to be part of my study. Reem is an applied linguist who has been living in the United States for about 7 years. She is interested in teacher preparation for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Reem’s wrote papers about “Language Learning Theory: A Personal Reflection” and “Language Teacher Preparation”. Though both of Reem’s papers piqued my interest, my conversation with her added much depth and dimension to my understanding of her voice. At first, she told me she did not think she had much to offer to a study regarding a student writer’s voice, but, as we started the conversation, she realized that she had much to offer. Her worldviews and voice construction processes evolved through many factors, besides the practice of writing, such as getting married, going to the United States to pursue a graduate degree, and engaging in critical conversations in
and outside the classroom about teaching and language in general. Our interview lasted for about 1 hour, and Reem welcomed questions I posed regarding her writing and related issues about her writing voice.

**Sixth Participant (Sarah)**

Sarah has been living in the United States for about 3 years and has studied in two different American institutions. Unlike my other participants (who are doctoral students), Sarah is in the final year of her master’s degree at a Southern university, and she will be graduating this summer in 2019. As a TESOL student, she stated her interest, both in the interview and her paper, in metacognitive theory in language learning and teaching. When I first contacted Sarah via phone, I immediately explained the process, the topic of my study, and the purpose of it, and she without any hesitation was willing to participate. I proceeded to email her the consent form and she immediately emailed me two samples of her writings (see Table 2 for more information).

In the following passages, the purpose is to focus on three main themes that emerged in my data. I then follow each theme with sub-themes and a brief discussion.

**Discursive Ideological Representations**

One of the major themes that emerged while analyzing data was that most of the participants implicitly and/or explicitly expressed the ideological power of language. This ideological expression refers to how language can sometimes be used as a tool to dominate, construct, and shape the structure, either at the macro or micro level (Fairclough, 2010). My participants’ ideological stances were sometimes shaped by their professional identities as experts in their respective fields and students at their respective institutions (i.e., as critical theorists, post-colonialists, educational specialists, or applied linguists, etc.).
The ideational or ideological representation these writers’ voices embody can be seen as a selective process, where certain lexicon and ideas are exhibited to carry their ideas and worldviews toward the text or the topic being discussed (Ivanic & Camps, 2001). Such acts of articulating one’s voice in the text can be achieved through different means. These means are personal, as the different means chosen by different writers to voice themselves in the text can convey messages about these writers and open windows for dissecting their ideologies. Moreover, the deliberate choices presented in text these writers composed demonstrated their approach to their arguments as manifestations of these writers’ ideological stances (Ivanic & Camps, 2011).

Highlighting the sociolinguistic nature of writing, Ivanic and Camps (2001) stated explicitly that writers align themselves with social groups in society, as certain authors utilize different semiotic resources to mark their voices accordingly in the text. Although participants were not asked to address their voice directly in the papers they submitted to me, their texts are ideologically laden and informed by the discourse community they are studying. They align themselves with the objectives of study and methodologies of their professional training. It is striking how the lexical range of each student is distinct from the others, as each comes through a different set of lenses and tools through their academic affiliation, explored further in the following subsections.

Interestingly, using their distinct professional identities, these writers have not only demonstrated a deep understanding of how education or any certain social phenomena is created, but they also question these creations and the knowledge that shapes social events. Dialectically, they position themselves by the discourse convention (i.e., their profession) that they are studying and positioning the future (i.e., by using the tools they learn in United States institutions to propose the future of education in their home country) by using their agency as writers and
constructors of knowledge. During these processes, values get interwoven into the text, scrutinized here in this section, dissecting how each writer builds a voice shaped by their own academic identity. As Ivanic and Camps (2001) indicated, “writers become partly to particular epistemological stances” (p. 18) through presenting their worldviews, values, motivations, allegiances (i.e., choosing the theory they ideologically align themselves with), and proposing possibilities of the future. It is noteworthy that the knowledge-making processes and the voicing tactics that participants manifested do not have to be interpreted as impersonal. Sometimes these writers expressed allegiance to certain ideologies by directly referring to different writers, mainly Western ones, who shared similar ideologies and subscribed to certain forms of pedagogy.

The choice of this theme—discursive ideological representations—was influenced by a long-lasting scholarly debate about literacy or writing specifically. Clark and Ivanic (1997) in The Politics of Writing contend that writing is not independent from the social and political realities; they highlighted that language and writing in specific are ideologically and politically constituted. Written products are increasingly viewed not just as linguistic artifacts but as socially produced and politically situated entities (Casanave, 2003; Kress, 1993). Casanave (2003) asserted that writing is a political act “produced in power-infused settings such as classrooms and discourse communities and are used to further political as well as intellectual and instructional agendas” (p. 87). This political dimension of writing occurs when a writer chooses a certain genre or discourse over another. The ideological representation of these writers’ voices is evident when they choose to engage in certain topics and promote certain messages or ideas in their writing, which can reproduce certain values, beliefs, and power relations. Writers’ ideologies are ideas disclosed in discourse—gained through writers’ disciplinary affiliation, training, and previous experiences—and acted in writing to maintain power over the audience.
In the following subsections, the focus is on participants’ texts and interviews to elucidate the role of their disciplinary affiliations in (a) tuning and coloring their voices and (b) framing their ideological awareness and representation. If one is aware of the nuanced power dynamics of language, one might be more equipped to consciously use language to voice and observe the language and rhetoric aimed at subduing and marginalizing one’s voice. Fairclough (1992) argued that the use of language and other “symbolic forms” “are ideologically invested in so far as they incorporate significations which contribute to sustaining or re-structuring power relations” (p. 91). In the examples provided below, I showcase how different writers articulated their ideological voices that they developed through their exposure to their academic and social lives.

**Khaled**

In this section, the focus is to show instances where Khaled utilized his ideological voice in the papers he emailed me. In his paper, he wrote about the conflict in the Middle East and argued that these conflicts escalated from the use of language, specifically the rhetorical tools of language in social media. In his paper, “How Writing Shifted from Covering the News to Creating the News in Social Media During the Arab Spring,” he exhibited a voice influenced by his own discourse community—his community of practice in the field of composition and rhetoric:

Therefore, this means that the journey of the power of words in uprisings has just begun. What the social media platforms promise is more power, which has never been felt. In its glory and unbounded ways, the social media and its different technologies did an unprecedented act of permitting the language of freedom to flow to the world. Therefore,
if there were not such appropriate technological features at hand, such acts of bravery and words of freedom would not have been able to be presented out to the world.

It is obvious from the excerpt above that Khaled is aware of the “the power of words in uprisings” during the Arab spring era. Referring to “the power of words” is a manifestation of his ideological awareness of the power and politics of language in that context—the Middle East—and in a specific genre—social media. He manifested his ideological and political voice by stating explicitly in his paper that his aim was to “highlight and analyze how writing across the social media platforms crafted the 2011 Arab Spring news and outcomes”. Moreover, influenced by his professional and ethnic identity as a student of rhetoric and composition and as an insider-Arab, Khaled exercised his authority over the readers to inform them that the spark of this phenomena was mainly because of the power of language used in the social media (e.g., “The paper also aims to elaborate on the language used on social media platforms and how it affected the overall results of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.” He also clarified that the organization of signifying practices, such as social media communications, can reshape and transform the whole society. The promise that Khaled wrote in his paper “the power of language” to change the structure of the Arab countries through the medium of language is very revealing—it is an ideology that carries beliefs about language being powerful—when he stated, “What the social media platforms promise is more power, which has never been felt.”

This critical view toward language as a tool for resisting the political regime is a ‘conceptualization of ideology.’ This conceptualization is “derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position” (Woolard, 1998, p. 3) that a writer chooses to take. The repetition of the word “power” and the clear statement of “the journey of the power of words in uprisings has just begun” and linking ‘power’ with language
and structure might be evidence of his influence by the ideology of his profession as a rhetorician; he stated this clearly in his paper about the Arab Spring that he is aiming to understand “The role of writing on social media.”

Furthermore, the reproduction of knowledge in the above excerpt (by mimicking similar tools and language of his disciplinary training—composition and rhetoric—to dismantle issues of power in language), the exercise of power over readers (i.e., by stating that the Arab Spring has mainly happened because of the power of social media), and the use of abstract concepts such as “freedom” are political choices of Khaled’s belief system and ideology as a Saudi male rhetorician. In other words, he exercised authority over readers by stating his argument that the Arab Spring has mainly happened because of the power of social media, as a fact: He expressed his ideological conviction, supported by his professional and academic stance (i.e., being a rhetorician), without hesitation. Also, he did not use any mitigators or hedges such as “might not” to express his main argument; rather he writes without qualification that “there were not such appropriate technological features at hand, such acts of bravery and words of freedom would not have been able to be presented out to the world.”

Moreover, in the interview with Khaled about the quote above, he clearly seemed aware of his ideological judgment in using his professional lens to dissect issues pertinent to language use as a form of democracy in society. Khaled stated, “It is a fact I used my own judgement . . . my own understanding of how these actions developed through the use of language.” The naturalization of his stance as a “fact” and the authorial stance he reflected in the interview (“my own judgement . . . my own understanding”) are also demonstrations of Khaled’s authorial voice on the rhetorical power dynamics and politics of language.
He then furthered the conversation to highlight that people who revolted against the government in the Middle East used different tools, including language, to overcome the fear of freedom. He said:

Also, how they [the revolutionists] used the media language as a tool to rally against the regime . . . you know . . . what they call it [umm] conquer the social fear or the fear of punishment or government and stuff to override this fear, and also give people their own way of explaining and expressing themselves more openly and more freely. (Interview)

Encouraging people to express themselves “more openly and freely,” Khaled enacted a catalyst voice that promotes justice and equality for his own people in the Middle East. By using a rhetorical lens, he was able to see different rhetorical tactics in the social media platforms that incite people to revolt against oppressive regimes. For example, his discussion of “social fear” is an attempt to realize the feelings and motivation of an audience, which is a critical element of the rhetorical situation that rhetoricians utilize and study deeply. As he stated in the interview, these elements of language are “important rhetorical aftereffect or rhetorical factor.”

Politicizing people’s reaction and linking to the concept of freedom such as “expressing themselves more openly and more freely” is another manifestation of his rhetorical, catalyst voice.

Interestingly, Khaled called for language awareness and pushing back against the hegemonic systems in the Arab world to stand by “people’s stolen humanity” (Freire, 1973, pp. 75-76). Khaled, as a student writer, seems to use language and its rhetorical tools as a platform to move societies—through his writing—into a more non-authoritarian practice and through dialogue to promote a “practice of freedom” (Freire, 1973, p. 77). Explicitly stating that people in the Middle East were tired of oppression, Khaled referred to the language of comments in social media, which emanated from anguish. In his paper, he stated the following:
The language of the comments expressed anger in the Arabs. Every word showed how tired they were with the oppression they were exposed to under the autocratic regimes. For instance, people’s reactions in Egypt to the YouTube video post of Khalid Said being harassed by the police was a definite indication that they would soon get to the streets demanding justice. The same reactions were experienced in Tunisia when the video of Bou-Azizi burning himself made it in YouTube.

Pondering over the prompt given to him by his professor to apply rhetorical theory into practice, Khaled’s choice to write about this controversial issue is in itself evidence that Khaled’s voice as a rhetorician, which his disciplinary training in the United States has prepared him to acquire, spans over to his own personal social reality, helping him mull over issues related to the language of power and oppression therein. Had he not been trained in this field, he might see this movement in the Middle East from a different lens, possibly not associated with language. From a rhetorical perspective, Khaled referred to “anger” and acknowledged the role of emotions in the social media users’ attempts to convince the public with their stance through emotionally powerful videos and comments (i.e., the use of pathos). Khaled’s awareness of the expression of emotions as a rhetorical tool is underpinned by a linguistic ideology, that language can send waves of ideological advocacy through society.

Additionally, Khaled seemed to be preoccupied both in his writing and the interview with how being aware of language tactics can encourage and empower both readers and researchers to use these rhetorical tactics to make an ideological change. Establishing his identity and expressing his voice in the interview and the text, Khaled later explained that his goal in this analysis was to apply rhetorical theory tactics to explain the Arab Spring phenomenon. In his interview, he stated that he wanted to fathom:
How the words . . . how the language that was used and why it was used and what was the reaction to them . . . and how they developed and how a post of one individual made a difference and stuff like that.

Scrutinizing the tools of language used in social media, and why they were used is an enactment of Khaled’s disciplinary training as he aligns himself implicitly with a certain interest group by using their discourse community. Also, relating to one exigency in the quote above such as “how a post of one individual made a difference and stuff like that” sparked the fire in the Middles East is an ideological value that Khaled integrated in his discourse. He takes the value of his own profession in writing and rhetoric (e.g., “how the words”), and thus he assimilated into a certain voice as some writers in his profession do to assure self-worth and acknowledgment in the act of writing. Pondering over the reaction of the Arab Spring and understating “how the language that was used” [and] “why it was used” [and] “what was the reaction to them” are all explicit instances of his rhetorical and ideological voice in the paper.

Moreover, Khaled’s authoritative voice here (i.e., in the Arab Spring paper) can be seen as a form of dealing with knowledge as not a fixed entity but rather dynamic and ideologically loaded. His authorial voice is manifested in the first paper as he tactically a) explained thoroughly how the political revolution started from social media and the effects of language with less references and self-interpretations, b ) he used less hedges such as “might not” to express his main argument, and c) he factualized his argument as an insider and a as a graduate student in rhetoric as he stated it in the interview: “To be honest, I was using my voice (as) Ibn Ali was a corrupt regime and everybody knows that so I made a fact not a fiction.” Thus, his critical moves in the first paper reflects his transformational voice towards social and political issues, which is relevant to his identity as Saudi. Hence, bringing these controversial topics into writing for
rhetorical scrutinization is an act of ideological stance by using his professional and insider identity to promote social and political justice (Benesch, 1993).

These political moves and choices of voices flourished in a context where both teachers and Khaled’s disciplinary training encourage conflicting voices through language and rhetorical analysis. His voice in the above examples exhibited his rhetorical analysis of the Arab Spring, requiring him to apply critical reading into the event, to break it down to readers, and articulate how the events happened, rather than what actually was broadcasted in the media. The choice of analyzing Arab Spring and the feeling that it needs to be “analyzed through social media writing” generated his ideology in its selectivity, reduction, and scope. Thus, these choices cannot be neutral or ideologically free; they mean that Khaled chose to “deny the political nature” [of the status quo, which goes well with] “articulating an ideological position in favor of the status quo” (Pennycook, 1989, p. 591). Therefore, these voices are also socially and politically constructed as “an arena of social conflict” [not a function of] “natural law” [or] “universal truth” (Berlin, 1988, p. 489).

**Manea**

Similar to Khaled in his metalinguistic awareness, Manea, who is in the field of literary criticism, constructed a voice in particular areas of his paper. In my interview with Manea, I asked him about the purpose of writing his first paper, “The Adaptation of The Tempest into Multiple Film Versions Represents New Cultural or Political Context.” He explicitly stated that the purpose of writing this paper was to use the lens of postcolonialism to raise awareness for his readers, and to stand up against the marginalization of nations in the East. Additionally, he wanted to reveal how a White, widely celebrated author, such as Shakespeare, performs ‘othering’ against North Africa through his literary works, which are—to many—indelible from
the Western cannon. Manea is aware of the power and the politics of language and the practices of racio-linguistics in writing. In his writing, he positioned himself through a postcolonial lens, which enables him to identify himself as an Eastern student in the United States. Using postcolonial theory in his texts to resist the colonial legacy perpetuated through Western writers, and dealing with issues such as national identity, language, representation, and history, are all tools he used to dismantle misrepresentations in literary texts (examples of this will be provided in the following paragraphs).

Yet, while he had to comply to certain voice-constricting educational practices back home, he did not feel a holistic sense of agency when writing this paper in a U.S. classroom. He stated that, throughout his writing process, he was haunted by the desire “to please the professor” because, in this class, his professor was not as voice encouraging as compared to his other professor for the other paper he provided. In my interview with him about this paper, which he wrote the first year of his PhD program, he said:

It was a final paper and seeking good grades and most importantly pleasing my professor . . . and I also was trying to prompt my own interest to the field ...in post-colonialism studies in general . . . also, in this paper there are some aspects of Shakespeare’s literary work that promotes others and othering such as in *The Tempest*. I also wanted to see how Shakespeare did othering and cultural appropriation in North Africa through his works. From the quote above, Manea’s curiosity and interest in writing such a paper is motivated by his interest in the field—particularly “in post-colonialism studies in general.” Positioning himself as a postcolonial student is evidence that he is critically aware of the politics of language, and how words can be used to marginalize and demonize other nations as he clearly

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5 In Chapter five, I will talk about how a professor through his assignments can hinder students’ writerly voice in the classroom.
stated in this excerpt: “in this paper there are some aspects of Shakespeare’s literary work that promotes others and othering such as in The Tempest. I also wanted to see how Shakespeare did othering and cultural appropriation in North Africa through his works.” Moreover, the abstract concepts that Manea used in his text such as “adaptation” and “appropriation” are common terms that post-colonialists integrate in their text to enact a voice unique to their disciplinary discourse. In addition, Manea’s nuanced ideological intake of his choice to dissect aspects of opposition and practices of othering is manifested in his paper. This is because the ability to “promote” his interest in the field is inspired by both a professional agency and identity that stems from (a) his academic discipline, (b) a historical struggle, and (c) lived experiences he witnessed in his own “Oriental” context. In “The Adaptation of The Tempest into Multiple Film Versions Represents New Cultural or Political Context” paper, he wrote:

Thinking of myself being from a third world country makes me consider that post-colonialism is my focused field through which the political issues in the Middle East should be identified . . . This paper is a portrayal of my personal life in academia. It shows my relationship with postcolonial texts, and why I would share the same feeling as some postcolonial authors who are haunted by the legacy of colonialism. Sadness and contradictions in history are issues that I may find in some of the minority texts.

Despite his concern about grading, since this paper was written in his first year of his PhD program, he seemed to voice himself very well in some aspects of the paper. The political voice that Manea constructed in the text above is shaped by his historical and racial struggle as a Middle Eastern and may be considered a case in point of the social, political, and ideological dimensions of voice (e.g., “makes me consider that post-colonialism is my focused field through which the political issues in the Middle East should be identified.”) Moreover, in this text,
Manea seemed also to be significantly influenced by his ideological stance by incorporating systems of ideas such as “postcolonial authors” [and] “haunted by the legacy of colonialism,” [and] “minority texts.” These ideas are all indications of his ideological allegiance with the theory he attached in his writing. Thus, he constructed an authorial voice in the text by relating and problematizing colonialism in the rest of his paper. In another part of his paper, he also stated:

I will be focusing and commenting on the contextual issues that may differ in every film. By incorporating postcolonial criticism to the films, I will argue that *The Tempest*, in every film version, may represent different cultural agendas that support either the equality of genders or suggesting the belonging of the indigenous to their land and the right to resist the Western domination over their land.

In this excerpt, Manea incorporated a postcolonial voice to help him dissect issues pertinent to power and domination such as “different cultural agendas” [and] to resist the Western domination.” His ideological awareness that language as a sociopolitical act can play a vital role in “marginalizing” [and] “representing different cultural agendas” is another example of his voice shaped by his academic practices as a postcolonial researcher. Yet, he enacted a catalyst voice that raises awareness for minorities and promotes social action: “the right to resist the Western domination.” However, Manea’s voice seems to be also contradictory with his identity as his voice in shedding light on the film that “support equality of genders” [and focused solely on the] “right to resist the Western domination over their land.” In my interview with Manea, he stated that the previous excerpt was part of his voice. He commented on writing this paper that:
Shakespeare, through his play, portrayed people in the Island as only White British people who own the land in general and ‘othered’ the indigenous people on the land. So, I used the adoption theory to help me deconstruct Shakespeare’s literary work as there are many other works based on this work and recycled the same stereotypes.

Manea’s paper is insightful for understanding the social and political functions of language construction in a global context. Manea understood, via his professional lens, that language is a tool by which one writer like himself can demonstrate the place of language in the construction, constitution, and regulation of the social world. Hence, the ideological representation in *The Tempest* can be seen as a form of social practice, in a written form, to accomplish the ideological meaning that writers passed on in the play and its adaptations. Manea recognized these biased ideologies (e.g. “portrayed people in the Island as only White British people who own the land in general and ‘othered’ the indigenous people on the land”) provided several examples of (e.g. “many other works based on this work and recycled the same stereotypes”), and even offered suggestions for restructuring the works into more inclusive forms (e.g., the adoption theory to help me deconstruct Shakespeare’s literary).

By acknowledging the power play between different strata and races of a society “White British people” [and emphasizing the rights of] “indigenous people,” Manea constructed a voice that aligns with what most post-colonialist scholars would call for: to deconstruct the colonial thought and promote the voice of underrepresented racial groups that have been traumatized by colonization. Although this play seems to hold a high place in the Western cannon, Manea’s disciplinary voice enabled him to exercise his agency over readers and show them different ways to deconstruct Shakespeare’s work and the colonial gaze it maintained across its adaptations. Manea further reinforced his own voice—in his other paper—by referring to the post-colonialist
scholar Edward Said, who is remarkable in the West, yet whose Oriental Arab legacy resonates with Manea’s. Manea wrote,

Hutcheon states that, “[w]hen stories travel – as they do when they adapted in across media, time, and place – they end up bringing together what Edward Said called different ‘process of representation and institutionalization’. According to Said, ideas or theories that travel involve . . . a transformation of the idea in its new time and place”

Writers in general might tend to adopt another writers’ ideology and cite certain writers who racially or ideologically alike to justify their arguments and voice. In this case, and in the previous excerpt, citing the work of Edward Said in critiquing a well-known writer such as Shakespeare is a form of affinity that the writer, Manea sought. In this case, Manea aligned himself with Said’s ideology and directly quoted him to support his argument in the paper. This act of referencing a writer who empowers minorities and deconstructs the colonial power in discourse and in the literature in general is a means of enacting an institutional, academic voice—a postcolonial voice—that achieves the ultimate goal of Manea’s values and ideology. In my interview with Manea, he commented on his referencing of Said:

I referred to Said in this paper to support my argument and empower my voice more.

Said is a great postcolonial writer, who shares similar pain and vision that I adopt in my academic journey as a postcolonial graduate student.

Manea explicitly referred to Said in his literacy practices—writing—to gain access to the academic discourse community and to legitimize his voice as a postcolonial student. In particular, in his text above, he needed to make his point of view more palpable to the audience—his White professor—who is too cautious against critiquing such a well-known writer, Shakespeare. By validating his discomfort to issues related to ‘marginalization’ and
‘othering’ and presenting them with ways that vivify his own experience and identity, Manea constructed a voice that institutionally aligned him with postcolonial theory and its advocates such as Said.

In his second paper, “Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts,” Manea’s voice was even more viable and powerful as he directly referred to his experience as a source of authority. In the following excerpt, he enacted another form of voice influenced by his postcolonial background and the discursive practices he encountered in the United States.

I believe that postcolonial studies, as seen in the minority literatures, have a positive impact on students or teachers who have almost the same situation that I am currently in. For example, most of the immigrant students that I meet every day here in the States have the same common feeling about the postcolonial studies. As we read postcolonial texts, we usually find ourselves involved with issues that authors are discussing. The feeling of being “others” can be considered a common sense that most immigrant students usually share. In my case, I am a Saudi student here in the Unites States, and I usually think of my identity in relation to what I am studying.

The primary purpose of this paper was to apply postcolonial theory to his own context, of so-called third-world countries, and understand how the dominant Western literature portrayed the East as inferior. Manea’s choice of this voice stemmed from his emotional integrations of his feelings as the “other” in the United States and into his study, as well as his empathic identification with other minority students. Including other members in his text such as “immigrants students” [with his] “feeling about the postcolonial studies” [and then following it up with] “we” is an ideological tactic shaped by his postcolonial disciplinary to construct an
affinity. Manea thinks that the approach of postcolonial theory in relation to his identity such as “I am a Saudi student here in the Unites States” and “I usually think of my identity in relation to what I am studying.” He believed that being a postcolonial researcher can help him and other students complicate the dominant narratives and ideologies that would marginalize immigrant students in the United States and their cultures. By enacting such a voice, Manea seemed to empower his own voice by clearly stating that postcolonial theory can be a platform for him to provide “a positive impact” in the future.

Ali and Saleh

Ali and Saleh portray a voice ideologically unique in their field of education and their experiences. Ali, one of the male participants, has been studying in the United States for about 5 years in two different American institutions. As a curriculum and instruction major, his areas of interests revolve around critical theory and pedagogy. Saleh, another male Saudi student, has been studying in the United States for about 6 years; his academic experience in cultural foundations of education is very deep as he has studied at three different American institutions. Both participants articulated in their interviews that the universities they were currently attending are relatively progressive. Tracing their voice evolution, influenced by the institutions that they are studying at now, I found that these two writers shared some common ground. They both created a voice informed by the disciplinary discourses, experiences, and ideology of their field—critical education.

In his first paper, “Problematizing Quality and Assessment in Education,” Ali wrote about the westernization of quality units, which are departments responsible for assessing and improving the quality of instruction in Saudi higher education, in his home country, Saudi Arabia. In this paper, he tried to raise some critical questions regarding importing quality
standards of Western education without recognizing the cultural sensitivity of the Saudi local context. In particular, tried to see aspects of power dynamics in global education as played out in these quality units without any consideration to local context. In my interview with Ali, I asked where in the paper he thought that his voice was visible and why. He responded as follows:

The reason why I chose this topic in particular is because I served in the deans of Quality and Development office at the College of Education at University <name withheld> for a year and a half. Over the period from September 2013 until December 2014, I was able to familiarize myself with the mission statement, objectives, and tasks of the Development and Quality Department at the university. When I was working for the dean of the Development and Quality Department, I remember having a conversation with some of my colleagues in the presence of the vice of the dean about the notion of ‘quality and quality assurance standards in higher education’ and what they mean. The vice dean gave us an honest answer and told us that he only knew the literal meaning and he was not familiar with the history of the quality in higher education because it is a new phenomenon in the country. I still remember this conversation because we were arguing about this topic for some time and we could not reach an agreement at the end.

Ali pointed out his experience and exercised his authority as an insider on this topic: “I was working for the dean of the development and quality department.” That is, he uses his professional identity to create an authorial voice that affirms his credibility in the eyes of his audience in this text. Interestingly, his choice of this topic is also intriguing for him as part of his exposure to critical literature about literacy and quality education; thus, he chooses to enact a voice shaped by his experience and the ideological academic training of his profession. In other
words, the context in which Ali wrote this paper gave him a safe zone to utilize and put theories of critical pedagogy into practice. His aim was not only to pass this class with an A, but also to voice his academic concern for social transformation and emancipation in a personally relevant context and to students from his own kin; his goal was to find a catalyst voice—a place where his actions might make a difference. Ali also pointed to the following excerpt as an example of his voice in writing:

One of the most disturbing rationales that the NCAAA stresses on, in their strategic practices, to legitimate their means is the need for creating “healthy competition among institutions.” Aside from the fact that the commission does not define healthy competition, it perceives competition as a positive indicator of good education. This perception ‘is interwoven with neoliberal ideology in education in which knowledge, learning, and intelligence are understood through the register of economic competition, social mobility, and opportunity’ (Slatman, 2017, p. 21). Agreeing with the aforementioned, Nguyen (2016) asserted ‘neoliberalism installs a new social imaginary that values competitive individualism over social responsibility and redefines democracy as market choice’ (p. 18).

Ali fashioned a critical pedagogy voice in this excerpt. He felt passionate and courageous in his disparagement of uneven power structures in the educational context. For example, he accused the practices of the NCAAA of being supported by “most disturbing rationales.” He further affirms this outspoken criticism by providing reasons (the socio-economically dark side of “competition”) and cited well-established scholars in critical pedagogy. This form of voice facilitated Ali’s resistance to the importation of western quality standards in his local educational context. In our conversation about his citing of “Slatman” and “Nguyen,” Ali stated that citing
other writers who ideologically align with his perspective is a tactic he employs to empower his stance and to add value to his argument. Ali’s act of voicing himself through citing other scholars is a form of reproduction of knowledge or a dialogic voice—capitalized through previous scholarly readings and critical discussions—that empowers his stance as a member of subordinate groups: being from Saudi Arabia in the United States and being a student writing for a professor.

Later in his paper, following the above quote, Ali again expressed his critical pedagogy voice when he wrote, “it is meant to mimic the success that other countries of the world had displayed when it came to be assessing higher education institutions” and also when he wrote, “I think that critiquing current practices makes us aware of potential problems and how we may be able to avoid them.” Ali seemed to be implementing transferrable practices that enabled him to ask questions about aspects of the dominant discourse that has been naturalized and normalized. He examined the surrounding power structures of the dominant educational models throughout history and learned how sometimes these kinds of power structures are reproduced in another context such as Saudi Arabia.

Ali was aware that these discourses of quality education are not arbitrary, but are rather naturalized, dominating education in Saudi Arabia. The problem with these ideas, values, and perceptions of quality education is that they look “natural [and become] common sense” (Gramsci, 1992). Being able to dissect such ideologies regarding the naturalization of these discourses is a voice Ali exhibited in his paper. Interestingly, Ali aligned himself with certain social and disciplinary groups—critical pedagogues—using systems of representation (academic writing) to interpret, make sense of, and define some aspect of what a quality education should look like in Saudi Arabia. Thus, Ali denaturalized the discourse of quality education and offered
possible ways of improving them. He was enacting a catalyst voice in the process such as “we need to localize the quality education standards and not to import them as they are from the west.”

Furthering the conversation about his voice in this paper and his experience in quality units back home, Ali seemed to deconstruct the status quo of the growing field of quality units in Saudi universities from his ideological lens as a critical pedagogy researcher. He stated that,

I feel here that my voice is so much visible because I am bringing my own experience as an insider; I also worked in this field in my home country; thus, I felt I can give an insider perspective. You might notice that in this paper, I have used “I” many times referring to my insider perspective about this topic and my previous local experience in this field.

Ali enacted a voice that is visible and strong as he stated that “I feel here that my voice is so much visible because I am bringing my own experience as an insider.” Being an insider and having first-hand experience such as “I also worked in this field in my home country” encouraged him to express his critical voice towards the quality units in his home context. Moreover, his use of the first-person pronoun “I” is another manifestation of his authorial voice he constructed in the paper. His professional training in critical pedagogy paved the way for him to use established intellectual and linguistic repertoire (e.g., critical pedagogy) in a way that also encourages him to draw on and incorporate his own voice / ideas / ideologies.

In the following quote, Ali continued his reflection and his awareness that an intrusively powerful group (e.g. the western standards) dominated quality education and inculcated their ideologies regarding the quality of education in Eastern contexts such as Saudi Arabia. When I asked Ali about what opened his eyes to the problem of importing Western standards, he stated:
Maybe I did not make the reason why I chose this topic clear enough in my paper, but my department is oriented towards critical pedagogy. My point here is that it’s not appropriate to take something or adopt something from a different context and apply it into another one as is. In our department, every faculty member has different ideological views toward education based on a local experience and this has given me insights that we as educators must be sensitive towards local issues. For example, the quality units are a phenomenon imported from the West and brought into my country; even the website of Quality Education Units in Saudi states very clearly that after Western educational institutions have succeeded in this move of quality units, we would adopt their way. So, in order to critique any idea, we have to look back at the genesis of it, and how it has developed. What is happening in Saudi is that quality units have overlooked the local cultural context that may affect the standard of quality in education.

It is through the academic orientation and the ideological training of a discipline that writers might shape their worldviews and interest in the text, as in the case for Ali. Ali enacted a critical pedagogy voice in this excerpt above as evident in: “educator must be sensitive toward local issues”; “it’s not appropriate to take something or adopt something from a different context and apply it into another one as is”; [and] “phenomenon imported from the West.” Those are typical terms of echoing critical pedagogy discourse, which aims to give agency or credit to marginalized educational contexts and resist any spoon-feeding or imposing of hegemonic practices. What constitutes Ali’s realities in the previous text was partly the systems of options he acquired during his study, which helped him construct his voice as a critical pedagogue. While he could have chosen other terms to critique Saudi quality units or could have even lent a blind eye to the Western values in these quality units where he worked, Ali deliberately chose to
represent his reality via selecting a certain lens (i.e., critical pedagogy) and authors to legitimize his stance and arrange his reality in the text. These ideological voices entail socially ingrained group values as, eventually, representation is socially constructed (Fairclough, 2013).

Saleh puts forward a similar voice to that of Ali but from a different perspective and on a different subject matter. Saleh wrote a paper titled “Critical Intervention for Teacher Alienation.” In this paper, he argues for teachers to be perceived as “public intellectuals” (i.e., someone who believes in the importance of critical dialogue as a necessary precondition to democratic life). His ideological voice to credit teachers as intellectuals, raise critical consciousness, and reform the educational practices in and outside the classroom is a case in point of his stance and nuanced ideology as a critical pedagogue. When I asked him about the purpose of writing this paper, Saleh stated that he wanted to “apply some aspects of critical teacher intervention in education and try to localize it and offer some hands-on solutions.” In this paper, Saleh manifested a voice informed by critical pedagogy by drawing on the discursive practices he was exposed to during his disciplinary training in the United States. I then asked him where in this paper he thought his voice was visible; he pointed out the following excerpt:

We cannot break this vicious cycle until we rupture this way of teaching. Moving the teachers from being technicians to be public intellectuals, from being spectators to being actors, and from being followers to be pioneers will not happen without the critical reflection. ‘Without educational experiences that are genuinely critical, they will reflect back the knowledge they have been taught’ (Sprague, 1992, p. 194).

Calling for “rupturing” the teaching system in his home country is a vocal and unwavering act of resisting the current status of teachers and the relevant common practices in education. It is very interesting to notice that Saleh is not only theorizing about the subject
matter, but also provoking policy-makers and teachers alike to move from “being spectators to be actors, and from being followers to being pioneers.” As such, Saleh enacted a provocative, critical catalyst voice, for it is his mission as a critical educator to help raise teachers’ critical coconsciousness and critically reflect on their practices. Critical pedagogy helped him to propose problem posing in education as a practice, which can promote teachers’ critical consciousness. Adopting the discourse of critical pedagogy helps him voice ways to make the values of justice, social responsibility, and respect for teachers in his context concrete. Furthermore, his ideological perspective is an attempt at shaping local education as he suggests alternatives such as “critical reflection,” which is one of the major tenants of critical pedagogy and literacy (Freire, 1980) to empower Saudi teachers. Reflecting on his writing in the paper, Saleh seemed to go beyond being critical of the teaching practices in his own context and try to acknowledge teachers as “public intellectuals” in the following statement:

I am saying this because our society has turned teachers down. Teachers feel that they have no critical role or any voice in changing society. I think that teachers can empower communities if they are given the chance as public intellectuals. In fact, this is my main message to teachers because if we empower teachers, then they feel the responsibility to change the society.

The discourse that Saleh enacted and presented in the paper is a form of social practice—a discourse influenced by larger macro factors such as the educational practices he had been exposed to in his home. He wrote in a voice encouraged by the discursive practices of his critical pedagogy-oriented institution (i.e., Comparative Education): his belief that “teachers can empower communities”; [his call to] “empower teachers”; [and his endeavor to allow teachers] “to change society.” Another discursive ideological manifestation of his voice is that Salah
tacitly chooses to insert certain discourses (i.e., critical and social theorist, other critical writers such as citing Sprague and Freire, referring to Marxism and Capitalism as a reference of potential readings, and calling teachers to become public intellectuals) are all forms of voices that colored his disciplinary training—critical literacy. Interestingly, the avoidance of other discourses (i.e., such as Arabic writers) seem to be in antithetical relation to his interest (Wilson, 2010). Not only that, but also later in the paper, he went somewhat further and started to problematize the ideological practices of his own context:

The dominant discourse was a psychological and religious. So, whenever an issue or failing happens in the education, we start to blame the individuals [teachers] of not being honest, altruistic, and hard working. Even if we blame the system, our analysis will be focused on narrow issues such as class size and teacher preparation. In the educational courses are derived from Islamic teachings and principles, and when we talk about Marxism and Capitalism, they will be portrayed in a simplified and shallowed way.

Being aware of the “dominant discourse” in Saudi Arabia that maintains the power relation in his own context is a significant example of Saleh’s reflection on his own identity and voice. His ideological stance is manifested in the text as a critical educator. Securing the roots of the issue in his own context and inviting readers to be aware of the larger influencing factors such as “religion” [and] “the system” is in itself an ideological textual representation of his background training. Through his professional training, Saleh invited teachers to critically analyze the reasons behind the maintenance of some negative practices and outcomes in local education. Empowering teachers as “public intellectuals” and highlighting that the issue of education is in the system not the teachers, was his main act of his critical writing. This point is evident as he wrote: “I think that teachers can empower communities if they are given the chance
as public intellectuals.” Furthermore, promoting his ideology as a critical teacher educator, he highlighted the main issue of why teachers lack agency in their profession. Another nuanced ideology he echoes is that his awareness of the root of the problem is not an “individual” issue but a structural one. This point can be observed when he wrote: “whenever an issue or failing happens in the education, we start to blame the individuals [teachers] of not being honest, altruistic, and hard working.”

Additionally, tactically implying a message to his audience, Saleh tried to understand how coercive relations of power limit the opportunities for educational, social, and cultural advancement in subjugated groups—teachers in this case. Empowering teachers, not only for the pleasure of enacting his academic identity, but also to help them discover their voices silenced through the educational and religious system is a case in point of a critical pedagogy voice. Saleh clearly stated in his interview that a “teacher should know that the lack of students’ outcomes comes not only from the classroom practices but also from larger sociopolitical aspects that hinder their roles in a society.”

**Reem**

Reem constructed a voice by narrating language acquisition from first-hand truth. The purpose of her paper, “Language Learning Theory: A Personal Reflection,” was to put language acquisition theories into practice by relating them to her context and her experience. To remind readers, Reem has been living in the United States for about 7 years, and she is a PhD student in Applied Linguistics. Unlike the other participants, who seem to be in a progressive, liberal school, Reem’s current school tends to promote a deterministic / structuralist view of language and learning—highly focused on micro issues of learning and teaching English. Reem expressed an *insider voice* in her paper, a move that writers adopt to exercise their authority over the
audience through the text—which may be conceived as a form of knowledge distribution that a
writer can enact when they are in a position of power (Clark & Ivanic, 1997). In this paper, she
fashioned a voice unique to her discipline in an assertive tone. The following paragraph
showcases her ideational representations of her voice:

In general, Arabic is the common language in Saudi society. This means acquiring a
second language is challenging because my countrymen do not have multiple languages.
Even the foreign people who come to work in Saudi Arabia can learn Arabic easily
because they are required to learn it. Other languages are not welcome in my country.
However, since English is a global language, it was not impossible to find a few people
who used English.

When Reem stated that “Arabic is the common language in Saudi society,” Reem seemed
to wield power over the text for two reasons. First, she feels that she is an insider to the Saudi
community and thus entitled to factualize her claim about the linguistic diversity in her country.
Second, her professional identity as a specialized student of applied linguistics paved the way for
her to use her perspective as an authority without citing any reliable references. The assertive
move utilized above in the quote is indicative of Reem’s ideological insider lens. Saudi Arabia,
as she refers to in the text above, is not a multinational / multilingual state; it is predominantly a
monolingual state where Arabic is the official language of the country. Her reproductive
discourse of nationalism by stating that Arabic is required can echo her home country’s ideology;
also, this move is a result of her current school system—the perpetuation of monolingualism—
that she is studying in the United States. In particular, her exercise of authority over readers is
evident when she normalizes that learning Arabic can be an “easy” process. Given her
background as an applied linguist—and her current conservative school in the United States—
her ideological voice to make Arabic a “required [language] to learn” [while] “other languages are not welcome in [her] country” is a case in point of her ideology towards maintaining the national identity of the country because she reports on this without critiquing it.

In addition to her voice above, she did not only refer to herself as an author but also utilized the authorial pronoun “I” as a tactic to enact and wrestle with power in the text:

As a speaker of two languages, which are Arabic and English, I did not recognize the processes or the strategies that are necessary to acquire languages until I learned theories and hypotheses that are related to teaching and learning a language. Those theories and teaching methods inspired me to think about the ways that I acquired both languages and the learning environment.

Laying out her linguistic identity as a “speaker of two languages,” Reem emphasized her insider identity and her first-hand experience of L2 learning in the field of Applied Linguistics; this act of writing is a form of ideological disciplinary and representation in the text. The narrative she presented in the text represents her voice, style, and power play in the text. To project a voice as a competent graduate student, Reem had to employ certain rhetorical tactics, such as narrating her story and relating to the language learning theories; this type of voice representation can further reinforce her ideological stance toward best practices of language learning in an indirect way. While she seems to be less assertive than Khaled above, she also did not refer to any authority/authors in the field and relied heavily on her experience as a source of knowledge. I asked Reem about her voice in her second paper, and she responded thusly:

Writing this paper has been a lot easier than the first one; the professor encouraged the class to bring their perspective and without any reservation. The freedom to write whatever you want by incorporating our experiences has given us much more freedom to
be who we are as writers. In this paper, I have explicitly stated my stances toward theories of different language learning in a narrative style.

Although I will dedicate a whole chapter to the role of institutional practices in shaping these students’ voices and discourses, it is imperative to point out the interplay of Reem’s power over the text and the role of her professor in this class. Reem asserted that she was very visible in this paper and used the narrative approach, or the genre style of her paper, to exercise authority and create her own reality through the text. Although her discourse is slightly different from my other participants (e.g., Saleh, Ali, and Manea), whose institutions promote a post-structural thinking, her focus on classroom issues in writing—micro-level—is an indication and telltale of her academic ideological background. Moreover, her professor played a vital role in this voice construction, as Reem stated that “the professor encouraged the class to bring their preceptive and without any reservation.” The affordance of safe spaces (Canagarajah, 1997), by her professor encouraged her to use her identity and historical experience to voice herself as an author with first-hand experience. Consequently, L2 writers, including Reem, feel entitled to be authoritative by drawing on their insider lens when given enough access. As Clark and Ivanic (1997) stated, “some writers’ life histories will have led them to feel relatively authoritative and powerful as authors,” (p. 153), which happened with Reem in her academic writing experience.

**A Brief Discussion of the First Theme: Discursive Ideological Representations**

In general, the participants of this study constructed an authorial voice in which they drew on their academic identities and dual experiences in both contexts, the East and United States. It is critical to realize that their critical stances in the above-mentioned texts were constructed due to their responses to a certain genre—academic writing—in a U.S. context. While not all audiences (e.g., their professor) provided a well-charted safe zone for these
students to express their voice wholeheartedly, most of them stated that the professor encouraged them to deconstruct the text, be critical writers, and create their own understanding, related to their own context.

Importantly, participants constructed their ideational (i.e., the ideological representation of the writer) and interpersonal (i.e., the power dynamics between the readers and writer) voices by using their experiences and ideologically informed selves, as insiders and at the same time outsiders of the text being analyzed (Hyland, 2002). Although scholarly debates continue regarding writing as autonomous, that which cannot be seen in relation to larger factors such society and politics, Clark and Ivanic (1997) believed that writing and the right to write are interwoven with larger socio-political aspects. Additionally, Street (1995) challenged the concept of writing as independent from the outer social and political world. Street highlighted that literacy practices, and written texts specifically, are ideological and shaped by larger social and political factors, among others. These L2 writers demonstrated what Clark and Ivanic (1997) explained, which is that writers in any field convey a message ideologically shaped by their social and discursive practices.

On a macro level, the examples presented here showcase that discourse reflects social and political realities (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). The access of knowledge and the feeling of insiders can grant writers the ability to write regarding their perception of reality or sometimes can prevent them from bringing their own reality and thus cause them to rely heavily on other writers’ discourses. These Saudi writers constituted their realities through the unique discourse they employed in their text, influenced by their life experience(s) and their professional field (in which their struggle comes into play). Every time these writers write in this academic community to a member within the community, they engage
in a dynamic and discursive construction of organizing and reorganizing their “sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (Norton, 2012, p. 4.). Nested within their sense of ‘insiderness’ and armed with their professional tools they have as an expert, these writers re-inscribe their regimes of truth uniquely, according to their specific field of study.

The significance of scrutinizing the ideological voices that participants construct lies in the idea that ideologies are tied to action and evaluated in terms of their social effects (Fairclough, 2001). These ideologies are located in language or discourse, discursively constituted, and found within structures and events. For example, since Fairclough (2001) believed that discourse is ideological, one can see different institutional voices that are ideologically loaded and socio-politically constructed. Moreover, according to van Dijk (1998), ideologies often associate with systems of beliefs, be they social, political, or religious, shared by a social movement or a social group. For example, Manea and Khaled tactically associated themselves with specific affinities and discourse communities that share “specific beliefs about the world, (to) guide their interpretation of events, and (to) monitor their social practices” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 6).

To understand the ideological representation of writers can mean that L2 writers bring with them their experiences of knowledge and their own alignments, values, and beliefs. Hence, writing is a political and social act. The examples above showed that values and educational experiences were both platforms for these writers to construct a unique local voice guided and enriched by the ideological awareness offered by their disciplinary training. In other words, the articulation of these voices is a result of social formation and discursive practices these writers were exposed to in both contexts. These voices are an articulation of their academic discourses and the local social events and concerns that study participants experienced (Hall, 1996). In this
sense, the voices expressed are unique articulations of these writers’ specific discursive practices and habitus (i.e., “a set of dispositions acquired through one’s inculcation into any social milieu . . . [a] system of acquired dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13) that circulates under definite cultural, academic, and historical conditions. Participants articulated their voices by “conveying messages about their sense of their own authority and certainty and about their relationship with readers” (Hyland, 2012, p. 178).

Resisting the Status Quo

Another aspect of voice critical to this study is resistance. Three participants portrayed different resisting voices shaped by their unique habitus, discursive practices, and their disciplinary communities. Influenced by their own lens, expertise, and backgrounds, the L2 writers in this study exhibited agency at times through their resistance to the practices of the Saudi social and educational system. In studying the dynamics of access to and negotiation of participation modes in classroom discourse, resistance emerged in this study as a form of voice in writing; the resistance moves writers exhibited are recognized through the inequality of power relations, as well as writer’s agency (Baynham, 2006; Hawkins, 2005), in choosing to participate in local practices in particular ways. Language, in this case writing, functions in two directions to empower writers if they have the ‘right’ linguistic capital; otherwise, this strategy disempowers or silences them in contexts as large as nation-states or as small as the classroom. Considering the previous themes and this one, resisting the status quo, specifically, L2 writers can agentively act using agency in their writing as a form of empowerment for social and educational change. Writer’s voice, especially in a form of resistance, is the mechanism for societal change. Moreover, writers enact a resisting voice “for the attainment of universal and [local] goals of liberation and social transformation” (Kamler, 2001, p. 36). Thus, critically looking at their texts
and interviews, one can observe that they manifested different forms of resistance (e.g., resisting local educational practices, the importation of western educational standards, and social positions) shaped by their ideological training and professional and ethnic identity.

More specifically, three L2 Saudi writers chose not to conform to the local pedagogical or institutional practices in their home countries. Instead, participants positioned themselves to push back the limits of local social authority and power to try to reduce any social or political power that suppressed their voices (Freisinger, 1994). Before digging deeper into how these three writers showcased their resistance and their opposition to the dominant ideology, it is critical to highlight some basic definitions of what it means for L2 writers to resist or oppose in the text. Resistance can be seen as a form of positive signifier of the writers’ agency (Ewald & Wallance, 1994). Additionally, Giroux (1983) borrowed his understanding of resistance from the Gramscian School, defining students’ resistance as when the powerless group contest authority in the text—a means by which students or L2 writers oppose the social and academic conventions. He sees resistance as a form of disruptive reactionary behavior toward a certain phenomenon. The voices these students constructed present themselves as active agents capable of negotiating complex networks of power dynamics and ideologies in their home country to re-channel, join, or deny the local practices. L2 writers can resist by not participating in the dominate discourse and rejecting through their texts any form of hierarchies. In the following paragraph, I will showcase how Saleh, Ali, and Sarah constructed and negotiated a resisting voice that challenged and restructured their own realities as shaped by sociopolitical and educational practices in their home country.
Resisting Local Educational Practices (Saleh)

My first example, Saleh, who sees himself as a social advocate and a teacher who aspires to change Saudi society through education—mainly by applying critical pedagogy. His ideological stance as a critical theorist is influenced by Freire’s (1973) model of standing against “the culture of silence,” where different social strata are given certain access while others are not. Saleh seemed to be promoting a catalyst voice. However, Saleh adopts realistic catalysis—relating awareness of how deeply embedded local ideologies and practices are and acknowledging the challenges presented by the local dominant educational discourses in Saudi Arabia. Saleh seemed to be acknowledging the power of the government and the politicized educational system in his home country; in this sense, he is aware that “social reality is based on the dominant discourse, which is controlled by the government.” In my interview with Saleh, while reflecting on his paper, he stated,

As a university teacher and a teacher trainer, I wrote this proposal paper arguing to use Critical Interventions as a way that help teachers in Saudi think critically of their teaching practices and raise their critical consciousness. Although there are some hurdles in the educational systems, I proposed in the paper some effective methods to change the current pedagogical practices. This way, I can give my students the tools to think, critique, and make a slight change for the current system. Learning the tools to think and critique is better than just complaining, and it is more hopeful.

He continued, pondering,

I think my role as a teacher-educator specialized in Educational Foundation is to help the students question the status quo and think beyond the limited structure.
It is obvious that Saleh tries to resist the status quo of the Saudi educational system that perpetuates silencing practices shaped by policymakers. For instance, his choice of “arguing to use Critical Interventions as a way that helps teachers in Saudi think critically of their teaching practices and raise their critical consciousness” is shaped by his professional identity as a critical pedagogy student, who would attempt to understand how dominant discourse is controlled, distributed, and maintained at the macro level—by the government—in education.

Critical to this conversation is his acknowledgement of “hurdles in the educational systems,” overtly causing this educational trauma that perpetuates ideological practices such as parroting the teacher, receiving knowledge as is and not questioning it, and crediting the teacher as the only source of information in the educational system. Thus, he chose to resist the current educational practices by proposing “effective methods to change the current pedagogical practices,” which can help teachers “think, critique, and make a slight change for the current system.”

Therefore, Saleh enacted his mission as resisting the educational system that suppresses the polyphony of voices. He then crafted his ideological stance to the next level as he expressed his transformational identity and mission as a professional: “to help the students question the status quo and think beyond “the limited structure” (as explained in his interview). The latter example shows an explicitly practical pedagogical lens through which he can empower student-teachers and battle with local educational practices.

Furthermore, Saleh’s ideological training influences him as a critical scholar, which he explicitly states in his papers and interview. For example, in his paper “Critical Intervention for Teacher Alienation,” he clearly proposed ways to implement critical pedagogy, such as “I think my role as a teacher-educator specialized in educational foundation is to help the students to
question the status quo and think beyond the limited structure.” This is mainly through critical
dialogue to help his future students to resist and question realities and dominant discourses; thus,
voices of other silenced groups or social classes can be nurtured. Furthermore, in the same paper,
Saleh argued for social change through education:

Third, as mentioned above, we need to change the way we teach in teacher education,
from banking education, where we deposit our students with decontextualized and
objective knowledge that is useless and irrelevant to the reality of the students, and where
the teachers possess the knowledge that needs to be transferred and poured into the
students’ head (Freire, 2016), to critical pedagogy where the students learn to question,
reflect, theorize, and interpret their experiences, reality, and the dominate discourse as
Saltman states, “critical pedagogy is a project of social and individual transformation”
(Saltman, 2017, p. 91). Thus, we need to change the way we teach from lecturing and
testing to dialoguing and reflecting.

The desire to help his students to voice their silenced or delegitimized experiences is
evident in Saleh’s interview and writing. Resisting the “banking system” as a common teaching
practice and referring to it as “useless and irrelevant to the reality of the students” is a
manifestation of Saleh’s transformative and catalyst mission to adopt some changes in his home
context. Perhaps such an oppressive approach to education may not be Saleh’s philosophy as an
educator, and that small change could be the start of eroding the whole system one day. As an
alternative, his catalyst voice is a straightforward example of him pushing back the practice
where “teachers possess knowledge that needs to be transferred and poured into the students’
head” and instead tap more into students’ needs and resources. This transformative approach can
be achieved by implementing “critical pedagogy where the students learn to question, reflect, theorize, and interpret their experiences, reality, and the dominate discourse.”

Further putting his realistic catalysis forward, Saleh used “we” as a collective voice through which he united with fellow teachers and educators to transform the lives of students’ through Freirean ideology of education. Saleh ensured its applicability in the Saudi context, to transfer his experience of voice to his students, and to hopefully help them transform their lives and their society through the Freirean practice of “dialoguing and reflecting.” Interestingly, Saleh’s voice in the text above is a form of participation or act, which is grounded in critical pedagogy as a means for individual to societal transformation.

**Resisting the Importation of Western Educational Standards (Ali)**

Ali, in the second example, showcased another form of resistance, in which he problematized the “quality control units” in his home country’s higher education, proposing further suggestions to restructure the practices of these units. In his paper “Problematizing Quality and Assessment in Education,” he questioned and deconstructed the ideological power of western standardization of education. He resisted the idea of imported quality standards to his own context, Saudi Arabia. Ali wrote,

The way that quality on education is promoted by the NCAAA lacks some important ideas that are vital to good education. Standing (2011) stated, “Liberating education for its own sake must be restored to primacy and the commodifiers must be resisted. We cannot remove them altogether but a balance in favor of liberating education must be institutionally achieved” (pp. 159-160). Personally, I believe that good education is holistic and liberal, allowing for a multitude of realities and possibilities and grounded in social justice, equity, democratic humanism and global citizenship. Being liberated from
intrinsic and extrinsic inhibitions allows us to be liberated to inquire with open-mindedness and love for others. The latter two qualities help define our moral and ethical compass. Also, a sense of professionalism subsumes understanding ourselves as free beings entrusted to make moral and ethical decisions with the purpose of serving others and effecting enduring values. Accomplishing the aforementioned in the field of education may be, or perhaps is, utopian; however, there is a glimpse of hope for a better future.

Ali is aware of the ways in which these institutions—quality units in the West—often operate to maintain their ideological status quo or values abroad. Thus, he clearly states that the “National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment [NCAAA] lacks some important ideas that are vital to good education.” For Ali, as a critical theorist, the importation of Western standards within Saudi education threatens to undermine his cultural and educational identity. Hence, his oppositional attitudes towards the importation of Western standards without considering relevant local and cultural practices manifested his educational “moral and ethical compass.”

Authoritatively resisting Western quality units whose standards are indifferently imposed upon Eastern students and teachers, Ali proposed critical pedagogy as a solution by citing authors who aligned with his ideological and educational belief system such as referring to author “Standing.” In the process of such resistance, he drew on his personal belief and experience as an insider educator, stating that: “Personally, I believe that good education is holistic and liberal, allowing for a multitude of realities and possibilities and grounded in social justice, equity, democratic humanism and global citizenship.” His belief system through resisting the western standards of quality education rooted in “serving others and effecting enduring
values.” This belief system reflects his ideational voice, which fosters “social justice, equity, democratic humanism and global citizenship.” This is a significant example of how Ali does not conform to the dominant discourse, perpetuating the ideology of a critical theorist who aims for social and educational liberation and rejects any form of implicit colonial standards. Enacting his critical pedagogy identity in his interview, he pointed out that the previous passage represents his voice in the text. He stated:

I do not agree with their points as they perceive education as a product that should be produced in one-size-fits-all manner! For example, the Ministry of Education they would give manual of how to teach and what to expect from students to learn and how to assess them . . . And I see this way isn’t effective at all . . . There has to be some changes to our educational system . . . what works in the US will not definitely work in my home country. . . we are so different in terms of what works the best for our education!

Ali wonders how dominating mechanisms work, such as exporting the quality standards as is to oppress and colonize other so called ‘Third-world’ institutions. Problems with the educational paradigm in his home country, especially the quality units, is a form of resisting the Western ideology literally imported to the Saudi educational system. Not being compliant with the hegemonic ideology and resisting the status quo of quality education is a mission, shaped by his professional identity. An important example of this is when he said: “I don’t agree with their points as they perceive education as a product that should be produced in a one-size-fits-all manner.” He then went on to resist the status quo of his current educational system and highlighted that “there has to be some changes to our educational system,” a decisive statement that reflects his belief in critical pedagogy and how to apply it in his own context. Not only can resistance in writing function on a macro-level (i.e., within education systems), but also
individuals such as Sarah can enact a resisting voice to deny any essentialization of her genre identity.

**Resisting Social Positions (Sarah)**

In addition to Ali and Saleh, who utilized a critical pedagogy lens to negotiate their voice in a resistance fashion, Sarah—a TESOL major—exhibited a different form of resistance in her paper “Cultural Autobiography,” in which she mainly reflected on her identity as an English teacher and a TESOLer. I asked her about a place in her paper where she felt that she strongly expressed her voice in the text, and she pointed to the following excerpt:

> After I graduated from English literature department, I was so interested to find a job. I had an interview to get a job as a teacher, but I did not pass the interview. This experience did not stop me to looking for another chance to be an excellent teacher and to improve my English language skills.

At the time Sarah had an interview with me, Saudi jobs were mainly dominated by male figures. In retrospect, her act of writing about her experiences in the Saudi educational system and about job opportunities plays a central role in her motivation to write in a mode of politicization and reject any patriarchal formations of her identity. Stating clearly and explicitly that “this experience did not stop me to look for another chance” is a form of not conforming to the rejection she experienced when applying for a job. Although she might seem privileged to some extent, as she earned a scholarship to purse her studies in the United States, Sarah came from a tribal system—a very conservative social group/tribal in Saudi—where women are more likely to struggle for opportunities to travel abroad, especially to the West, and further her graduate degree. Hence, choosing to fight and to be in the system, she instead chose to study abroad “to be
an excellent teacher and to improve [her] English language skills.” Pondering over her text and trying to fathom her form of resistance, she commented on her text in this way:

I remember I had an interview to teach English in Saudi Arabia; after the interview I felt very disappointed, because I felt I am not qualified enough to get that job, so I was looking at that time to improve my English skills . . . So, I fight for this opportunity to study outside of my home country and I did it and right now I feel way much comfortable to take the challenge and do more job interviews again.

Internalizing her role as less qualified and self-deprecating her identity as a ‘not qualified professional English teacher’ when she states “I felt I am not qualified enough to get that job” might have resulted from the practices of patriarchy that privileges men over women as effective, successful teachers. However, acknowledging her power and her right to “fight for this opportunity to study outside of [her] home country” is a form of resistance to demand equal opportunities for her as a female, and for the empowerment of other female individuals to create positive environments in her society. The discursive practices she experienced in the West mediated and shaped her visibility as a female and a professional English teacher in Saudi. These practices can include (a) accumulating the right linguistic and professional capital, (b) socializing with her peers, and (c) engaging in critical conversations in the classroom about teaching and effective ways of managing the classroom. It is very obvious that she is more confident to go back to “take the challenge and do more jobs interviews again.” That is, she took the courage to re-inscribe and rewrite her journey by pursuing her MA degrees in the United States. Interestingly, such rhetoric is a capital that she might have acquired and built in the U.S. classroom through different discursive practices and habitus.
A Brief Discussion of the Second Theme: Resisting the Status Quo

At the end, Ali, Saleh, and Sarah exhibited different forms and spectrums of resistance in their papers and were able to reflect on them in the interview. For these writers (participants), being able to resist and oppose the dominant ideology is a move that they chose to take in their writing, which can mean being able to recognize their rights to speak up as they gain the linguistic and theoretical capital (Freire, 1988; Freisinger, 1994). These participants negotiated different tactics to show how tactics of domination work to maintain oppressive ideologies. These L2 writers’ ability to articulate different forms of “critique of domination” is a case in point of their critical consciousness (i.e., the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to act against these systems) in writing and their relationship with different sociopolitical power dynamics (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1983). Resisting the status quo for these writers manifested in a way that tells readers that they have and believe in the right to consciously participate in the transformation of their societies (Freire, 1985).

Challenging current pedagogies and social positionalities (e.g., as Sarah does) that reproduce the local or postcolonial oppressive ideologies in the Saudi context (Chase, 1988; Helker & Vandenberg, 1996), these L2 writers showcased different forms of resistance in their texts. Saleh resisted the pedagogical teaching practices in his institution, planning to incorporate critical pedagogy to help empower his students when he returns to his home country. His proposal of realistic catalysis might not seem as realistic as written now in his paper when he gets back home because of the institutional constraints (see institutional effects in Chapter five). Meanwhile, Ali opposed the importation of Western ideology through quality units in Saudi education and proposed to relocate these standards to local practices and standards that suit his context. Sarah, by contrast, pushed back the limits of her identity and resisted her experience of
the job rejection and chose to fight for her professional identity to become a better English teacher. For these writers, opposing the status quo to create an emancipatory society with a more equitable distribution of power (Freisinger, 1994) is a mission they aspire to take on when they return to their home institutions.

Saleh, Ali, and Sarah resisted new pedagogical and social practices inconsistent with their social desires and imagined constructions of their communities in the future. It is important to note that the negotiation strategies observed in this study emerge contingently and dynamically, especially as experiences change over time. To choose not to conform to the status quo is to resist; these L2 writers exercised power over current practices—a move that manifests a latent exigency for resistance in their writing. Moreover, they “actively work against the dominant ideology” (Chase, 1988, p. 15) to achieve self and social emancipation. Understanding resistance as a form of positive engagement in the text to transform local practices “give[s] scope for micro-politics, encouraging subjects to negotiate power in specific areas of local life” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 33) and allows for the potential development or plethora of voices to nurture.

**Voice as a Process of Ideological Becoming**

Although some aspects of this theme might interplay with the resistance discussed above, I draw a line between resisting and the possibility to transfer voices. This transferability of voice allows these writers to empower the voiceless students in Saudi, transfer the tools and the educational models that help students and teachers alike to raise their critical consciousness and democratize and humanize education. The process of ideological becoming active members means that participants accumulated a number of discursive practices and habitus—social, educational, and intellectual—that enable writers to transform their values, views, and practices.
to voice themselves and others as well. Voice for these writers are means of thinking out loud, ‘*languaging,*’ feeling the right to use language to grow intellectually, thinking individually, and being assertive in and confident about their right to speak up.

Participants use their voice to fashion proactive identities and to negotiate their subjectivities among networks of complex power dynamics and ideologies in the United States and then eventually, possibly, transfer them in Saudi Arabia. These proactive identities nurtured from exposure to a plethora of classroom discussions, literature, and reflective critical writing assignments—as a form of new literacy practices—that might be novice to them. Additionally, these participants experience of making connections between what they already knew and what they are learning and connecting to their local contexts manifests a form of actively constructing knowledge as they needed it, and, thus, they ideologically become different individuals with different options of ideologies and identities.

These practices—mainly writing processes and assignments—which some participants stated in the interview, have in some ways ideologically changed their views towards the world and reflected in their writing papers. The question here should be ‘is voice transferable?’ Can teachers of writing and educators in general adopt a plethora of voices culturally and socially relevant to transform their classroom and the community they live in? Is it possible to encourage student writers to voice themselves in writing and in turn cause a holistic personal journey of evolution in some other social and intellectual aspects of these student writers’ lives? Answering such questions is not easy, as these participants enacted complex identities and voices that were constructed via a number of macro and micro factors. These factors aided them in envisioning a voice not only to please the professor (although it might seem hard to draw a line between what students’ writers really aspire for or what they write about so that they can pass the course with
an A), but also a catalyst voice that aims to transform their student learning experiences and their societies.

Through their professional lens, they advocate for a catalyst voice that can possibly change the paradigm of the specific fields they study in the United States. Central to this form of voice transferring to transform the community is that these voices can be seen as a form of empowerment to future students, a way to emancipate societies. Astonishingly, two female Saudi participants, Reem and Sarah, explicitly stated that the concept of voice is critical to them and that through the educational and social experience in the United States, they gained increased confidence to express their voices in the academic setting and outside of academia.

Of importance here is what I mean by ideological becoming: writers are exposed to a variety of different literatures and social experiences that can shape their identities into more dynamic ones; they can be inspired to take on these experiences and tie them to their own context, either by writing about them or applying them in the classroom. I built this analysis on the notion of ideological becoming (Bakhtin, 1981), which rarely includes discussion in L2 writing pedagogy. I use the term ideological becoming to refer to the process of “how [writers] develop [their] way of viewing the world, [their] system of ideas” (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 5) through writing. The idea that writers go through a journey of ideologically becoming emerges from individuals’ ongoing engagement in understanding and analyzing tensions between dominant and alternative ideologies regarding what counts as legitimate discourse. Therefore, ideological becoming does not occur in an isolated fashion; rather, it happens “through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 14).

In *Rewriting Student Voice*, Lensmire (1998) postulated that voice can be conceived of as a “project involving appropriation, social struggle and [ideologically] becoming” (p. 262).
Instead of assuming that voice is a fixed-end product that students showcase in their writing, Lensmire, from a feminist and poststructuralist lens, reassured that voice is enacted as a spectrum of development, which students go through both inside and outside of academia. Hence, according to Lensmire, some student writers may not be able to articulate a critical voice at first until they appropriate the dominant discourse and become a member of an academic community. This process, of course, can include many journeys of finding the right and proper voice, the voice that ideologically and academically aligns with students’ values and beliefs.

In addition, participants’ voices emanated from navigating social and academic struggles, whether in the United States or home in Saudi. Lensmire’s (1998) metaphoric conception of voice as a project, for example, is embodied in the data of participants; the ideological becoming of voices here and the transferability of voice to their own community to transform their pedagogical practices and their students is a form of educational empowerment. Hence, voice is always “dynamic or in-process” (Lensmire, 1998, p. 278), as requiring development and crafting rather than being “already finished” or “frozen at the beginning” (Lensmire, 1998, p. 279). In the following paragraphs, I showcase how Khaled went from a muffled voice to a more visible voice as an insider. Then I illustrate Reem, Sarah, and Manea’s journey of ideological becoming as proactive members of their communities.

**Khaled’s Ideological Becoming: Muffled, Masking, and Ventriloquizing Voices**

The discourse of the powerful group in a society may dominate the mainstream rhetoric and thus shape writers’ voices and identities. Simultaneously, writerly voice can often be constructed according to the interests of those who hold the reins of society, pushed back through the subordinate group by the act of writing. Thus, the interaction between power and voice is nonlinear, rather dialectical. Therefore, writers’ construction of voice is never linear or orderly. It
is a process that occurs in complex ways with increasing levels of social, cultural, and academic knowledge. Factors such as meaning systems, beliefs, values, consciousness, convention, and ways of thinking and viewing the world are vital to writers’ ways of expressing their ideologies.

It is interesting to note that, although the Western convention encourages writers to present their own argument and challenge the topic being discussed, Khaled masks his voice (even though sometimes masking voice in writing is itself an act of voice), especially during the interview. Although Khaled voiced himself in some aspects of the Arab Spring paper from a place of experience, he manifested his argument in the Planned Parenthood paper differently and tried to avoid including any personal experience in his paper. This act of masking was evident when interviewing Khaled and I asked him why he did not relate significant issues argued in his paper to his own experience. In the following paragraphs, I show Khaled’s journey of voice construction masked with facts and supposedly objective self-distance, as discussed in his interview. I call this phenomenon muffled voice, a move in which L2 writers use others’ ideologies to obscure their stance and presence in the text—a reproductive move that conforms to the western dominant discourse.

Khaled, studying composition and rhetoric, fashioned a voice unique in each of his two papers. When reading his second paper, about the Arab Spring, I felt that his voice was more visible for numerous reasons. First, his list of reference was much shorter than in his first paper; second, he utilized his ethnic and geopolitical insider experience to express a stronger voice. Third, being an insider can give writers a platform to exercise somewhat authority in the text over readers (for more information and examples on this, readers may visit the first theme in which I discussed his voice in the Arab Spring paper). When I analyzed and compared both papers, his voice in the first—Planned Parenthood—seemed muffled and almost invisible. He
neither used personal references, such as I, nor related the topic to his own experience or context. While the topic of Planned Parenthood may be challenging for many students to handle, it can be particularly challenging for Khaled, as it is not the type of topic that people argue/write about in Saudi Arabia.

Similarly, Khaled seemed, in the “Planned Parenthood” paper, to be aware and critical of rhetorical tactics writers and speakers utilize when they deliver or write to the public. His professional identity as a rhetorician influenced his writing when analyzing the rhetorical tactics used by both parties—Democrats and Republicans. In his paper, he stated:

Since the beginning of 2015, the U.S. elections have occupied the public interest and the media coverage as well. The two biggest and influential parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, have been going at each other at every stage of their campaigns. However, their debates did not only depend on arguing for what each party is able to contribute to the general public, but also by tapping into some controversial debates considering “Planned Parenthood” as well.

The prompt that Khaled was given in his class was to choose a topic and apply rhetorical theory to it. Hence, choosing to write about this political conflict and scrutinizing the different ideological stances of both parties, Republicans and Democrats, is an interesting move on Khaled’s end. His motivation to write about such a topic is influenced by a dominant discourse—media discourse—in his current context, the United States, as he clearly stated this in the interview:

I have been reading a lot and seeing a lot of Facebook and Twitter posts about the Planned Parenthood . . . and it was at that time a big debate in the media between people and also a lot of incidents happened at that time.
Thus, choosing to fit in by writing about “controversial debates” is an act of identity politics that writers such as Khaled intentionally took to fit into the mainstream media discourse at that time (i.e., when he first started his PhD program). To better understand, I asked Khaled a question about how his awareness of these rhetorical tactics used by both parties in the United States affected his stance or identity especially when writing about a controversial Western topic. Upon my asking him further about his voice in the paper, he stated:

I am not using my voice as a judge or as a main factor, I am trying to find the goal of these writers to convince the mass about their moral stance . . . I am not trying to critique . . . I am not trying to have my voice influence the reader . . . I am trying to give the reader more than I give myself . . . I am trying to explain what and how I saw these rhetorical tactics are being used by both parties . . . but it is not my voice that I am using to convince the readers. I am trying to use examples and they can follow what they call my lead, or they can follow some other lead and read other sources.

Writing about such a controversial and local topic in the United States may require solid genre knowledge for L2 writers to appropriate or borrow some terms to make meaning, negotiate their voice, and offer critical insights in their writing about the topic (Tardy, 2014). The mere fact that Khaled is not trying to voice himself in the first paper or “not using [his] voice as a judge or as a main factor” can be seen as another form of voice derived from other western dominant discourses/authors in his current context, the United States, which to an increased degree shaped his current voice in this text. The nuanced voice expressions he tactically presented in the text such as “I am trying to explain what and how I saw these rhetorical tactics are being used by both parties” [and] “I am trying to use examples and they can follow what they call my lead, or they can follow some other lead” can be seen as significant examples of a
writer’s muffled voice. This can be accomplished by choosing a topic that is novice for writers, citing other expert writers who wrote about the topic, and trying not to integrate any personal intake in the paper.

Additionally, I was intrigued that an Arab, a Saudi, and a Muslim chose to write about a controversial, local topic for its novelty. Discussion of Planned Parenthood or abortion is not a common topic discussed in Saudi Arabia’s societal and educational system. Teachers of writing in general serve and maintain the hegemonic ideology of the Saudi system, which perpetuates the ideology of dominant groups in Saudi Arabia and silences non-dominant ideologies. Khaled’s choice of this topic is in and of itself a form of ventriloquizing the voice of the U.S.’s dominant discourse in order to be valued and included as a legitimate member in the U.S. higher education community. When asked in the interview about the reason why he chose to write about such a topic, Khaled replied: “I wanted to write about something that my professor would love to read and something that is to the level of a PhD.” Later in the interview, when he stated that “[he] tried to get some of the facts . . . the pillars of this subject,” he offered a significant example of how he masked his voice with “facts” to legitimize his expressions about both parties.

Interestingly, Khaled’s essay demonstrates that his previous academic and social experience did not always give him the opportunity to appropriate language for his own intentions and to imprint with his own voice. Rather, he chose to “recite others’ words” (Ritchie, 1989, p. 161), hoping that his argument and choice of topic would be accepted as legitimate discourse, where the class is predominantly White, middle-class American graduate students (as Khaled reported in the interview). Furthermore, choosing to be invisible in the text can be in itself a display of the ideological awareness of the writer. In this sense, Khaled chose to naturalize and bring his voice as “common sense” by ‘objectively’ citing other writers and not
inserting his own voice. Thus, his common-sense tactics to be an objective scholar resulted from an effect of power dynamics where ideologies and orders of discourse can be enacted in the text through writers (Fairclough, 1992). In other words, because discourse is a site of struggle for power, Khaled’s lack of mastery of the cultural content may have made it more elusive for Khaled to negotiate his voice, pushing him to reproduce the social structure and maintain the western dominant discourse (Fairclough, 1992).

While Khaled did challenge the structure of the both parties arguing for pro or anti-choice through the tools of his discipline by uncovering its deceptive and manipulative rhetoric, he did so impersonally and through self-distance. His unique fingerprint was not as traceable in the text. The text, as he acknowledged, felt like an excerpt from a random neutralized, cookie-cutter Western academic journal. He attempted to reproduce the western dominant discourse. In his discussion of a Western topic, he clung to the patriarchal Western epistemology that sings the praises of impersonality, so-called objectivity, and logic over emotions and personal experience.

Another example where I felt that Khaled was not incorporating his own views and rather just paraphrasing other writers’ views is in this quote:

By contrast, Republican presidential candidates were “noticeably silent” about the killings at the Planned Parenthood facility (Davidson, 2015). Only Ted Cruz mentioned the incident at all in the following days, while Rand Paul, Jeb Bush, and the others basically ignored the shooting incident but spoke out on other topics. Ted Cruz did recognize the incident, but he failed to condemn the killings as an act of terrorism. His message was simply that he was “praying for the loved ones of those killed, those injured & first responders,” and this response seemed to indicate selective compassion, to say the least, given all the violence that had taken place (Davidson, 2015).
In the excerpt, Khaled tried to be objective by not directly stating his own take on the issue although it could have been very interesting to read his stance on this issue, which can be somewhat controversial in his home context of Saudi Arabia. By stating clearly that he is not “trying to have [his] voice influence the reader,” he tried to avoid projecting any direct personal take on the issue and conform to the dominate discourses about Planned Parenthood. Unequal relations of power are evident in the excerpt above. Apparently, Khaled did not feel he had enough insider knowledge to dig deeply/negotiate his stance about Planned Parenthood; instead, he tried to factualize the argument by merely stating what each party did and said regarding the issue.

In this example above, Khaled supported what Clark and Ivanic (1997) highlighted regarding the spectrum of writer’s visibility in the text. Clark and Ivanic suggested that writers articulate an authorial self through many different means, and they can be one of the following tenets: using the first-person pronoun, self-referencing, and being able to feel in control on the act of writing. Moreover, Clark and Ivanic stated clearly that voice can be articulated when writers “feel themselves to be not just writers but also authors with the authority to say something” (p. 153). Erasing oneself from the text as such is an ideological move that a writer “[does] as a default position, in situations where the writer does not wish to wrestle critically with competing discourses” (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 268). It is also critical to highlight because the course in which Khaled’s Planned Parenthood paper was graded, he might have felt the compulsion to satisfy western dominant discourses. In the process, he might have struggled to resolve some of the tensions between his text and his identity. Although he chose to engage in a U.S. mainstream topic to fit into the discourse community of the target language, he did not seem
to give space and voice to his own cultural capital as a Saudi voice and his personal stance, even if hesitant or uncertain.

Unequivocally, negotiating and constructing one’s voice in the text can be a messy process—a recursive path. Khaled showed multiple subjectivities and showcased how his voice shifted from one situation to another to negotiate the complexity of his identity (Fernsten, 2008). Khaled also struggled to express his ideas and voice in writing. It is also possible that these acts of masking voice were because to the teacher’s authority and language ideologies toward “good writing” and sound argument, which made Khaled align his voice more with the western dominant discourse in the classroom context for the specific genre of academic writing (Fernsten, 2008).

Notably, the lack of voice and identity manifestation in students’ writing, as Hyland (2002) argued, spring from the social and educational practices that restrict students from projecting their authorial self in the text and downplay their role as writers. Interestingly, Khaled’s previous cultural and institutional practices—in Saudi Arabia—could have affected his selection of authority in writing (Shen, 1989). For him, writing with voice meant reconstructing his identity because—in his home country—it is challenging to write by using the pronoun I and to comfortably voice himself about such a Western, novice topic that conflicts with his ideology. Instead, he used “facts” as a shield to avoid any personal involvement in the matter. Accordingly, sometimes writers feel less authoritative, as in the case of Khaled’s paper, and less inclined to verbalize their voice out of a lack of experience and / or see themselves as an outsider to the topic— their discursive practices do not grant them enough access / power to the topic being discussed (Ivanic & Clark, 1997). The first sample of his writing—Plant Parenthood paper—reminds us that Khaled relinquished control over the topic and relayed names of other authorities.
or some abstract impersonal sources such as his question about the fight on terrorism. However, in the following passages, I show how Khaled moved from a muffled voice into a more authorial voice.

**Khaled’s Story of Ideological Becoming: Insider Voice and Groping for Power**

However, Khaled’s voice in his second paper, “How Writing Shifted from Covering the News to Creating the News in Social Media During the Arab Spring,” where he scrutinizes the power of social media in firing up the uprisings of the Arab Spring, is intriguing in a different way. In this paper, Khaled used his experience and identity to voice himself as an insider. He tried to argue for the power of language and how language in social media incited the masses to rebel. By not referencing any Western writers and positioning himself as an insider, Khaled constructed an authorial voice; he seemed to be more confident and surer that these rhetorical tactics used by media users played a critical role in the uprising without even citing one credential resource to back up his stance. He wrote, “The protests commonly called Facebook or Twitter Revolutions since the protesters mostly used social media platforms during the uprisings,” claiming that these tools—the social media—were used by protesters to inflate the start of the revolution in the Middle East.

The act of writing about the political unrest in the Arab countries by referring to the power of language “to elaborate how social media platforms affected the overall results of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions” is an act of voice that holds power for the author and ideology of the writer. It is very critical to notice that the order of discourse in Khaled’s paper indexes his position as both an author and insider. He achieved such an optional move by not abiding to the conventional way of writing an academic argument (e.g. providing enough citation
about his claim) and assuming the entitlement of his insider lens to disseminate knowledge as someone who knows his epistemic privilege.

Although my intention is not to scrutinize the lexical choices of how the writer voices themselves, sometimes this analysis becomes imperative for understanding that even these texts are socially and politically constituted. Thus, by examining some lexical choices, I was able to dissect another form of assertive, authorial voice Khaled constructed later in the paper. Khaled used definitive verbs such as “are” and “is” to showcase his perception or regime of the truth (Foucault, 1980), about the status quo of the Arab Spring. In his paper, he voiced himself as the following excerpt shows:

The uprisings that started in December 2010 didn't mystically convey stable majority rule governments and flourishing economies. At present, Egyptians are wavering, Tunisians are grieving a killed restriction pioneer, and Syria is a bad dream.

As this excerpt reflects, Khaled’s perception of truth included images of the incidents that happened in the Middle East, beliefs of how this happened, or practices socio-politically battled at a discourse and larger level (e.g., “didn’t mystically convey stable majority rule governments and flourishing economies”) (Foucault, 1980). Khaled’s awareness of rhetorical theory, its corresponding writing conventions, and the political status at that time empowered his ability to voice himself as an insider and an authority on the topic—a voice for the people, his people—again, as presented clearly in the excerpt above: “Egyptians are wavering, Tunisians are grieving a killed restriction pioneer, and Syria is a bad dream.” Interestingly, none of the above statements included any hedging strategies nor citations of established political writers, which can indicate Khaled’s regime of truth and his exercise of power over readers by arguing for the present and future of these protesters. It is also crucial to note that even though Khaled acts an insider to
Egyptians, and the West might see him as an insider, he might be considered an outsider—especially as a Saudi—by Egyptians themselves, and his voice might be viewed as the ‘hijacking’ of their voices. Despite Khaled being an Arab, the political complexity of the sociopolitical status in another Arab country is still not as clear as when one lives in the same country.

Furthermore, adding complexity to his authority and his perception/ regime of truth, he is convinced that what he wrote—from his perspective without citing reliable resources—in the paper are “facts” and non-negotiable. Although this act of writing unsupported claims, without evidence for one’s opinions, is typically not accepted in the traditional Western convention of writing, it seems that the professor created an environment where anecdotal, non-patriarchal, emotion-approving, non-Western voices were encouraged in the classroom. In the following excerpt, Khaled explicitly made his objective clear:

To be honest, I was using my voice. Ibn Ali was a corrupt regime, and everybody knows that, so I made a statement of fact not a fiction . . . So, I tried to see what they call the details and the facts and try to concentrate on them and all the problems that are actually happening in these countries. And how they actually been followed up by protestors by different social media platforms and agencies and those who join them and how they cover it.

The non-benign nature of voice is evidenced in Khaled’s comment. The mere articulation and factualization of his voice such as “I made a statement of fact not a fiction” is another place where power dynamics (e.g., exercising his power over audience) plays a vital role for writers such as Khaled. Other non-discursive practices, including the selection of topic, attempting to be independent from other writers, generalizing his ideological stance and naturalizing it (e.g., by
saying “Ibn Ali was a corrupt regime, and everybody knows that,”) and the absence of “I” to factualize his authority are all integral aspects of Khaled’s ability to establish power over the readers and discourse construction.

The layers of voices Khaled constructed and negotiated in both papers exhibited a spectrum of his ideological tactics employed to navigate his complex, multilayered identities, including (a) choosing the subject matter; (b) a careful selection of lexicon; (c) a lack of citations; (d) assuming a distant, objective tone; and (e) the claiming an affirmative stance in some parts of his papers. These choices manifested a political position that Khaled took on, which can be “from wholehearted endorsement of the status quo in school and society, to tacit approval, to critical dissent” (Benesch, 1993, p. 707).

**Reem’s Ideological Becoming**

Reem, a female participant whose specialty is in Applied Linguistics, manifested a voice very promising to the future of Saudi female students and the policymakers in the Ministry of Training and Education in Saudi Arabia. Reem explained that her seven-year academic and social experience in the United States as a Saudi female transformed her identity and her role as a Saudi woman. In the texts she wrote for her classes and in my interview with her, it was interesting to observe how her voice in the genres of academic writing and outside of academia evolved. As she stated in the interview, Reem stipulated that her American educational experience has “of course shaped the way she sees and perceives the world.” Her journey of voice construction has been stimulated ever since she started to write reflectively and critically about the field of teaching and language learning. The space given to her by her professors and the critical exposure to different literatures she read in class also molded her identity. For Reem,
coming from an authoritative educational system in Saudi Arabia has generally been a contrasting experience:

Coming from teacher-centered educational system, my voice to an extent was invisible, or at least, the chances to express one’s voice were rare. Reflective writing and collaborative critical discussion in the class were also absent; we as students were just a passive receiver of knowledge.

Major steps forward in her voice journey included studying aboard and trying to be an independent woman. These experiences helped her transform her view of life and voice, as she described below:

First and foremost, studying abroad, the mere fact that I left and studied away from my family and tried to be more independent of course with their support, was a great milestone in my life. When I came here to the United States, I became more responsible for myself, especially after getting married, I even felt more responsible about life and my house, and this has made me more empowered and that I have a voice that someone can hear or care about; I also here voice myself as a writing teacher and a graduate student from Saudi Arabia who aspires to better the teaching system in my home country.

Reem’s voice did not seem to be a finished product in both papers. Rather, her self-expression morphed through a plethora of life experiences that molded how she voices herself today. Considering the unique discursive practices and habits she went through in studying abroad, Reem must have been exposed to many uncomfortable scenarios—inside and outside the classroom. In addition, she had some challenging writing assignments through which she had to critically voice herself and weigh different attitudes, which she is not used to in her home country, especially in writing assignments.
Instead of echoing the learning style of her home context—being silent or a passive learner—she authoritatively expressed her voice as “a writing teacher from Saudi Arabia,” and deliberately took a transformative voice to transfer the pedagogy she acquired in the west to Saudi Arabia. She planned on “better[ing] the teaching system in [her] home country.” Reem’s voice journey is indeed a process of becoming, which was constructed through her social life in both the United States and Saudi, by getting married, trying to be an independent woman, and moving to the United States as a foreign student. Moreover, her attempt to actively participate in daily classroom critical discussions seemed pivotal to her voice journey.

In the interview, I asked Reem to identify in her paper where she feels that her voice is more visible. She pointed to the following excerpt, which manifests her visibility in the text and her catalyst as a teacher educator:

I will help EAP students to have learning experiences through creating an activity that allows them to build on these learning experiences in their future. For example, I will provide my students with different organizations that need volunteers, such as Safehouse Outreach and Recycling Outreach. Students will be invited to choose the organization that they are interested in to become one of their volunteers. In order to become a volunteer for one of these organizations, my students will need to fill out an application, participate in an interview, and attend the orientation. Through this activity, my students will have learning experiences in terms of being able to use the English language, proficiency language skills, body language, and social communication skills with the targeted organizations’ members.

Envisioning ways to scaffold learners’ experience in the classroom is a promising transferrable voice that Reem constructed in her U.S. context and is planning to continue in her journey of
ideological becoming with and through her students in her home country. Teaching is ideological, and Reem—through her experience, training, and discursive practices in the United States--has come to form her teaching ideology, that teaching should go beyond the limit of the classroom: “I will help EAP students to have learning experiences through creating an activity that allows them to build on these learning experiences in their future.”

Moreover, deeply examining her tone in the previous excerpt, it is clear she is enacting an authorial voice via avoiding any hesitation or hedging markers. She assertively used “I will” [and] “my students will have.” This assertiveness and determination could mean that her voice—as she contended in the interview—transformed from being that of a passive learner to that of an active researcher and practitioner who promises to make some changes in the classroom and social levels. The transferability of her voice in the examples above did not happen overnight (as I will argue later in the discussion; identity and voice are in an ever-changing status). It is a process that took several years as Reem accumulated the cultural, social, and academic capital to continue the process of ideological becoming.

**Sarah’s Ideological Becoming**

Reem’s experience of identity and voice formation are echoed in some ways by Sarah, who has been studying in the United States for about 3 years and is pursuing her master’s degree in TESOL. Sarah also has an interesting story about her voice revolution and how she, as a Saudi female, became a different person who looks at the world from a different angle. As a female and as a TESOL professional, she strongly believed that her voice journey was a process of becoming because of her unique academic and cultural experience in the United States. Reflecting on her voice journey, she stated,
My experience in the US, especially writing, have shaped my identity and made me more confident to say and write what I wanted to say in either the classroom or in any social settings. I used to be somewhat shy before and speak with a hesitant tone, especially when I talk to men; nowadays, after having many graduate classes that encouraged me to voice myself and say my opinion in the paper or in the classroom, I can express my perspective towards certain topic, without hesitation, because I came here to learn and be open to many learning resources that can help me better understand the world.

Sarah’s experience, especially reflective academic writing, in the United States had a significant impact on her identity and voice as a Muslim Saudi woman. Instead of being “shy” or “hesitant” to speak up, her personal becoming and “voicing herself” shifted her into a more assertive person, as evidenced when she stated, “I can express my perspective towards certain topic, without hesitation.” It seems that her journey of becoming this academic person was influenced by numerous factors including the following: first, the professor created a safe space in the classroom for students to voice themselves and to reflect on their experience through reflective writing. Second, her intercultural interactions and intensive reading had a pivotal impact on how she would look and perceive the world as a woman who comes from a virtually—and sometimes—oppressive, patriarchal society. Sarah’s writerly voice, nurtured through critical literacy practices, especially writing, reflected in her paper, encouraged her to be more articulate and visible about her ideology and stance toward academia and other social issues.

Stating clearly that “[her] experiences [especially reflective writing] in the United States have shaped [her] identity and made [her] more confident to say what [she] wanted to say in either the classroom or in any social settings,” is a case in point of how writers transfer their ability to voice themselves into other aspects of life and possibly turn it into a way of being.
Sarah stated that her experience through reflective writing provided her with ways to establish a social place and windows for others to read and hear her voice. The political aspect of the ideological becoming of Sara’s voice is evident in her experience: “I used to be a bit shy before and speak with a hesitant tone. . . after having many graduate classes . . . I can say my perspective towards certain topic, without hesitation, because I came here to learn.” Sarah made decisions about how much of her voice should be heard in the text in resistance to her acculturation back home. Her comment “I used to be somewhat shy before and speak with a hesitant tone, especially when I talk to men” stems from the ecology of her home’s norms and powers against women. Through her act of writing, she challenged these norms of her home country while in the United States and pushed back against the ideology in her home context that denigrates women in the names of decorum, sexuality, and morality. Her choice to be visible in the text and in academia are, broadly speaking, political decisions. The transferability of Sarah’s voice to her home context is exhibited in her paper. When I asked Sarah about a representation of her voice in the paper she wrote for class, she singled out this paragraph:

Believing how strong society is important, I will teach my students how to work as group which is helping them to learn from each other, and they feel all the students are equal. Based on my experience in school and college which taught me how to be confident and choose things I like. My relationships with my students will be as friend. Therefore, this will make my students to be confident to express their beliefs and feeling. Studying abroad, taught me how to keep my identity at the same time how to adopt new things from different culture. Therefore, I will use diversity of subjects to give the students opportunity to adopt new aspects in their lives.
Although every individual is in constant flux of becoming, it is explicit in Sarah’s text that she plans to adapt the voices that she constructed in the West (and during her past experience in Saudi) to empower her students in Saudi Arabia. As she became a different educator, her ideological pedagogical stance shifted from lecturing knowledge / information into co-constructing knowledge with her students. As such, promoting a democratic environment such as “how to work as group” and unfettered voices in the classroom such as “I will use diversity of subjects to give the students opportunity to adopt new aspects in their lives” are basic tenets that she acquired in her U.S. classroom. This pedagogical promise is a case in point of Sarah’s voice as a process of ideologically becoming, which she plans on gifting / or transferring to her home context. She also aspired to promote “diversity of subjects,” thus allowing different student voices and ideologies to hopefully surface in classroom discussions. It is interesting to note that Sarah will adopt these skills when most of her classroom students will be female like herself because education is gender-segregated in Saudi Arabia. She is not only transferring these voices she accumulated through her discursive practices and unique experiences in the United States, but she is also investing in the particular often-marginalized population of female students. Sarah’s training in voice as a writer might have helped her as a Saudi female student to speak up, resist, and find her voice, and transfer these tools to “give [her students] opportunity to adopt new aspects in their lives.”

The vision that Sarah will teach her students in a democratic and voice-empowering way is a byproduct of her ideological transformation constructed in her current U.S. institution. The applicability of this catalyst voice is rooted in her understanding that “people in Saudi have changed and they started to adopt different perspectives and became more understanding towards other conflicting issues.” Thus, the journey that Sarah went through reflects a daily tension for
some Saudis, especially females, whose culture might be labeled as less pure for voicing themselves in front of men. However, Sarah resisted this ideology and chose to promote her voice in Saudi Arabia. Despite the prospective hurdles she might encounter as a female in Saudi, her voice now is a courageous step to start thinking about these plans to influence other females in her context. She clearly stated in the interview that her voice evolved especially “after [studying abroad], I feel now I am more comfortable to express my ideas and to change others.” Tentatively speaking, the recent crackdown and the current political tensions might pose a constraint for her to act or voice her thoughts as comfortable as her current context, the United States.

**Manea’s Postcolonial Becoming**

In this section, Manea’s journey of constructing and negating his voice to become a more proactive member of his discourse community or home community is socially and academically mediated. In his paper “Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts,” his voice, as he reflected in the interview, was much stronger and more visible than the paper he wrote a year earlier, titled “The Adaptation of The Tempest into Multiple Film Versions Represent New Cultural or Political Context”. Manea specifically stated in my interview with him, “I do not see myself as much stronger as I am in the second paper, although I know what I am writing about, but I feel I am less visible in the first paper.” The voice he constructed in this paper “Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts” is transferable to other members of the community (the Saudi community) and can be utilized as an educational tool to empower his students and raise their critical consciousness. His journey of ideologically becoming is manifested both papers, where he constructed a promising catalyst voice that sought
to promote critical literacy and social transformation in his home country (I will show examples of this below).

It is no surprise that Manea’s voice journey did not happen overnight; it was through the educational and social experiences, especially the heavy, critical writing assignments, that he went through, which made his voice evolve in ways that aligns with his identity as a postcolonial scholar. Tracing Manea’s voice, he first did not reveal a voice that is strong, visible, or enlivened by his identity in his first paper. A year later in his academic life, he wrote another paper, about postcolonial theory, and his identity and voice were much more visible.

As stated before, these voices were shaped through a unique habitus and discursive practice in the United States. In his first paper, Manea constructed a voice that virtually echoed his home educational practices and social norms. Some institutional factors existed, such as his White male professor who admired the work of Shakespeare and did not allow opportunities for students to deconstruct Shakespeare’s work. Manea’s attempt to make himself visible through a first-person tone is sometimes overshadowed by the use of the passive voice, which can be a telltale sign of his past educational and social experiences back home, where such a writing style is often encouraged. In our conversation, he pointed to this excerpt:

A year later, I was asked to complete my postgraduate studies majoring in Literature. I was asked to study in one of the Western countries. I came to the States in 2010 and I finished my MA study in 2012. As an immigrant graduate student here in the U. S., I found my interest in works that have been written by postcolonial authors. Among other English fields, postcolonial study gave me the chance to discuss issues that have a great connection with my identity and to where I come from.
The text that Manea wrote in his paper indicated that voice is not an end-product, but a process that can shape and be shaped by western dominant discourses and institutions. When I asked him about places in the text where he felt his voice is most revealing of him, he referred to this passage, which explicitly represents his past identity and future self. The passivation of his voice, as in the example, “I was asked,” portrayed him as a passive object, rather than an active agent, in his academic start. Later, he became a case in point of how voice can transform one into a more active agent that aspires to push back and resist the possible future hurdles in his academic career, as in his later paper.

Although passive voice can be perceived sometimes as a form of voice, in my conversation with Manea, I asked him about why he used passive voice twice in this paper. The use of passive voice in the above excerpt, as Manea, explained “does represent me as part of my current identity or voice I constructed in the United States.” Being a product of an educational system that does not often encourage voicing in the classroom and living for most of his life in a context that does not allow or encourage conflicting views, are two major factors why Manea started his voice journey with a passive one.

Spending some time in the United States and affiliating his identity with postcolonial scholars, “[he] found [his] interest in works that have been written by postcolonial authors.” This example showcased Manea’s journey of becoming to negotiate and shape his proactive identity and voice with postcolonial writers, who sought to empower minorities and deconstruct their representations in any means of discourse. Referring to “where [he] come[s] from” is a reflection of a process of historical struggle that he ideologically emerged from as a member of a postcolonial society.
Moreover, discipline, or, in this case, literary criticism, can serve as a platform to empower not only writers but also the society at large. Looking closely at Manea’s process of voice is very interesting, as, later in the paper “Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts,” he envisioned the future by using his ideological understanding of realities, supported by his professional identity as a postcolonial scholar. As he explained in the excerpt below, his voice-flourishing journey was a result of a series of life events, experiences, and social tensions to voice himself in the text. He reflected on this journey by stating,

Honestly, having majored in literature and criticism in my PhD program has been a life-changing experience. More specifically, criticism theories have shifted my mission as an educator from being a student, a receiver of knowledge, into a critical receiver of knowledge. This has prompted me to raise my students’ consciousness by helping them see the macro aspects, which are the larger the structure that controls the world and shapes its realities.

The disciplinary expectation and the academic writing genre were both critical tools for his voice to surface in the text: “having majored in literature and criticism in my PhD program has been a life-changing experience.” Interestingly, Manea rejected his passive status in local practices such as “from being student, a receiver of knowledge into a critical receiver of knowledge . . . to help my student to raise their consciousness by helping them see the macro aspects.” Now, he plans to continue the journey of voice with his students: he wants to help his future students see the word and the world—how meaning is constructed in relation to a different relation of complex power dynamics.

His goal has, as he stated, shifted in his ability to vocalize: from only aiming to get a degree in the United States to aiming for a more catalyst mission that may transform society.
This ideological becoming is the result of reading, discussing, and critically writing about different literary texts. For instance, for him, taking classes in literary critical theory and writing about it has scaffolded his identity to become a different educator with a different future mission. His catalyst voice to “raise [his] students’ consciousness by helping them see the macro aspects, which are larger structure that controls the world and shapes its realities” is a reflection of his transformative mission as an educator. In “Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts,” where he uses the postcolonial theory to reflect on his identity as a future educator in the Arab world, Manea highlighted another example during the interview of the transferability of voice as a vessel for ideological becoming. His future vision is to transfer the voice he constructed in the United States to his own context to promote social and academic enlightenment:

My academic mission is a process of enlightenment that should be delivered to my students in Saudi Arabia. Those students need my assistance to identify how history, as represented in some of the postcolonial texts, shows that some acts may lead to or have developed into bloody wars. This paper is a portrayal of my personal life in academia. It shows my relationship with postcolonial texts and why I would share the same feeling as some postcolonial authors who are haunted by the legacy of colonialism. Sadness and contradictions in history are issues that I may find in some of the minority texts. Postcolonial writers seem to be haunted by such issues.

The enactment of his postcolonial identity supports Manea’s journey or view toward the process of becoming and voicing, such as “My academic mission is a process of enlightenment that should be delivered to my students in Saudi Arabia” for him and his future students. His discursive practices and his alignment with postcolonial texts have paved the way for him to
become and to transfer his voice in order to transform and empower his classroom. Establishing his authority, as reflected here—“Those students need my assistance to identify how history, as represented in some of the postcolonial texts, shows that such acts may lead to or have developed into bloody wars”—shows his transformative, catalyst voice he is planning to promote in his own context. Indeed, Manea’s text shows his journey of ideological becoming, which emerged from his critical understanding of dominant discourses and practices of literary works; he thus proposed to adopt postcolonial theory in Saudi Arabia, which could possibly empower his classroom.

**A Brief Discussion of the Third Theme: Voice as a Process of Ideological Becoming**

Khaled, Sarah, Reem, and Manea experienced different, unique discursive practices that molded their identities and voices throughout their academic journeys. Thus, voices, with their varied social and political positions, can be seen to continually reproduce and disrupt existing social and educational practices. These voices were constructed through a process of becoming and a journey that “is always determined by a system [whether social, political, or institutional] and codified by a way of receiving it” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 132). By being exposed to a different educational and social system, L2 writers can accumulate a heteroglossia of voices that can bring about change and arm them with tools to better their societies and humanize the educational system they teach in; thus, as an educator, they can possibility determine the system, or at least adopt some changes within the system in which they will teach.

Dealing with voice as a dynamic process and a means of ideological becoming, the four participants in this section expressed many voices relevant to the status quo of their intellectual atmosphere. Studying abroad, reading different critical texts, and dealing with social tensions and different ideological voices inside and outside the classroom discourse are a core part of
their voice journey. These processes of ideological becoming inspired these participants to aspire to expand these journeys by sharing their experiences with their students in their home country. Note that most of them are aware of hegemony and the domination of Western texts, yet they plan to critically and carefully apply these theories and practices to local and cultural practices at home (e.g., Saleh, Ali, and Manea).

Critical to this journey of becoming, these writers’ voices were not constructed in isolation, “but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 14). My participants’ exposure to different social settings, a myriad of readings related to TESOL, applied linguistics, and criticism theory scaffolded their ideological becoming and prompted them to transfer it to their own context. As Ball (2009) argued, educators’ ideological becoming reflects their critical awareness of dominant ideologies and discourses and the new consciousness that emerges from a dialogic engagement with tensions between dominant and alternative ideologies. Furthermore, the voices that these writers manifested show their willingness and motivation to disrupt local practices. In other words, they do not want to be only educators who transfer knowledge but also individuals who aspire to use the classroom as a platform to transform the society at large. By using their professional backgrounds and utilizing their educational experiences in the United States, these Saudi writers went through a process of ideological becoming, which show their subject positions as critical agents for a possible transformation.

For these L2 writers, ideological becoming is a form of *languaging*; this process of *languaging* can be seen as a “a dynamic, never-ending process of using language to make meaning” (Swain, 2006, p. 96). Through *languaging*, L2 writers accumulated the tools and “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (Swain,
to articulate their voices and ideologies in the text. The ideological becoming of their voices was a long, discursive journey towards articulating and proposing possibilities.

Through the medium of discourse as a social practice, Bakhtin (1981) emphasized that ideological becoming happens within what he calls “the ideological environment” (p. 14). According to Bakhtin, “[h]uman consciousness does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (p. 14). In effect, the ideological environment—be it the classroom, the workplace, or—as in the focus of this research—the **topoi** that writerly voice can take writers to—mediate a person’s ideological becoming and offers opportunities that can allow the development of writers as social agents. In ideological environments characterized by a diversity of voices as in the case in most of U.S. higher education classrooms, writers would expect new communication challenges but also exciting possibilities and chances for adapting these voices to their own context in order to transform the local practices in Saudi Arabia. For Bakhtin, this process is critical to L2 writers’ development and can be seen as a process of appropriating others’ words. In this regard, Chapman (2006) proposed that the journey of voice is a process that can negotiate “multiple, internalized perspectives that are polyphonic and ideological” (p. 18).

Moreover, it is critical to note that developing L2 genre knowledge (Tardy, 2009) was a scaffolding factor for these writers to envision the future of their classrooms. Although creative writing can be a platform for L2 writer’s creativity and imagination, some genres, such as reflective and critical writing tasks, encourage writers to explicitly express their voices and negotiate conflicting stances—as participants in this study showed. As Tardy (2009) argued, genre knowledge development is not a linear accumulation of new structural information but
rather a process of restructuring. Hence, in this case, L2 writers’ voices can bring about qualitative changes to the internal organization of knowledge.

These changes manifested in at least, two ways: the writer’s increasingly explicit attempts to claim significance for their work and their evolving sense of self as a member of a disciplinary community (e.g., my participants in this research proposed future changes and transformation to their classroom aligned with their professional field). According to Tardy (2009), L2 writers’ voices develop to become a significant expertise and thus gain access in their fields through their participation in different genres and adopting multiple roles and positions of agency (as teachers, researchers, insiders, and educators).

For instance, Reem reflected on her academic experience in the United States as a female coming from Saudi Arabia, and she exhibited in her text a catalyst voice, one that can help other female teachers have more agency and pass along to their Saudi female students. Moreover, Sarah constructed a voice shaped by her professional background as a TESOLer; she aimed to bond with her students and help them build a stronger community inside and outside the classroom. Through her unique discursive practices and her extensive exposure to TESOL literature, she plans to humanize and democratize her classroom by offering different aspects of learning that empower her students and help them voice themselves. In addition, Manea explicitly adopted his postcolonial identity to construct a promising voice for his future classroom; he beautifully calls his voice journey “a process of enlightenment,” a term that he earned from his extensive study in literary criticism.

As the main premise of this project is to understand the nuances of these writers’ voices from a critical, post-structuralist lens, these writers’ identities, subjectivities, and voices were always in a constant state of becoming, contradicting, and changing over time. Norton (2012)
stated that L2 learners construct an identity “in relation to the world around them, and how these voices and identities are constructed across time and different social settings” (p. 7). Norton further highlighted that learners—in this case L2 writers—can also understand their possibilities of the future, and thus, they are in a status of becoming as long as they are intellectually and academically growing. Individuals struggle with the tensions inherent in the voices that mediate their environment as they develop their own ideologies, and this is what Bakhtin (1981) called that students coming to ideological consciousness. L2 Saudi writers in this study constructed voices that reflected historical, social, and political practices and struggles. Additionally, their voices are still in a process of ideologically and academically becoming.
Chapter Five:

Findings and Discussion: The Effects of Institutional Practices

This chapter presents findings about the participants’ reflection on and their perception of the effects on the institutional practices of their voice. The focus of this section is to dissect participants’ reflections on their voice expressions and how likely they will express such voices eventually in Saudi Arabia—as the themes of institutional effects emerged in the interviews and textual analysis of the current study. While the previous chapter explained the multiple voices L2 Saudi writers exhibited in their writings, this chapter focuses solely on their reflections on the papers they wrote in the United States and the effects on institutional practices on them as writers in both the United States and Saudi Arabia.

In addition, this chapter answers the following question: What are L2 Saudi writers’ perception of institutional practices, with a focus on those with educational and sociopolitical impacts or overtones, that may shape their writerly voice or expressions? To answer this question, additional questions included the following, along with textual analysis of their final papers: Would you write/express your ideas like you did in this paper in your home country in either languages? Why? Why not? How would you address a similar assignment in your native language [Arabic]? And please tell me about your experience(s) writing in L1 and L2? These questions were followed with specific probes to ensure and capture other dimensions of any factor that may constrain or scaffold how they voice themselves.

To remind readers, the study utilized the concept borrowed from Fairclough (1992, 1995) in which language is a site of political (i.e., power dynamics) and social (i.e., ideological conflict) struggle. Fairclough (1992, 1995), in studying and analyzing texts, stressed that discourse is a form of social and political practice within a socio-cultural context. Hence,
language users and writers in this study are not isolated individuals; rather they engage in communicative and interpersonal activities as members of groups, institutions, or cultures. Discourse and its production, reproduction, and maintenance of societal and institutional ideology can extend, shape, and give writers access to their voice to express themselves in writing (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Therefore, in this study, the role of institutional practices is key to understanding sociopolitical and educational institutional factors that played a role in how Saudi students express themselves. These expressions of voices are best understood “through the ecology of communities, in which there is frequently inequitable access to social, educational, economic, and political power” (Norton, 2010, p. 2). Expanding the previous perspective, the study includes a focused analysis on the aspect of power in discourse from two concepts: avoidance and silencing. In an effort to understand the relationship between structure (i.e., institutions) and agency (writer’s voice) (Block, 2014; Fairclough, 1995), this study explores the nuanced power dynamics on these voice expressions. In particular, Fairclough (1992) emphasized “each institution has its own set of speech events . . . its cast of participants, and its own norms,” and he argued that structure and social events should be considered when studying meaning and ideologies in discourse” (p. 38). Fairclough (1995) also suggested it is necessary to see the institution as simultaneously facilitating and constraining the social action of its members: it provides them with a frame for action, without which they could not act, but it thereby constrains them to act within that frame. (p. 38).

Fairclough is explicit that discourse is rooted and embodied in institutions which are structured in terms of social power relationships. In this regard, Simon and Dippo (1986) emphasized that the production of knowledge cannot be understood independent from personal histories and larger institutional contexts. Understanding the influence of institutional practices
and the writers’ reflections on these practices in this section can aid the ability to capture ways in which language practices and ideologies are structured and situated within a particular social site. Also, it can help me understand how institutional relations of power can offer different channels where Saudi L2 writers can express their voices. These practices (whether political, social, or educational) can construct Saudi students’ voices and affect their visibility when they express themselves (i.e., voice). Saudi students, for instance, might experience challenges to express their voices because of institutional practices, whether experienced in the United States or in Saudi Arabia.

The understanding of institutional practices can mean any larger factors that encourage these writers to voice, parrot, or muffle their voices in the process of writing (I have discussed these findings in Chapter Four). These factors, can be, but are not limited to, a professor, societal norms (such as the stigmatization of critiquing religious aspects) that may threaten the writer, ecological educational practices (e.g., a banking system approach and rote learning), and an oppressive regime that does not allow for any conflicting ideology that a writer might bring to the text (I will present data for this in the coming sections). The institutional demands that can shape students’ writing voice, whether educational or sociopolitical, are practices that encourage writers to “conform to the local standards, uniformity, objectivity in the classroom” (Harkin, 1991, p. 329) and that might not cause any conflict outside the classroom. Harkin (1991) suggested institutional ideology can regulate students’ discourses to the institutional standards, which can result in institutional silencing and reproduction of the US or Saudi Arabian dominant discourse. This way, students in academic institutions may hegemonize the institutional discourses to become natural knowledge and, thus, this can serve and perpetuate the state and the school ideology at large (Bizzel, 1982; Fairclough, 2014). These values the schooling system
perpetuates in the Saudi context or in the United States can play a vital role in “mediating dominant values” (Clifford, 1989, p. 521) and function politically.

To better understand and gain a broader view of how these participants in the earlier chapter voice themselves, I explore large-scale institutional factors that either suppress, challenge, or encourage students to share their voices in both contexts. In the following sections, the goal is to showcase different instances where study participants expressed their perception about the role of institutional practices in shaping their voice in the process of writing.

Avoidance

The ruling apparatus that reproduces the institutional dominant discourses pervasive in academic settings are reflected in students’ writing (Fairclough, 1995). One of the main tactics that participants tried to employ in their writing process in Saudi Arabia was avoidance, which means creating a safe zone to maintain harmony with the audience, especially the dominant group. To better understand this, I adopted Canagarajah’s (2004) understanding of avoidance in writing for multilingual writers’ voices. Canagarajah defined avoidance as “a somewhat one-sided move to the dominant discourses without sufficient [or critical] negotiation with the other discourses one uses” (p. 284). This strategy—avoidance—is enacted when a writer adopts a position that does not creatively and critically negotiate tension between differing discourses (Canagarajah, 2004). The choice to avoid any potential conflicting ideology and conform to the dominant discourse, especially for my participants when they write in Saudi Arabia, is one way writers avoid wrestling with competing discourses. This move is in response to coercive institutional practices that form hierarchy, stratified meanings, and orders of discourses (i.e., norms and rules of language), which indexes unequal relations of power (e.g., legitimate and illegitimate) (Fairclough, 1992, 1995).
The discussion below indicates how some study participants adopted avoidance as a tactic or strategy to evade any conflict for different reasons. Two emerging themes from the data below will be discussed thoroughly: utopianization as a form of avoidance and avoidance of political and social repercussions. Although these participants expressed their voices and exercised a myriad of agencies in different ways in the United States, they expressed in their interviews their concerns about writing and voicing sensitive topics in their home context. It is also crucial to note that avoidance in these contexts shows a more conscious internalization of the Saudi dominant discourses, and thus, participants chose to avoid wrestling with other conflicting ideologies to maintain a safe zone and a harmonic discourse. The first sub-theme of ideological avoidance is utopianization.

Utopianization as a Form of Avoidance (Ali)

To remind readers, Ali is a second-year doctoral student in comparative education. He has been living in the United States for about 5 years and aligns himself with authors of social theory. Although he seemed to be applying critical theoretical approaches to education, in the interview he reflected on avoiding any ideological conflict with his home institutions. In his paper, “Theory and Research in Curriculum and Instruction”, his aim was to reflect on personal experience in education to link those experiences with educational theory and the readings covered in class. A close reading of Ali’s paper suggests his argument is for a liberal, democratic education that promotes equity and justice among all strata of society, as most social theorists might advocate for. This is reflected in the following excerpt from his paper:

Personally, I believe that good education is holistic and liberal, allowing for a multitude of realities and possibilities and grounded in social justice, equity, democratic humanism and global citizenship. Being liberated from intrinsic and extrinsic inhibitions allows us to be liberated to inquire with open-mindedness and love for others.
Ali is aware of one of his primary missions as an educator, which is to raise students’ critical consciousness. By adopting and aligning himself with critical scholars of education, his ideological lens toward education seems somewhat Western-oriented. By clearly stating that “good education is holistic and liberal, allowing for a multitude of realities and possibilities,” he aspires for a system of education that promotes a plethora of voices to emerge in classrooms and to prepare Saudi students to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. However, this view does not align with what his home context ideology perpetuates. Education in Saudi Arabia is shaped by a totalitarian system that allows only one voice to surface. Imagining that education in such a non-democratic system as Saudi Arabia’s can be “grounded in social justice, equity, democratic humanism and global citizenship” is somewhat impossible to implement, especially in a 2018 environment. Thus, the ideological conflict between what Ali wrote in the paper and the actual practices in Saudi seems to be contradictory.

Avoiding any assumption about his utopian ideas of liberal education, I asked Ali to reflect on his paper and if what he wrote can be applied to his home context. Specifically, I asked him, would you write/express your ideas like you did in this paper in your home country? In his response, Ali undoubtedly continues to celebrate the idea of liberal education in general but avoids any context-specific cataclysm and even puts his voice down as “unattainable.” Ali reflected on his paper by stating that

Hummm . . . [long pause] . . . see currently no . . . even critical theorists always have some reservation on some other ideologies. That these actions or ideas are not applicable or cannot be applied in today’s society . . . they know that some ideas or ideology are utopian ideas and not realistic . . .
As such, Ali’s discourse can be interpreted as vocal avoidance of Saudi institutional backlash—the trouble that an educator can get into by encouraging students to question power. Nonetheless, he seems slightly hesitant (such as “hmm” and “long pause”). He also chooses to avoid any potential ideological conflict that might happen when he teaches in his home country. Ali’s statements project a contradiction. In the previous passage, he stated that he aspires for a liberal education that gives equal footing for students, teachers, and policy makers. Yet, in the interview, he understates all of these concepts as merely “utopian” and as a “dream” in his home country. Continuing the conversation about his ability to express such rhetoric in his home context, he stated,

When I wrote this . . . I wanted to say that this is my dream, and this is what I aspire to achieve in such society . . . although everyone knows that it might be difficult to achieve such utopian picture . . .

Although Ali practiced agency somewhat in his paper in terms of what education should look like in his home context, he chose to reproduce his home ideologies in the interview, such as the generalization that “everyone knows that it might be difficult to achieve such utopian picture.” Ali’s reflection about his paper in his interview demonstrates his belief system and his concerns about his safety in regard to the Saudi education system. This system allows only homogeneous voices to emerge; otherwise critical change or voices are considered “utopian” and a “dream.” Voices that align with the system can greatly perpetuate, maintain, and serve the ideology of the Saudi system. Moreover, this utopianization of change can be interpreted as a perpetuation of current sociopolitical inequities. It is another means of internalizing that social transformation is too good of a goal for individuals to attain. The current political rhetoric that
controls even education makes voice, especially adopting critical theory ideology in a conservative society, somewhat impossible.

Avoidance of Political and Social Repercussions (Manea and Khaled)

While utopianization as a sub-theme might overlap with this theme, I chose avoidance of political and social repercussions as an additional, independent sub-theme because participants in this section clearly stated they would avoid stating or expressing their ideas or voice due to political and social repercussions. In the following analysis, I shed light on some aspects where two of my participants, Manea and Khaled, explicitly reflected their views on the topics they wrote in their papers. To remind readers, Khaled wrote a very controversial paper about the role of social media din the spark of the Arab Spring. Writing about such a topic in the current climate of 2018 is a courageous step for writers such as Khaled. This is because the rhetoric perpetrated by his home country and the neighboring gulf states, along with U.S. foreign policy, ban any act or form of revolution or power questioning. I was intrigued to delve deeper about his perspective in writing about such a controversial and sensitive topic in his home context.

Not only did Khaled construct a critical voice about the role of social media in establishing a revolution, but also Manea exhibited a postcolonial voice in his paper by adopting and aligning himself with postcolonial writers who deconstruct dehumanization, oppression, and marginalization through literary texts. The transferability of critical rhetoric and voices into their home context can pose much harm for them. Manea’s entire work focuses mainly on the East in general; however, his avoidance of not focusing on these aspects in his home context and applying them to problematize the sociopolitical practices in North Africa is worth investigating. In the following paragraphs, I will showcase how Khaled and Manea reflected on the voices they construed in their papers.
I asked Khaled some of the questions posed above about his perception on the paper he wrote in the class and whether he can express the same ideas in his home context. In his paper *How Writing Shifted from Covering the News to Creating the News in Social Media During the Arab Spring*, he argued that language has the power to change societal structures and transform societies. In my interview with him about the purpose of writing such a paper, he stated that he wanted “to see how social media has sparked the revolution during Arab Spring era.” The quote below shows that Khaled is aware of the political consequences when writing about controversial topics that question power and promote the role of language as a tool to push back, raise awareness, and resist. When I asked if he can express the same voice in his home country, Khaled responded,

> [Um] [um] it depends because I mean . . . you know . . . and most people know that you know the whole idea of freedom of speech . . . freedom of writing is kind *(long pause)* of controversial . . . so it is not an idea that we try to convince ourselves that we are free to write what we want because I know a lot of people who wrote what they wanted, and you know it didn’t end well for them.

The quote above is ideologically loaded with effects of macro aspects that create an unequal relation between the writer and the structure, which can influence, shape, or suppress the writer’s voice. For instance, Khaled is aware of the consequences that might affect him, yet he chose to enact his agency in a context, the United States, that encourages conflicting voices to emerge and to co-exist. The pauses and the hedging remark he made in the passage above such as “[um]” and “*the long pause*” are hesitant ideological gestures (Lakoff, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Johnstone, 2018) as he feels that writing about such a *taboo* topic can be life threatening and may carry political

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consequences. Repeating “you know” more than once is also another assumption that he and I know the results of writing about such sensitive topics. Also, Khaled believed that the right to freely express one’s voice is not promoted by the system in Saudi Arabia, as reflected in his comment that “freedom of speech . . . freedom of writing is kind (long pause) of controversial.”

More specifically, associating these aspects of political consequences with the freedom of expression and writing is a case in point of his limits as a writer to know when, how, and to what extent (if any) a writer can freely express what they believe should be said or written. This act of avoidance is because he is aware that “a lot of people who wrote what they wanted . . . it did not end well for them.” So, choosing to avoid any political conflict is a safe move that Khaled would consider when writing about controversial topics in his home context. It is, indeed, the context that allows him to express and take a courageous stance toward the injustice that took place in the Middle East by simply writing about it and inserting his writer’s voice as an insider.

Furthering the conversation about his experience writing the two papers he provided, I asked him which one of the papers was easier or harder for him to write. He stated that “To be honest, writing this one [the Arab Spring paper] was harder or more, you know, dangerous to use in my own country as it has its own repercussions, if I wanted to be honest.” Stating that it is “dangerous” to write about such a controversial topic that questions, scrutinizes, and deconstructs the regime is reflective of how writers, including Khaled, could end up, including dead—even if he did not state this outright in the interview. Hence, Khaled emphasized that if he wants to write about a critical topic such as the one he wrote about in the United States, he should mask his writing voice and try not to be “honest” or as critical as he can be. This act of avoiding any potential conflict to muffle his voice can root from the “the lack of individual voice,” which is an often-common practice in his home context. He also continued indicating
that voice is “is more collective and not individual . . . unless you agree with all of them or you are going standalone against them.” The pressure that Khaled feels to not “stand alone” is often an ideology of collective societies—including Saudi Arabia. This practice of unifying societal voices remains rooted in a politicized movement to maintain nationalism and Islamism.

Furthermore, his awareness of the political, non-democratic system, the banking educational model, and the often-collective values in the Saudi context could possibly be obstacles for him to express his voice in a collective, politically-friendly tone in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, realizing the political repercussion, Khaled believed that writer’s voice should not oppose or pose any threat to the dominant group. Hence, voice in Saudi Arabia should be appropriated in a form that does not conflict with any political figure. His narrative about the institutional role in shaping a writer’s voice is reflected in the interview excerpt below:

So, if I want to write something, definitely I am not going to write about a subject like that, but if I am going to write a paper like this one, I would definitely try to take my own perspective on the idea and try to deliver it in a form that would be appropriate and without trying to undermine any power or authoritative ruler at that time at least.

The struggle of Khaled’s identity and positionality to express himself with the same tone he expressed in the United States is real. Although Khaled exhibited an agentive voice in his papers he wrote in the United States, he seems to want to avoid these agentive moves when he gets back to Saudi Arabia. Using “definitely” twice without any mitigators or hedges and “I am not going to write about a subject like that” shows his awareness that writers in authoritative systems lack some aspects of agency and access to express what they truly believe.

Although Khaled tried to adopt his own perspective into the text when he stated, “I would definitely try to take my own perspective on the idea,” he will have to “appropriate it” to avoid
any political conflict. The institutional practices, especially the political ones, suppress writers’ voice and promote voices that perpetuate the ideology of the system. By contrast, Khaled seems to practice some sort of agency by integrating his Western identity by “try[ing] to take [his] own perspective on the idea,” and strategically infuse some critical aspects in his writing. Otherwise, Khaled believed that “undermin[ing] any power or authoritative ruler” in writing is a serious threat that writers might face. It is important to note that the act of avoidance should not be understood as a writer’s lack of power; rather the appropriating of discourse is in itself an act of agency, sometimes, to tactically create a safe zone for one’s self as a writer.

Similarly, Manea, who self-identified as a postcolonial researcher, wrote a critical paper about the power of words and how literary texts can promote otherization and marginalization. Echoing Said’s work and referencing him numerous times in his paper, it is interesting to notice that Manea avoided any critique toward the structure of his home government. In his paper *Sadness and Contradictions Represent Power of Postcolonial Texts*, his aim was to apply postcolonial theory to his own context, the so-called “Third-World” countries, and understand how the dominant Western literature portrayed the East as inferior. Instead, he focused more on the micro level and constructed a catalyst voice to transform students’ experiences via applying some tenets of postcolonial thoughts, including questioning, analyzing, and going beyond the text (see these examples in Chapter 4). However, none of his thoughts in the paper question the macro level of domination, as he seemed to tactically choose to avoid any potential conflict with his home institution. Delving deep into this matter, I asked Manea if he would be able to express these critical thoughts in his home country. He responded thusly,
For writers who use postcolonial theory, I think I should be very careful when I use or write about this theory back home for several reasons; I would not touch on or critique any domination in the society for reasons. I will encounter some difficulties because writing about such critical topics is sensitive especially when you try to tackle issues pertinent to marginalization of minority groups or students.

Manea’s recognition of the need to avoid postcolonial theory in a suppressive context is obvious in the passage above. As Manea comments, he thinks that he “should be very careful when [he] use[s] or write[s] about this theory back home.” The perpetuation of dominate ideology is explicit in Manea’s interview as he stated that “[he] would not touch on or critique any domination in the society” because he will face serious institutional backlash. Although Manea will experience an identity struggle as a postcolonial thinker, his voice will not be as critical as it was when he wrote his paper in the United States, which manifested agentive, critical voices that deconstruct the ideology of the west and stood up for a marginalized group. The fear of his safety is real because he narrated that he will have to perpetuate the repressive status quo for “reasons.” He did not explain in the interview exactly what were the reasons that might pose a threat to his life when he writes about such a sensitive topic. He did not articulate what kind of ‘difficulties’ he might face when expressing such a critical stance; rather, he assumes that we both are aware of what is going to happen when someone critiques or questions power in a totalitarian society, that this is a shared fact. That these topics are “sensitive” is case in point of his awareness of the
dominant ideology, and he stated he will strategically choose to avoid them when he writes in his home context.

Another form of avoidance that Manea strategically employs in his writing is reflected in his second paper *The Adaptation of The Tempest into Multiple Film Versions Represent New Cultural or Political Context*. His aim was to reveal how a White, widely celebrated author, Shakespeare, performs “othering” against North Africa through his literary works, which are—to many—indelible from the Western cannon. While he had to comply to certain voice-constricting educational practices back home, he still did not feel a holistic sense of agency when writing this paper in a U.S. classroom because his White professor is fond of Shakespeare’s work (more discussion on this will be discussed under the theme of silencing). I asked Manea if he could write this paper with the same expression and tone in his home country, and without hesitation he said,

نعم بهذي الطريقة لأنه أقدر ان أخفى نفسي واتغبى شوي وأقدر ماكون نفسي وفيه حذر عالي من ككاتب وقد يكون مناسب للجو العام في بلدي والحدود المرسومة لي وحتى لو كانت بالعربي نعم لأنه ما في صوتي بشكل واضح

Yes, I would write this paper in my home country because I was slightly invisible—I was hiding my identity. I was extra cautious; this rhetorical situation is very suitable to my home country’s audience and the general rules that we should abide by as citizens and writers. Even if I write this in Arabic, yes, I feel comfortable writing the same paper because my voice was not visible enough.

In this paper, Manea sheds light on a different geopolitical context, North Africa. In the U.S. context, he seems to be comfortable using his postcolonial scholarship to problematize the text
and promote a catalyst voice in a U.S. context—even covering aspects pertinent to the macro-level practices. However, in his perception of what it would be like to write this paper back home, he stated that he will be avoiding such rhetoric. In his reflection above on writing such a topic in Saudi Arabia, Manea indicates that he will be “slightly invisible,”—a tactic that he prefers to adopt. Moreover, being “cautious” and knowing that these “rhetorical situations are very suitable to [his] home country’s audience” is a manifestation of his avoidance of societal pressure. The ideology of situating one’s discourse in harmony with the mass (e.g., “suitable to my home country’s audience”) and the construction of nationalism (e.g., “general rules”) is reflected in Manea’s narrative. Writers in Saudi Arabia should not pose any threat to the collective values and they “should abide by as citizens and writers.”

Unequivocally, Manea, as a postcolonial scholar, is aware that discourse is a political choice, which can be shaped or constituted by institutional practices. Yet, he continues to voice in a very strategic and rhetorical way; invisibility in a text can sometimes be a form of voicing and expressing one’s idea. Manea’s struggle to be a ‘good’ citizen who abides by the country’s rules and who carries on his mission to transform the classroom seems to be in conflict with the dominate educational practices back home. He will choose to avoid any potential conflict with the power holder (such as questioning the system or problematizing any issues that threatens power) and will focus on micro-level topics—the classroom. This “safe” move, where Manea will adopt the avoidance tactic in his home context, which does not explicitly negotiate the tension between conflicting discourses, is a case in point that many writers might experience in suppressive systems around the world. Instead, he safely attempts to meet the expectations of his professors, through his avoidance voice, and interjects his voice in an invisible way, a voice that promotes and maintains the ideology of both his professor’s assignment expectations and his
home context’s social practices. In the following sub-theme, the focus will turn to another similar, yet slightly different theme, which is institutional silencing.

**Silencing**

The encouragement of visibilization in the Western classrooms, an often-overlooked voice, can have a wide spectrum of pitches; silence/ing is one of them. The study of silence and forms of silencing in discourse remains relatively unchallenged, especially in academic writing (Schultz, 2009). Silence, which can be a product of silencing practices, is often stigmatized and labeled as a lazy and less intelligent way of voicing and articulating one’s expressions. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn (2004) highlighted that studying silence and silencing practices in writing and rhetoric is essential to understanding the more nuanced voicing strategies in which silences continue to resound. She reassures that dissecting silencing practices in discourses is associated with language and power; it is a political site of struggle over who gets to speak and who gets to be silenced (Johnston, 2018). In addition, observing silence and silencing aspects in data can be challenging, as Johnston (2018) critically reminds researchers of discourse to identify and analyze what is absent and present in discourse as they both should be treated equally in discourse studies. She emphasized that noticing to “defamiliarize” [the] “familiar” (p. 60) is an alternative way for researchers to reimagine discourses, including absence and silence (Schröter & Taylor, 2017).

Furthermore, to contextualize the meaning of silencing in this section, I draw on the work of Thiesmeyer (2003) in *Discourse and Silencing: Representation and the Language of Displacement*. Thiesmeyer set the foundation of how institutions work and function to filter, represent, and select certain types of discourses that represent one-sided knowledge / ideology.

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6 The ability to express one’s individual unique voice and argue critically in writing.
Arguing for a theory of silencing in language, Thiesmeyer explained that silencing is not only a “physically coercive act,” [but also] “an act of language involving forms of selection, representation, and compliance” (p. 2). In her perspective, silencing occurs when there are other discourses enacted by a powerful group that silences the discourse of the subordinate group—which undoubtedly involves aspects of political and social practices of what is acceptable and unacceptable in a social event (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, I understand silencing as “a way of using language to limit, remove, or undermine the legitimacy of another use of language.” (Thiesmeyer, 2003, p. 3). In other words, silencing in the following examples means that student writers could not fully articulate their expressions because of other external subversive factors. These factors can include, but are not limited to, a professor as the primary source of knowledge in the classroom and the societal stigmatization towards any westernization of pedagogical practices or ideas that threaten the value of religion.

**Professor Embodying Institutional Silencing (Manea and Reem)**

The first example of silencing is demonstrated by Manea, who experienced institutional silencing enacted by his male, White professor through the type of the assignments and rubrics he assigned to his students. For Manea, who has studied in different American institutions, he realized that different graduate schools shape how students, especially those who come from so-called “Third-World” countries (as Manea suggests others perceive the East), raise their critical consciousness about different voices and whether they can critically see the nuances of power dynamics globally. Interestingly, Manea thinks that the spark of his critical consciousness started when he joined his current Northeastern school (i.e., the school he attends is considerably progressive).
Manea showed different forms of voice and agency tuned and colored by his unique habits and professional training (i.e., postcolonial school). However, Manea stated in the interview that, in his Western institution, he often wants to fit into the discourse of postcolonial theorists because he believes that post-colonialist rhetoric empowers his voice. He can relate their discourses to his own experience as a student from a context where marginalization and systemic oppression is pervasive and enacted by politicians in his home country. He reflected on his experience writing and adopting the premises of postcolonial theory by stating that:

I want to fit myself into this discourse and reflect how marginalization and oppression can be related to my own experiences in the world, and how to resist!

Even though he acquired the tools through which to “resist” “marginalization and oppression,” he is aware of the power dynamics—or silencing tactics—that he may encounter when he returns to his home country. His efforts to “fit” in with the postcolonial theorists seem situational since his tone and rhetoric will drastically change to avoid any potential conflict with his home system. He further explained in his interview that he “will not be able to write such rhetoric back home especially about topics that focus on marginalization and oppression.” This stance of avoiding the conflict with his home institution seems natural when considering the recent governmental breakdown of any nonconformist voices and silences of popular figures in social media outlets.

However, avoiding polarization and essentialization of student writers and their background is critical. Silencing and nuanced oppressive practices in Western academic institutions can be enacted by some professors’ nature of the assignments. It is interesting to note that sometimes the West, especially in some academic institutions, is not the superhero of voice. In the example below, Manea still does not find his host context—the United States—to be a safe
haven either. He revealed some thought-provoking ideas, such as that in his experience, his voice was not always uncontrolled, even in Western academic institutions. He stated that:

هنا انا كنت اقل ظهور وأقل جرأة في الصورة لاسباب اولا ن الموضوع شوي صعب وبعدين الدكتور نفسه توقعاته كانت عالية جدا وهو من الناس الي يحبون شيكسبير فنقدي وجرأتي لشكسبير كانت محصور فقط في إرضاء الدكتور والدكتور هذا كان يبغي انني ادعم كلا مي في كلام الاخرين اكثر من الدكتور الي يبغي اربط واقعي في النظر

I see myself as less visible in this paper and less confident. The topic of critiquing Shakespeare literary work is slightly hard. Also, the professor is a White British who admires Shakespeare’s work and does not allow students’ criticism of it. All of what I have focused here in this paper is pleasing the professor and trying to support any implicit criticism by quoting other writers as he always wanted us to do.

For Manea, decentralization the performance of “othering” and deconstructing the work of a White, widely celebrated author, Shakespeare, against North Africa through his literary works can be a very challenging task. Manea felt he had to use a one-sided dominant discourse when he said, “I see myself as less visible in this paper and less confident,” without sufficient negotiation with the other discourses. In this case, silence—as in being less personally visible in the text—is an expression of his desire to avoid any potential conflict with his professor. This act of invisibility in Manea’s text resulted in unequal relations of power; the professor who is White, uses his privilege to discourage students to critique the work of Shakespeare. Legitimizing his invisibility in the paper as “the professor is a White British [faculty] who admires Shakespeare’s work and does not allow students’ criticism of it” is an act of institutional silencing that does not create a safe zone for students to practice their agency and their right to critique.
The feeling that Manea had to “please the professor” and to implicitly voice his critique by “quoting other writers” is itself a form of nuanced silencing. Importantly, the professor’s expectations and the nature of the assignment that requires quoting other well-versed writers could have been hindering factors for Manea to be less visible. This result is because he felt that his professor positioned him—along with his fellow students in the class—as a less legitimate writer who does not have proper tools to critique Shakespeare’s work. Hence, Manea intentionally and tactically chose to be invisible, to try to quote other writers that may align with the professor’s ideology, as Manea stated clearly that “trying to support any implicit criticism by quoting other writers as he always wanted us to do.”

Another example of silencing that participants experienced was in Reem’s paper *Language Teacher Preparation*. Her aim in the paper was to explore effective ways to prepare future English language teachers in her home context of Saudi Arabia. To reiterate, Reem has been living in the United States for about 7 years. In my interview with her, it is obvious that her current school is conservative, unlike that of other participants who attend liberal, critical schools that approach language from a post-structural lens. In Chapter 4, I showcased how Reem expressed her discursive ideological voice through relating her ideas and argument to her first-hand experience of language learning. Although she showed numerous forms of voice in her text, mainly in her first paper, *Language Learning Theory: A Personal Reflection*, she experienced some forms of silencing. Particularly, the silencing occurred through the objectives of the assignment that her professor chose, which did silence Reem’s personal voice. Carefully reading and analyzing her second paper, she completely parroted other scholars; her voice was almost muffled. The catalyst voice and first-hand experience she narrated in her first paper was almost absent in her second paper. For example, in her second paper she wrote,
According to Dewey (1938), “It is [the teacher’s] business to arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his activities are, nevertheless, more than immediately enjoyable since they promote having desirable future experiences” (p. 27). Educative learning experiences play a crucial role in the learning process, especially when learners are being motivated from the created environment and find a way to learn, think in depth, and build on what they have learned with previous experiences. As Gee points out (2008), “experiences are most useful for future problem solving if the experience is structured by specific goals” (p. 21).

Unlike her first paper where she frequently used “I” and “I will” and mostly referred to her own learning experiences, in the above quote she mainly cited other established writers in the field of Applied Linguistics and Education. In the interview, Reem pointed out that her voice in the second paper was not as visible as in her first paper. Reem also explained that this paper was a final one and that her professor is very strict, especially regarding whom to cite and what type of discourse and pedagogy should be addressed/promoted in her paper. She said:

When I stated my opinion, the professor did not like it. So, I had to redo it again so that I can pass the course. I had to think like her and cite people she thinks are the best to be cited in this paper. If I hold into my opinion, I would have not passed this course—definitely I had to cite writers that she likes.

Reem continued:
She is my advisor, she is a little tough when it comes to grading . . . she does not accept any work. When I first submitted this paper to her, she failed me . . . she always wants to me to cite Gee . . . I have to cite Gee everywhere to show her that I am adopting her ideas and using the same recourses she recommended me to cite. So, I have to do this, and I had to completely ignore my voice and my opinion.

She referred to the effects of institutional silencing in the above quote by stating clearly that she wants to “redo it again so that [she] can pass the course.” Hence, Reem appropriated her discourse by including writers her professor admires. Otherwise, if she “[held] into [her] opinion, [she] would have not passed this course.” Her confirmation of her professor’s ideology (e.g., by citing writers her professor wanted her to include) provided explicit evidence of the power of the institution that reflects how students construct themselves through others. Because she had to redo this assignment and refer to specific writers, she did not negotiate her multilingual identity and, thus, was silenced through the assignment’s expectations and her professor’s’ approach to teaching. This is a case in point when a democratic environment becomes almost absent and writers’ agency is constrained by the standard of audience—her professor. Thus, Reem seemed competent as a writer, but she abided her professor’s expectations to pass the course.

The systemically reproduced indexicalities or order of discourse (e.g., by suggesting her to cite Gee) mediated by her professor’s assessment system is a mechanism to reproduce the
dominant ideology and create unequal relations of power in the classroom. The school system Reem attends is not as progressive as the other participants’ school’s ideology and does not promote analyzing language from a macro perspective—as it is reflected in her two papers. It is worth re-emphasizing that this kind of silencing happens through the use of language to deny language. For example, the ideological alliance that Reem chose to enact (e.g., “I have to cite Gee everywhere to show her that I am adopting her ideas”) forms the hierarchal structure of language in academia, which articulates the preferred social ideologies in social events such as the classroom. From Reem’s quote and experience above, it is evident that knowledge and power create and recreate each other in classroom discourse. In this way, some student writers are rewarded and indulged—when given the space and safe house—and others like Reem were sanctioned (e.g., “So, I have to do this, and I had to completely ignore my voice and my opinion”) by their choice of discourses in educational institutions.

**Religion as a Form of Silencing (Saleh and Manea)**

The right to express, speak, and use the mechanisms of compliance are all discourse dimensions controlled and constituted by its conventional institutions. For each context and social event, there must be a discourse and norms of discourse that constitute its existence. Silencing and its mechanism emerged in the data as participants expressed their fear to articulate any ideology that contradicts or poses a potential threat to the dominant Saudi ideology (or conservative ideology promoted in a U.S. classroom). It seems that participants did not have an issue critiquing certain aspects of societal practices, including religion. However, they are aware that context is critical; their discourse productions and interpretations might lead to unpleasant consequences that can trigger animosity amongst members of the society.
Religion can be an implicit factor that restricts a writer’s choice. By internalizing the ideology of some religious practices, writers can avoid critical reflection on some aspects of societal practices. This way the socioreligious practices in certain societies can allow certain ideology to be expressed and suppress other counter-discourses. My understanding of religion refers to the politicized aspects of religion or the political manipulation of religion enacted by religious people. In Saudi Arabia, the maintenance of religious discourse serves the dominant group, and thus, there can be a tendency to overemphasize the role of religion, specifically Islam, the state-sponsored religion, as a controlling form for the masses.

This mechanism of maintaining power through fear in Saudi Arabia emerged in the data below. The data involves the construction of voices fashioned by power relations, frequently institutionally-oriented. In particular, the effects of institutional practices on voice expressions in academic writing is a way of constituting knowledge, which together with social practices can form unequal power relations in the discourse. The first example is Saleh, who studies comparative education. In the paper he wrote for the class, *Critical Intervention for Teacher Alienation*, he promoted a critical theory ideology, which in some ways included some aspects and practices not allowed in his home context. For example, at the end his paper, he wrote, “Nevertheless, it is important to clarify from the beginning that these authors contradict some of the Islamic teachings.”

In my interview with him about this juxtaposition of his voice and identity, he stated,

I do strongly believe that not all of what critical theorists propose is true or applicable in every context. However, I do believe that they have a crucial role in promoting some educational change. I also, as a Muslim, do not apply some of their ideas because these
ideas contradict with my ideology. I also think that the religious texts can be unquestionable or unchallengeable.

Saleh chose to not fully engage with critical theorists’ ideologies because these strategies can go against his faith; thus, he chose to resist. He spent most of the paper writing about the importance of implementing critical theory, but at the end his authoritative voice merged as he contended that these ideas might not go well in his context and with his own beliefs, which are religiously-oriented (e.g., “contradict some of the Islamic teachings”).

Emphasizing his stance as a “Muslim,” he questioned the implication of critical theory in his country by stating that “I do strongly believe that not all of what critical theorists propose is true or applicable in every context,” and associating it with “context” is manifestation of the mechanism of silencing in certain contexts such as Saudi Arabia, which is rooted in religious ideology. Saleh drew on his Muslim identity to construct a resistant voice that distinguishes his identity from the mainstream Western discourse and, thus, displayed agency in his discourse choices. However, this resistance is an echo of the religious and sociopolitical ideologies that the educational system and Islamic authorities back home have spoon-fed students over decades. This resistance can also possibly be interpreted as a phenomenon resulting from perpetual silencing that renders Islamic authorities “unquestionable and unchallengeable.”

A second example of silencing was in Manea’s paper and his reflection about writing his two papers. Choosing the right and the appropriate rhetorical situation in his home context seems critical for Manea. In my interview with him, he is aware of the role of audience in shaping his writer’s voice, and this awareness might shift according to the language used—Arabic and English. Manea stated that:
When I think in my first language and write in English, of course my style and my tone will be different because my audience are different. However, when I write ideas similar to these ideas, my voice will be different due to larger factors such as religion and institutions. My religious identity conflicts, sometimes, with what I write in English and thus some of my values, which I grew up with, will contradict with what I say or write in English. Therefore, this way of writing and deconstructing will be totally different. The religious discourse in my home country is very dominant and is not subject to any potential change or criticism.

Audience can determine Manea’s catalyst voice options when he writes in a Saudi context. As critical as context can be, he seemed to indicate that his choices are limited and “audience”—oriented. He also is aware of the vital role audience plays in his voice construction and expressions as he reflected on in the interview: “When I think in my first language and write in English, of course my style and my tone will be different because my audience are different.”

Emphasizing that his “style and [his] tone will be different” in English offers the linguistic safe space—by using English—for him to deconstruct societal aspects and engage in critical thoughts in the text. It is the second time Manea avoided mentioning any political consequences, and instead he expressed that “when [he] writes ideas similar to these ideas, [his] voice will be different due to larger factors such as religion and institutions.”
Religion, along with its political practice, can be an obstacle for him to express his voice because “[his] religious identity conflicts, sometimes, with what [he] write[s] in English and thus some of [his] values, which [he] grew up with will contradict with what [he] say[s] or write[s] in English.” Therefore, religion embodied as a social and political institution can guard writer’s voice, especially if the topic is about a controversial one that might cause some tensions in conservative societies such as Saudi Arabia and serve to maintain the elite religious group. Thus, Menea seemed to further his home ideologies and dominant discourse by not allowing for critique because of his religious identity and the politicized nature of religion that serves the domain group in Saudi. As he puts it, “this way of writing and deconstructing will be totally different. The religious discourse in my home country is very dominant and is not subject to any potential change or criticism.”

Clearly, the avoidance of authorial responsibility, which Manea articulated, does not necessarily constitute a lack of the writer’s own ideas; rather, it is rooted in the deep socioreligious identity that does not allow other non-authorial writers, such as Manea, to question, deconstruct, or problematize any social practices that might threaten societal norms. This order of indexicality or discourse—by abiding to the sociopolitical norms—is evident and demonstrates how institutions guard against the threat of other conflicting discourses by modes of exclusion.

**Summary and Discussion**

Institutional avoidance and silencing were two main themes that emerged in the study that can constrain and limit writers’ voices. These two themes interplay and can lead to the same consequences—invisibility in the text or potential writerly voice. Through the examples above, this section showcased that language within written discourse is critical to institutionalization. In
“Discourse and Institutions,” Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy (2004) asserted that “institutionalization occurs as actors interact and come to accept shared definitions of reality, and it is through linguistic processes that definitions of reality are constituted” (p. 638). This practice of institutions to guard certain discourses, therefore, can be understood as “products of the discursive activity that influences actions” (p. 635). Participants in this study expressed their views—implicitly and explicitly—of the role of institutional practices on their writerly voice. From the data, the main effects of their voice expressions were their professors’ expectations, the nature of the assignment, and teaching approach (e.g., Manea and Reem), religion (Saleh and Manea), and sociopolitical repercussions (e.g., Ali and Khaled). The writers in this study enacted different agencies and voices through the use of language (Canagarajah, 2004). These voices can be avoided or silenced in different contexts; L2 writers can rhetorically and socially construct different forms of voices that have to be negotiated in relation to their historically defined identity, relevant institutional practices, and ideological subjectivities. From the data, it is clear that their perceptions of the role of institutional practices on their voice construction affected their choices and voice in the text (Canagarajah, 2004).

The fact that writers can be given certain access to ‘utopianize’ what education should look like, as in the case of Ali’s paper, is a reminder that writers sometimes shape and theorize what education should look like but, in reality, writers might avoid promoting such rhetoric since they believe that such change in the educational system is a “dream.” Such acts of avoidance remain rooted in oppressive systems when governments, which police the education system, do not allow a multitude of voices to participate democratically in the system, especially educationally.
Moreover, Khaled tactically tried to avoid any political repercussion in his interview. That fact that writers can promote a catalyst voice toward the role of language in change and rhetorically avoid any voice pertinent to his own context is a mechanism writer uses to avoid any future political consequences. Ali and Khaled’s fear of not confronting the dominant ideologies in their countries mirrors the concept of the “state apparatuses” (Althusser, 1971). Their production and reproduction of voice has to be in alliance with their home institutions that works in conjunction with the state or serving state interests. This act of maintaining harmonic discourse can generate unequal relations through which writers act in particular ways that reflect dominant ideologies (Fairclough, 1995).

Furthermore, writers can enact a form of agency and be rhetorically conscious about their audience and thus choose to avoid any inflammatory rhetoric that might incite some reaction from the power holder. For instance, Manea was vigilant that the discourses of postcolonial theory can pose danger to his life; he believed that the basic premises of postcolonial theory are to question power and stand for the marginalized group, which is an act politically unwelcome in his home context. This act of governmental surveillance of writers’ discourses was a concern that he expressed in his interview. In particular, education that is politically shaped and monitored creates a new form of governance and policing, which Foucault (1980) called “governmentality.” In governmentality of discourses, individuals might internalize or be aware of the consequences; thus, Manea was aware of the different conflicting ideological discourses and chose to avoid any act of conflict. This act of governmentality, enacted by his home government, can function to “the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39). Ali’s, Khaled’s, and Manea’s language about the role of
institutional practices, their rights to express, and obligations is replaced by the language of the dominant group in their home context.

In a similar vein, Manea and Reem expressed their concerns that their professor’s assignment requirements were key in constraining their voice expressions in their papers. Manea and Saleh also feared the consequences of expressing their Western-constructed voices in their home context. The ideology they might pose (e.g., questioning authority) when they get back to Saudi Arabia is a threat to their life and safety. Although both participants expressed different forms of voices in their papers, they still experienced in the United States, and might experience in Saudi Arabia, some hindering factors that disrupted their voice. Not only non-democratic societies such as Saudi Arabia discourages voice; the West, as caused by professors’ approaches to assignments or pedagogy, can suppress/limit students’ discourse options as well. The institutionalized silencing experienced by Reem (e.g., by abiding her professor’s suggestion of what authors include) and Manea (e.g., by not fully engaging in a deconstructive rhetoric of Shakespeare’s work) indicates that “silencing clearly involves choices made by other people as well as by the potential [writers]” (Thiesmeyer, 2003, p. 2).

Similarly, the socioreligious practices that limited Manea and Saleh from fully engaging in a critical conversation is an “action of silencing, [which is] accompanied by [religious], social, and political judgements of what is acceptable and unacceptable” (Thiesmeyer, 2003, p. 3). The mechanism enacted by gatekeepers in American institutions and the domination of religion in Saudi Arabia discourage student writers, “silence [their] experiences of, and reproduce social relations of inequity” (Kamler, 2001, p. 46). Manea, Reem, and Saleh’s experiences of being guarded by their professor’s choices, and their religious ideology, reflects the functionality of institutions, bound with power; that is, institutions, be it a professor or a religious practice, set up
an unequal expectation and asymmetrical roles: the expert, who embodies the institutional position, and the non-expert, who must accommodate the institutional norms (Benwell & Stokoe, 2007).

Finally, the experiences that the L2 student writers in this study expressed is very complex. Foucault (1972) explained the conflict between finding one’s voice and identity as this conflict exists between instinct and institutions: the macro-social, institutional practices can shape our selfhood, which in turn will affect and mold our identities and voices. These institutional practices can either suppress or encourage certain types of voices and discourses. However, Canagarajah (2004) stated discourses and institutional practices are not deterministic; writers can always resist, reconfigure, or negotiate dominant discourses in the text. This strategy can be done through creative, constructive processes relevant to the established discourse, which participants enacted in different creative ways discussed in Chapter four.
Chapter Six:

Conclusion and Implications

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, my aim is to explore and understand the concept of voice in L2 writing, and how it is shaped by students’ previous experiences and institutional practices. Interest, values, beliefs, and relations of power were pervasive and encoded in students’ voices, and thus drawing on certain conventions could reflect certain positions or voice (Clark, 1997). Through reflective interviews and student texts, participants showcased their discursive ideological representations, resisted and reproduced the status quo, and thrived to ideologically become proactive members. Through their reflections on the effects of institutional practices on their voices, the present study shows that writers can experience some institutional silencing or avoidance in response to unequal relations.

Upon a scrupulous look at the aforementioned chapters, especially four and five, this study concludes that the complexity of holding multiple identities, of being a writer who is Arab, Muslim, a member of a minority and a Saudi, must emphasize that voice should be explored and scrutinized in relation to not only a textual level, but also how institutions function to produce and reproduce their ideologies. Participants of this study exhibited a myriad of juxtaposing voices gleaned from specific, social contexts and events. The participants expressed voices to foster agency and social action in the politics of particular social and educational practices. For example, Ali and Saleh enacted an agentive voice to resist local practices in their context and proposed several critical ways to denaturalize the teaching practices in their context. Also, Sarah resisted the essentialization of her gender identity and chose to resist and re-inscribe her social position through the act of writing.
This study also suggest that voice is grounded in power dynamics and different ideologies and is in a constant state of contradiction— it can become filled with politics and ideology in different contexts and spaces. Although participants exhibited catalyst voices to transform the local practices in their home context, they contradicted these ideologies in the interview because they were afraid of serious institutional backlash. More specifically, context and space in this study were key elements in constructing/constraining these voices. For instance, Saleh, Khaled, Manea, and Ali expressed their concerns that the voice they negotiated/expressed in the West might shift drastically when they go back to their home to avoid any political and social repercussions. Ali also showcased a critical voice in his two papers; however, in his reflection about the paper, he believed that the system—in his home context—allows only homogeneous voices to emerge, otherwise critical change or voices are considered “utopian” and a “dream.” Institutional silencing also emerged in the data—as in the case of Manea and Reem—as a result of religious ideologies and/or the nature of the unequal relations in the US classroom and the types of the assignments the professor assigned students.

Also, the participants in this study reaffirm that voice is not just a West-specific privilege that only Western students can bring to the text; rather, it is a sociolinguistic/political act that L2 writers can also showcase in their writing, yet through their own unique manifestations. Data in chapters four and five showcased a myriad of voices across modes and time. These voices were negotiated and constructed in relation to their unique habitus and identities throughout their academic journey. From this perspective, I define voice, according to the data, as a sociopolitical site of struggle where I define voice as a sociopolitical site of struggle where writers discursively represent their ideologies through alignment and resistance, thus
ideologically fashioning and negotiating agentive identities. These representative acts of writing can be constrained by some larger institutional factors.

The findings of this study were analyzed through the scholarship of Fairclough’s model (1992,1995) that language is a site of political and social struggle. I analyzed my participants’ voice representations by focusing on three concepts: *discursive ideological representations, resistance, and ideological becoming*. Then I moved to delineate the macro aspects by looking at *institutional avoidance and silencing*. This approach indeed pays great attention to the unique voices my participants expressed and avoids any form of essentialization or polarization toward L2 writers. More importantly, using critical discourse analysis to understand nuanced and complex forms of voices students express in their writing challenges unequal power relations and promotes equality and empowerment in L2 writing education. This approach indeed allows researchers to consider how voice, identity, ideology, and the effects of institutional practices might account for students’ discourse production and selection in terms of how they respond to topics/prompts that might seem challenging to them in the US or in Saudi Arabia.

The participants in this study are complex social beings, who have experienced two educational and sociopolitical systems. This study shows how students’ voices are intertwined with their identities and ideologies. That is, their articulation of voices is ideologically loaded, which is influenced by their professional training, context, Arab and Muslim identities, and genders. Indeed, these L2 writers have become members of academic and social communities, their voice journey is accumulated and developed to resist and to become more proactive members in their professions and communities. This of course requires they constantly negotiate between different rhetorical discourses, complex networks of contesting ideologies, and challenges to the status quo and power relations.
In addition, this project goes beyond the mere textual representations of students’ voices and choices to understand complex networks of ideologies and power dynamics within the text. Many researches on L2 writing voices have focused on students’ texts from a traditional lens of contrastive rhetoric, which “tends to ignore the multiple factors that contribute to the process and product of L2 writing, such as L1 writing expertise, developmental aspects of L2 proficiency, and individual writers’ agency reflected in their intentions and preferences” (Kubota & Lehner 2004, p.12). Indeed, most of the research conducted on the nature of Saudi L2 writing mainly ‘other’ their linguistic practices, label them as substandard writers of English, and analyze their texts as product, rather than vessels for ever-growing identities. This current study expands the previous understanding of voice by underscoring its nuanced sociopolitical aspects. This study also adds another dimension to this line of research by exploring the interplay of micro and macro-level factors. Therefore, using CDA can offer the possibility for a more complicated and holistic picture of students’ voices and the rhetorical patterns in L2 writing.

Finally, this study expands the concept of voice as enthusiasts in the field look forward to future development in L2 writing voice. This study is an answer to the demands of the increasingly complex power relationships in our world today. As Matsuda (2015) heralded, “The development of voice, then, may also involve … an awareness of how self is situated in complex relations of power” (p.154). I thus hope that this project will inspire other (Saudi) researchers to explore how ideologies, identities, and the institutional practices influence multilingual writers’ voices in other contexts, including Saudi Arabia.

**Implications for L2 Writing Pedagogy**

The present study has several implications for L2 writing teachers. The findings of this study reiterate the importance of the politics of language and teaching. Failing to address issues
of power and not allowing a safe zone for students to democratically express their views can promote the rhetoric of ethnocentrism. Hence, the significance of the present study helps L2 writing teachers and L2 writers to be aware of the different ideologies and power exercised in the classroom, deconstruct hierarchy, and challenge and resist unequal power relations (Hairston, 1992; Berlin, 1988). This is important because, as Fairclough (2001) explains, the exercise of power is pervasive and attained through dominant ideologies. As some of the participants experienced silencing and muffling, it is important for educators to help students rethink whose norms are conformed to in US classrooms. L2 teachers should promote differing ideologies in the classroom and encourage students to write about them; this practice might help both teachers and students avoid reproducing the dominant discourse. This also, along with civic dialogue, will help student writers to move societies into more non-authoritarian practices and to promote a “practice of freedom” (Freire, 1970, p.76.).

Furthermore, teachers should view L2 writers as an asset—the view that the superiority of English rhetoric through their recommendation to conform to the mainstream voices of L1 speakers should be reconsidered, and L2 students’ voices should be valued as much as those of L1 speakers. Furthermore, the practice of assigning writing assignments that are culturally bounded (i.e., American-based) can sustain “colonial dichotomies between the colonizer and the colonized” (Pennycook, 1998, as cited in Kubotaa & Lehnerb, 2004, p.9). Such rhetoric of differences might inevitably perpetuate the Othering and silencing of students’ L2 writing. Instead, taking on a critical approach can help researchers and L2 writing teachers see how L2 writing students’ subjectivities are formed and transformed across time and space though their writing practices and processes.
The role of writing in different disciplines plays a vital role in reshaping students’ identities and voices. The current study suggests that students’ voices can be nurtured through the process of interactions with a range of discourses, communities, institutions, individuals, texts, and ideologies, which in turn will have the potential to support robust, multifaceted disciplinary voices. Thus, teachers should understand that silence and voice are “multiple, fragmentary, and overlapping dynamics [and] can be iterated, investigated, and explored, but they cannot be fixed nor predetermined” (Ferguson, 2011, p.126). Importantly, for teachers to understand student writers’ voices, they should embrace Bakhtin's (1986) writing about language and culture in which humans are in the process of evolving and becoming. The incomplete, and unfinished nature of human experiences is relevant to the process of voicing in writing; his warning against the “false tendency toward reducing everything to a single consciousness” is a great reminder for teachers to perceive student’s voice as a process of becoming as they accumulate a plethora of experiences and sociocultural capital (Bakhtin,1986, p 99). Equally important, to understand voice, educators should consider its political and social dimensions, and that voice is never an end-product. To voice oneself in writing can “involve a much more complicated process. [Students] do not become members of a community by parroting or learning by rote the forms and conventions of the dominant group” (Ritchie, 1989, p.172). In this way educators will understand teaching and their students’ learning much more—that they are multifaceted, evolving, and the unfinished nature of the process of learning to write and voice.

While it might seem an idealistic idea to transcend the power relations in the classroom, embracing our conflicting roles (i.e., teacher-student relation) in classrooms can have the potential for educators to participate in liberatory education practices and avoid forms of silencing. L2 writing teachers should also question their ideologies and positions (Berlin, 1988)
and engage in rhetorical listening to discern student trajectories so that they can avoid any forms of implicit power that limit, remove, or undermine the legitimacy of their students’ choices. This should lead us, finally, to a clearer view of how we might achieve our goals—empowering students and helping them gain membership in a given community. That is, the processes of resistance and negotiation, as students in this study experienced them in the US classroom, are critical to the meaning making in academic communities and in the wider society. As Ritchie puts it:

Our students will be most valuable as members of our communities not by merely "fitting in," or acquiescing to the requirements of the institution, but by making some unique contribution to the evolving dialogue. The classroom, as seen here, can open for students a process of "becoming" which ultimately prepares them for more than the narrow vocation of academic life. It encourages them to be more than pliant members of a community, more than bureaucrats who can use the required conventions with ease, or people who can “recite by heart” what teachers and others want to hear. It allows students to gain a sense of the personal, social, and political relationships from which all our words arise and of the new idioms that are likely to be born as we appropriate those words to our own purposes. It educates people who can participate in a constant evolution of personal and communal meaning and who will not be easily silenced. (1989, p.173).

Some of my participants in this study exhibited different forms of voices that played a central role in their communities. These voices can play a central role in critical, democratic, and emancipatory pedagogies; hence, Saudi teachers should embrace a pedagogy of ‘voice’ as a “motivation to write, as a mode of politicization, as a way to understand and disrupt patriarchy
and other oppressive formations” (Kamler, 2001, p.36). Extending my hope beyond current academic discourses about L2 writher’s voice, L2 writing teachers, especially in Saudi, should incorporate a pedagogy of voice and explicit instruction of teaching voice in EFL context. This can be achieved by including critical literacy—through writing—as a tool or mode to promote critical reflection about social practices, gender roles, and create a dialogue that allows students to explore other alternative and realities. The findings of this study also promote viewing “EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia as fertile fields for critical literacy—believing in these powerful [students] as seeds for social transformation and a better future for the [Saudi] community in the country” (Ammar, 2018, p.30). I also adopt what (Ammar, 2018) advocated for the implementation of critical literacy in the Saudi context. Implementing this approach can help student writers meaningfully influence the world around them and re-envision and reimagine the “pre-packaged curricula and rigid institutionalized policies in Saudi education” (Ammar, 2018, p.30). This is still an imperative and possible praxis, hopefully to be carried out by current educators in Saudi Arabia, which is motivated by social justice and social action. This type of practice might include “teaching the need for perpetual vigilance against closure, against authoritarianism over meaning and truth, for a constant openness to the other.” (Clemitshaw, 2013, p.278).

Finally, this study promotes a vision of pedagogy that reimagines, repositions, and reconceptualizes the concept of voice and its interplay with identity and institutional practices. Pavlenko (2003) asserted that language teachers should create a space for reimagination of identities and voices that is multicompetent. I also think that it is critical for teachers to consider wider aspects of students’ voices to get a deeper understanding of how L2 students express themselves in relation to their histories, identities, and the ecologies of their educational
practices. Examples in my study show that it is through the process of professional training that they were able to critically express their voices towards controversial issues and promoted catalyst voices. Voices that promote equality and ultimately help them redefine unequal power relations. That said, L2 writing teachers can be transformative intellectuals (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993) who promote individual empowerment and social transformation (Weiler, 1988).

Directions for Future Research

Meanwhile, exploring L2 voices through writing can help researchers see how writing as a form of becoming and voicing has some implications for future L2 researchers. First, a CDA approach considers the social and political dimensions of L2 literacy learning and voice manifestations. By doing this, this study asks L2 writing researchers to investigate L2 writers not only from a classroom level, but also how larger issues such as an educational model and sociopolitical practices can interplay with voice construction of these writers. This means that researchers need to situate findings and consider historical, cultural, social, and political relations. For example, student writers’ voices will be completely different in different research settings (i.e., the experience they gained in the US and Saudi is unique to the participants of this study) and findings might be different when studying writers in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, a critical approach invites future research to go beyond students’ linguistic production and choices and consider sociopolitical and educational factors, which will yield different realizations.

Indeed, from a thorough dissection of this study, we can delineate future itineraries of ESL writing research: future studies should move from a traditional epistemology of differences to challenge deficit, assimilationist, and essentialist orientations in looking at L2 discourses. In this pursuit, critical inquiry into student minorities’ texts give educators more insight about
linguistic diversity and empower L2 writers to develop their writing voices and identities “as [they] resist assimilation and appropriate the rhetoric of power to enable oppositional voices” (Kubota & Lehner, 2004, p.15). Instead of investigating how these L2 writers can write in standardized English, future research should address the following questions in American-oriented classroom communities: How do these students perceive writing and voice in their L1? How can L2 writing help them mold new possible selves? How do they grapple with the problems and challenges they face when writing in new environments? How do they develop voices as writers of Engishes? How do they negotiate their power and access as they develop their linguistic as well as cultural capital?

In this sense, Valdés (1992) wonders “how traditions governing appropriate expression of feelings or beliefs have an impact on students when they write?” (p.125). While it is easy to attribute writing differences to cultural norms as Valdés advocates here, a step forward in studying the nuances of these discourses is to rather take the individual into consideration: how these writings are affected by the writers’ stance and identity evolution. Indeed, aspects pertinent to writers’ voice—such as social class and gender—are crucial variables that affect how students perceive writing as a tool to develop their literacy and voices. Valdés also suggests other windows of research that are worthwhile here: how ESL writers—Saudi ones for the purposes of this study—position themselves in relation to the classroom authority, such as their teachers and the larger sociopolitical factors? Valdés asked “Do they [teacher’s/authority holders] limit how they argue, what they recount, what they explain because the teacher is the sole audience? Do they consider certain kinds of writing to be inappropriate for addressing an instructor”? (1992, p.135). How students position themselves in relationship to power dynamics is an essential aspect of figuring out membership and thus shaping one’s voice in writing.
Although some institutional practices may marginalize some Saudi students (Giroir, 2014), others may come from different socially privileged classes, and thus experience different identity and voice positioning. Vandrick (2010) dedicated a whole chapter, “Social Class Privilege among English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Writing Students,” to asserting that social class in L2 writing research is rarely discussed when it is highly connected with power, voice, and identity. She elaborates on how social class, especially students of the new global elite, can ameliorate their experience of the negative effects of the deficit model or commonplace discrimination against ESOL students.

Along with these directions, the poststructuralist construct of investment (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Norton, 1995) can help researchers also depict how L2 writing students acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, critical theories/pedagogies and conversations in the class), which eventually increases the value of their cultural and intellectual capital and social power. The construct of investment provides insightful questions for understanding the writer's' voice from a broader scope: to what extent is the learner motivated to write a resisting voice? Are L2 writing students invested in the language and social practices to critically argue for controversial topics? Moreover, the prompts that are assigned to students may not be appropriate in their culture or religion (e.g., taboo topics) or some students have little schematic background about the topic; thus, students are unfairly labeled as substandard writers or silenced.

As critical as these thoughts are, I also think that it is important for future researchers to reconsider and be aware that researching and getting access to some participants who might fear future institutional consequences is serious. Due to global political alliance shifts, some of my initial participants had to withdraw from this study, and I completely acknowledge their reasons
for not participating. Some of the questions that researchers, including me, should ask include the following: How can we ensure the safety of research participants when we know that there might be some physical/emotional institutional consequences for having their voices expressed? How can we ensure that expressing critical thoughts that do not go along with the hegemonic political discourse are accepted or at least negotiable and not underplayed—especially with current political tensions? Rather than merely focusing on voice, researchers should focus on how students can be intricately silenced in certain classroom or research situations. A theory of silencing about who cannot speak and how to hear them in EFL contexts is imperative to investigate. The reason for hope is more than a desire or a wish. It is an unshakable trust in future educators and fierce, hopeful youth.

Finally, pedagogical decisions, types of assignments, student nurturing, all of these classroom factors impact how student writers perceive themselves and, in turn, construct their voices as writers. Clearly, the present study is not intended to be conclusive but explore some aspects of Saudi writers’ voices in relation to institutional practices. I am also intrigued in my examination of my participants’ voices as they constructed and negotiated them in the United Stated to now trace these voices when they get back to Saudi Arabia. I would also like to expand this study by including some quantitative and ethnographic data to add more texture to the current study and enrich our understanding of voice across spaces. Hence, I would like to explore how Saudi student writers express their voices in the Saudi context, especially in relation to the local pedagogical and sociopolitical practices—this might yield different interesting voices and power dynamics.
Limitations of the Study

The applicability of this study is limited for different reasons. First, the population of this study was selectively chosen from a few graduate students, so I do not claim that the anticipated results of this research represented the diverse group of Saudi writers in academia. Second, gender representation (i.e., I have four male and two female participants) was not balanced between males and females, which might blur gender differences in how different Saudi L2 graduate student writers construct their identities in writing. However, this research contributes to the conversation on how Saudi Arabian writers utilize different rhetorical and linguistic styles to express themselves in English. Moreover, this empirical study only takes place in an ESL context, where English is the primary means of communication. Hence, EFL writers might be different in many ways, and thus the result may not be applicable to them. Therefore, it is crucial to compare my findings with those of other students who have different learning experiences, ideologies, and academic levels. Finally, this is a qualitative study that seeks to qualitatively understand how certain ESL writers express themselves in English. The anticipated results might be enhanced by the texture and richness of future mixed-methods research.
Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions: (time and contextualizing clues from participants will be my indicator for the number of questions to opt for in each interview)

1. What were you hoping to accomplish with this paper?

2. Where in the paper do you think that your voice is visible? Why? Give examples?

3. Would you write a paper with a similar purpose or voice in your home country?
   If not, why not?
   If yes, and writing in Arabic, would you express your ideas in a similar voice? Please explain?
   If yes, and writing in English, would you express your ideas in a similar voice? Please explain?

4. Please tell me about your experience(s) writing in L1 and L2?
   - Detail probes: where, why, how
   - Encouragement probes: tell me more about…
   - Clarification probes: did you say….
   - Specific prompting questions will be based on what the interviewee reports and their texts.
Appendix B: Informed Consent for Interviews

An Odyssey to the Self: Understanding L2 Graduate Students’ Voices in Writing

5/5/17

Majed Alharbi, from the Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies is conducting a research study. The faculty responsible of this project is Dr. Cristyn Elder from the Department of English at UNM. The purpose of the research is an attempt to understand how Saudi Arabian graduate writers bring their voices into their written discourse and how their voices and identities intersect with institutional practices. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Saudi graduate student studying in the US and your field is in education, humanities, or social sciences.

Participants who choose to be involved in this study will not be offered any payments. Your participation will involve one interview for two hours (face-to-face or via email, Skype, or Google Hangouts), and you will be asked to provide two samples of your final papers—10 to 20 pages long. The academic papers that you are asked to submit will be used for the textual analysis, which I will do to understand the writer’s voice. These papers will be anonymized by assigning each participant a pseudonym to protect your identity.

The interview includes questions regarding your experiences in academic writing and voice-related issues. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. Also, if you choose to not participate in the study, your choice will not affect your relationship with me or UNM in any way. There are no names or identifying information associated with your responses. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy.
when answering questions. Data will be kept in a password-secured computer and will be linked to pseudonyms only.

Participants who wish to receive information about research results will be given a free copy or link to any publication information resulting from this research. The findings from this project will provide information on voice in L2 academic writing. If published, results will be presented in summary form and use pseudonyms only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Majed Alharbi at 571-409-9454 or Dr. Elder at celder@unm.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, you may call the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

By submitting your example academic texts and participating in the interview, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.
Key Terms

**American convention of writing:** Convention is just another way of referring to standardized American writing practices and expectations; it also can refer to a historical agreement on how writing should be according to a monolingual ideology, how certain written linguistic features should address the audience, and how the pre-set rules and the etiquettes of ideal texts in an American context are taught to students, including international students.

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**Global Englishes:** Refers to the varieties of English used in diverse sociolinguistic contexts globally and may be used locally by international students.

**Identity:** Identity deals with “how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p.12).

**L2 Writing:** Second Language Writing

**Translingual practice:** The process of “making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011, p. 288).

**Voice:** I define voice as a sociopolitical site of struggle where writers discursively represent their ideologies through alignment and resistance, thus ideologically fashioning and negotiating agentive identities. These representative acts of writing can be constrained by some larger institutional factors.

**Writerly identity:** The characteristic of a writer and the discoursal features that identifies his/her writing stance and position.
References


