# WRITING, POWER AND IDENTITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Abstract

*Formal education is designed in accordance with the values and ideologies of those in authority, and study into formal education provides numerous chances for ethnographers to examine how learning takes place within institutions and how it is assessed. The study draws on ethnographic method in Academic Literacies Approach in its investigation of the academic writing practices in higher education. In this paper, we investigate the opinions of the students regarding their writing procedures and issues as well as their views on their writing assessment in order to know about the reader-writer power relationship and the influence of the institutional norms on writing practices. Since the research is ethnographic, it comprises a short sample and a thorough examination of the information gathered in various stages. Therefore our sample includes only two postgraduate students from a public sector university of Pakistan. The findings from the data are significant as they point to the influential factors that affect not only the students writing practices but also the portrayal of their identity in their academic writing. The reader-writer relationship and academic norms appear to be the significant factors which influence students' linguistic choices and their self-representation in writing, in an institutional setting that involves power relations. The study sheds light on institutional policies, student-teacher interactions, and their effects on student writing. The study of writing and identity as well as the understanding of students' writing difficulties in the context of prevalent institutional processes are both advanced by the current research.*

## Introduction

Studying formal education gives ethnographers many opportunities to look at how learning occurs in institutions and how it is evaluated because it is created in accordance with the beliefs and ideologies of those in power and authority. According to Heath & Street, "Ethnography is a theory-building enterprise constructed through detailed systematic observing, recording, and analyzing of human behavior in specifiable spaces and interactions" (p. 8). Power is present in all parts of society, not just on a grand scale in the shape of institutions and the government. Collins & Blot (2003, p. 5) stated, "Writing is usually associated with power and particularly with modern forms of power" (cited in Street & Lefsteain 2007, p.177). Without a doubt, the power dynamics at play in society as a whole have an impact on how we go about educating ourselves on how to function in society and how to create our identities. There are therefore macro-level forces that influence people's decisions and sense of identity. They also comprise educational institutions, which help people develop an educated sense of self through education, job, etc. As a result, power and literacy are inextricably linked.

The way we portray ourselves to the outside world and how we interpret the world are both influenced by our identities. The literary activities that students partake in both at home and in school settings are linked to their perceptions of themselves as social agents, the language they write in, speak, and use in their interactions with others reflects their identity as Rowsell states that "Writing and literacy are social and cultural processes that relate to our cultural identity" (2005, p.101). According to Bartlett and Holland (2002), the social structures and cultural environments in which people live have an impact on their literacy identities. By putting it this way, they broaden Bourdieu's idea of linguistic habitus and connect it to the idea of identities-in-practice.

Numerous researches (Ivanic, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998; Barton, 2006; 2009; Lea, & Crème, 2008; Lea, 1999, 2009; Lillis, 2001, 2009; Lillis, & Scott, 2007; Lillis, & Turner, 2010) draw on Academic Literacies Approach in their investigation of students' writing. Lillis (2001) does not view students' academic writing as a skill but as a social practice; she examines ten non-traditional students' responses and their experiences with academic writing. Lea (2009) focuses on online discussion texts because she thinks they are an essential type of academic writing. Hamilton & Pitt's (2009) research focuses on the role of originality and identity in academic writing. Turner and Scott's (2009) research has a more general goal of assisting

students in writing authoritatively while dealing with "jostling voices" (Turner & Scott, 2009, p. 159).

The current study is located in a public sector university of Pakistan and takes postgraduate students as a sample. Numerous issues plague students in Pakistani higher education institutions, lacking resources (books, journals), language barrier (especially for people from lower middle-class families who could not afford to pay for a top-notch English-medium education), and the requirement to write in English in accordance with predetermined standards. They carry out what may be described as a mechanical writing process of forming other people's views, opinions, and values, but they do it without any agency, authority, or creativity. According to Kanwal et al, (2021) it is crucial to consider authors' identities when undertaking writing research and when teaching writing.

To examine students' perspectives and writing practices, the study employs the ethnographic method of inquiry and the lens of the Academic Literacies Approach. The purpose of the study is to determine how much the institutional procedures in place affect how students' identities are expressed in their writing. We were unable to locate a single academic writing study carried out in Pakistan that would have used an academic literacies viewpoint to examine students' writing practices and academic writing issues. In order to contribute to the continuing discourse in Pakistan about teaching, learning, and higher education reform, the current study attempts to bridge this gap and explore potential ways to better combine writing, learning, and students' multilingual identities.

**Academic Literacies Approach and Ethnography**

We believe it is crucial to explain the importance of this approach to writing, since we use the Academic Literacies Approach and ethnographic research methodologies to investigate academic writing and the problems with power and identity. The Academic Literacies perspective looks at all aspects of academic writing, including student writings, disciplinary genres, and the techniques employed to produce them. It also questions institutional rules, prevailing academic norms, and their relationships to identity and power issues.

The interest of ethnographers in formal education dates back to the 1990s; the parameters are set by "power sources beyond local participants" in terms of methodology, standards of achievement, and instructional goals (Heath and Street, 2008, p.17). Governmental institutions such as formal education systems have their own preferred and sanctioned forms of written expression, "written language evolved at a rapid pace, becoming the ultimate tool of power for formal education systems linked to the state"(Heath and Street, 2008, p.17). The ethnographic

tools used in academic literacy research include textual data from students such as their written assignments and teachers' in the form of their comments on the assignments and the grades, documentary data (such as institutional and disciplinary rules and guidelines), and participant or non-participant observation, including field notes and visual records (photographs etc.). These tools try to place the researcher in the particular socio-historical ways that the writers have taken while preventing the data from being interpreted via any simple theoretical (etic) lens. Thick participation (Sarangi, 2007) offers a way to investigate the implications for students' identities and their lived experiences of higher education, of institutional needs in terms of discourses, forms of representation, and established norms.

## Research Methodology

In order to investigate the academic writing practices in higher education, the study uses the ethnographic technique from the Academic Literacies Approach. In order to understand the reader-writer power dynamics and the impact of institutional norms on writing practices, we study students' opinions on their writing practices, issues, and assessments in this paper. In order to uncover the dominating norms that impact writing practices and the evaluation process, the study examines students' attitudes and practices of academic writing.

The study is ethnographic and involves a small sample as well as a thorough analysis of the information gathered over the course of several stages. As a result, we only selected two postgraduate students from the University of Gujrat's English program. Due to the interpretive, subjective, and partial nature of ethnographic research, it is essential for the researcher to carefully choose and lay out the guidelines that will govern their work. Additionally, ethnographers must always exercise caution and reflection regarding their own values and perspectives in order to avoid influencing the validity of their findings. We gathered two kinds of data for the study:

**Written Narratives**

We chose to gather the written narratives of our postgraduate research participants' academic experiences and writing practices because our research aims to examine and get a deeper knowledge of the patterns of meaning-making in these texts.

**Interviews**

The most popular and regularly used method of gathering data for qualitative research is the interview, which has been heavily utilized in modern linguistic research (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 42). There are many different interview formats, however for our ethnographic research; we used semi-structured interviews in accordance with the goals of our study. Semi-structured interviews last 30 minutes to over an hour and are performed with an individual or perhaps even a group (Jamshed, 2014).

**Our Reflections**

These are our observations on the interviews, and there are a few things we wish to highlight here. We discovered that students either are unaware of or have never considered these lines, or the topics we covered in the interviews. They appear satisfied, if not happy, with the deadlines and academic traditions at the start of their interviews, but as time goes on, they sometimes begin to express their emotions, convey their feelings and share their concerns, during or after their interviews.

It is an individual's language, mannerisms, and the way they express themselves, think, and behave which define who they are as a person. We want to emphasize that when we were conducting the analysis and had to quote students' remarks or comments, we were not required to look up their names in particular to determine who said what; rather, it was their linguistic expression and the manner in which they said the things that made it simpler for us to identify them.

**Findings from the Written Narratives of the Students**

The findings drawn from the students' written accounts of their academic experiences, writing practices, and issues are presented here (For narratives see the Appendix section).

According to Khushi's narrative, she is a skilled writer and speaker of English. She does, however, point out several areas of academic writing that require work since she realizes that every student, regardless of how competent they are in the English language, must be able to write academically. She finds it tough to make connections while writing. She goes on to say that

she used to struggle with keeping the word count and avoiding repetition, but with time and effort, she has improved. Writing an abstract and making connections while doing so are both difficult tasks for Khushi. As she began her degree, she also realized that creating a thesis statement and writing an essay were the two most difficult tasks.

Haider's narrative shows that he acknowledges the value of studying the English language, not only for academic success but also for achieving a high social status. He comes from a low socio-economic background; therefore he had little experience with the English language. His early education was likewise received in an Urdu-medium institution. His academic writing is also not up to the mark due to his limited English competence. Haider struggles with several aspects of his writing since he typically thinks in Urdu before attempting to convert it into English. Even now, he struggles with grammar issues and writes slowly. This reveals a lot about his English proficiency levels as well as the difficulties he faces in achieving success and completing academic requirements.

Overall the narratives of both of our research participants are revealing and demonstrate the issues with their writing and writing processes involved in any academic setting.

**Results of the Interviews**

We present the findings in six categories as they emerge from the interviews.

**The Sense of the 'Real Self' and Identity**

As Ivanic lucidly shows, that the "true me" that authors have and the self they portray in their works are quite often so different that they are incompatible.

*The persona that a writer discursively creates is merely an echo of real voices and familiar abstract, archetypal voices. However, despite the possibility that this perception is socially manufactured, my co-researchers had a sense that there was something that might be referred to as "the actual me" (1998, p.217).*

We include a few of the participants' comments that show a feeling of their "true selves." When Khushi describes her writing experiences, she says the following, which we believe has helped her develop a feeling of her "true self":

Khushi: *My initial source of inspiration for writing is my own self; I must write. And I want to make sure that my ideas are clear to those who can understand them. To start, I want to mention that when my father and I were talking about current events, politics, and international relations, he would often give me general statements and ask me to elaborate on them. I would then write what I had said, which helped me develop as a writer.*

There are the aspects of her writing that she owns in terms of language, subject, and style. Khushi used Carl Jung's work to apply psychoanalytical theory to William Shakespeare's play King Lear, and she looked delighted with the concept she provided.

We: Were you satisfied with the concepts and viewpoints you expressed here (and the manner in which you did so) or were you required to do so in some way?

Khushi: *That was my own notion; I wasn't confined. I considered coming up with something very original that deals with the psyche of girls and the element of a girl as a daughter. As a result, I considered developing the concept of the daughter's psyche. We females tend to be more emotionally bonded to our fathers than our mothers. When I had that thought, I felt a certain amount of happiness.*

We: What do you own in terms of language, style, and content for this assignment?

Khushi: *One aspect of this particular project was that I was thrilled to be reading Shakespeare all over as I was doing my analysis and selecting the material from the book. These are the things about the word count and length that I find acceptable.*

Khushi seems to totally identify with the persona she assumed for this project based on her comments.

We: If you read that assignment right now, describe the type of writer you think it is.

Khushi: *To start, the author is a liberal since we don't discuss concepts like psychoanalysis, Lacanian theories, and other such notions because they are too radical for our society. Not too daring, but since the concept is not often addressed, I believe that only half of the population will ever read my project. Other than that, the author is quite liberal and very rigid, a serious person who adheres to the philosophy.*

We: Are you yourself like that?

Khushi: *Yes, I am that way.*

We: So we might see you there in that writing.

Khushi: *You're right; I always include myself in every piece of writing.*

Haider chose not to use headings, so he presented his ideas in his own way. He owned the language as well, as his linguistic choices had long been a part of his writing and were now his own.

He also complied with the discipline's requirements.

Haider*: ye assignment likhne ka style mera apna hai, matlab I'm not used to giving headings … moreover,linguistic expression wohi hain jo mein shuru se use krta hu according to what I have learnt and what is required tau wo bhi meray apnay hain.* [The style used in this project is mine; I don't offer headings, and I used the same linguistic terminology as I always have because that is what we taught and what is needed..]

Hence, both writers own certain aspects of their writing and identify with them.

**Aspired Identities**

Sometimes, their comments give the impression that they are happy with how they come across in their writing. This is because they strive to sound that way and have that identity.
Khushi was asked whether her perception of the reader affected her choice of language.

*I think I want my reader to understand the concept so they have a notion, thus sometimes I like to use plain words. I would like them to read my assignment in plain English.*

We: Did you do the same in this project as well?

Khushi: *I never employ complex words or idioms. I never do that. You could impress the teacher with an innovative idea rather than using a lot of terminology to do it.*

Haider avoids complexity in writing as well since he wants to clearly communicate his ideas without confusing the reader.

We: Is there a particular writer you'd like to emulate?

Haider: mein *Qaim Ali Shah ki terah likhne ki koshish kerta hun uski ek book padhi thi, kyu k wo har ek k lye likhta hai aur approachable hai har parhne waly ko lagta hai uss k lya likha gya hai, uskay kabhi double meaning nahi hotay wo reader k lye bohat clear hota hai.*
*[I read a book by Qasim Ali Shah, and since he is so approachable to the reader, I try to write like him whenever I can. Every person who reads his writing interprets it as if it was written specifically for them. The reader's interpretation of his work is that it is clear and does not contain any double meanings.]*

*We:* It is a straightforward, everyday language.

*Haider: Yes, straightforward and well-known; reader tak apni baat pohnchana na k ussay impress karna. [It is vital to me that the objective of writing is to convey one's message, not to impress the reader.]*

Khushi stated that she wanted to sound pleasant and remarkable in her writing. When discussing her assignment and the areas that needed improvement, she said:

Khushi*: There are a lot of individuals in your life who use language in powerful ways, and it's incredibly lovely. Because of this, your assignments and other writing will be really lovely and satisfying to anyone who reads them. You can occasionally bore the others when you don't stick to that trend. I should improve my project in some way so that it would be more aesthetically acceptable to readers—not the reader—but readers. My current assignment isn't really spectacular in that particular sense in terms of the linguistic component. Therefore, I believe that this should be more impressive.*

We: Whose writing inspires you and makes you want to emulate it?

Khushi: *Mohsin Hamid is an English-language author from Pakistan whose expressions are really, extremely fascinating when it comes to incorporating his ideas into the narrative. His narrative offers more than four concepts. When you read Moth Smoke, for instance, it provides you a lot of inspiration and is an open-ended novel no matter how it is concluded. Not to be forgotten is Manto, whose tales are equally open-ended and, in my opinion, capable of developing on their own. Thus, I make an effort to write in a similar manner.*

There have been times when both of our research participants have distanced themselves from their written discourses. Because they did not choose this representation of themselves in their writings and were, in some ways, restricted in it, they do not want to be connected with it.

Khushi does not feel comfortable about having to use difficult vocabulary for her written work since she does not see it as a show of power.

Khushi: *My language resources were the aspect with which I was not satisfied. Because of this, my language in my assignment can be quite weak at times.*

Additionally, they reject some identities and have taken care to avoid revealing them in their writings. In her writing, Khushi does not want to come across as someone who tries to force her ideas on the readers or as someone who frequently switches between different languages and code types. She does not like a few writers as she mentioned.

Khushi: *Jane Austin and Moni Mohsin in particular*

We: What elements of their writing do you find objectionable?

Khushi: *Moni Mohsin is a multilingual author who writes in both Urdu and English for the majority of her novels. Anyone reading that who does not speak Urdu may never understand it, and anyone reading her may become confused between the words "kya" and "kya and thing." And with regard to Jane Austin, she is quite good at laying out an idea and telling you to stick with it. Still, I don't intend to write in their style.*

**Conflicting Identities**

The research participants of the study may appear unclear about how they identify with the prevalent ideas, because they have mixed feelings about how they associate with the established academic norms. The responses demonstrate that while students occasionally willingly adhere to academic standards, they occasionally defy them and opt to follow their own paths.

We: When it comes to academic writing standards, do you follow them willingly or do you struggle against them because you don't know how else to proceed?

Khushi: *Everything has both advantages and disadvantages. However, while writing something, you need guidance, and I believe that the way the assignment is done provides that guidance. On the other hand, we are restricted by several rules, such as not doing this or that. The questions must be developed first, followed by the objectives and, most importantly, the reference section. This poses a challenge to the student because we have to provide references for everything we learn. Because once we have an idea, we are required to write it down, and when a boundary is present, we limit that, either by ceasing to do so or by never adding it because adding something requires a reference. Give pupils instructions, but don't specify which headings they should use.*

We discussed the importance of expressing oneself and doing things the way one wants to. In response, she said:

Khushi: *Sometimes, I believe it's okay to be constrained by things because they provide us with a way to do things effectively.*

While Khushi initially responded that she accepted academic conventions as directions that were helpful for students in completing any academic task, she later came to see them as inhibiting elements that served as restrictions that bound them to follow a specific pattern. Such ambivalent and occasionally contradictory responses from the participants came to the fore, which prove to be very revealing of writers' sense of their identities. The general attitude is one of acceptance of the norms as long as they help the pupils carry out their tasks correctly.

In response to our inquiry about the self Haider wished to express in his writing, he stated:

Haider: *Muje acha lagta hai k apni identity show kru lekin baaz auqat reader ki demand k mutabiq bhi portray krna padta hai. Lekin mein uss mein comfortable hota hu jo mera apna style hai aur wo hai k mein moderate rehta hu aur positive aur khushgwar tareeqay se aur criticize bhi positive way mein krta hu ta k negatively na dekha jaye…*

*[I like to present my own identity, but occasionally we have to present ourselves in accordance with the reader's expectations. However, I feel more at ease when I go about things my way, which for me is coming up with a constructive strategy, being reasonable, and presenting things in a cheerful manner. [Even when I must offer criticism, I make an effort to be constructive.]*

We: It means you are flexible …

*Haider: To achieve the desired objectives, one must be adaptable, and poori koshish karta hu hasil karnay k lye. [Yes, I'm willing to be flexible, and I work hard to get the desired results.]*

We: What would you do differently if you had the chance to complete that assignment again?

Haider: *ager moaqa diya jat ahi ye assignment dobara krne ka tau mein revisions kruga isko improve krny k lye aur issy modify krun ga reader k mutabiq aur usay change nahi kruga jo reader ko pasand hai lekin apny flaws ko door kruga*
*[If given the chance of doing that assignment again, I will make changes, improve it, and alter it in an effort to satisfy the reader's needs while maintaining the reader-pleasing style and overcoming my flaws in accordance with their needs.]*

Haider states that he enjoys expressing himself in his writing. He then expresses his intention to modify the assignment in accordance with the reader's demands while preserving the reader's preferences. Both of these assertions are completely at odds with one another and make obvious the students' varying and uncertain attitudes toward their identity in their writing. Even while they want to portray themselves in their writing, they also want to meet the expectations of academia by adopting the persona they prefer.

**Student Teacher Power-Relationships**

Because of the importance of power dynamics between readers and writers in an institutional setting, students' linguistic preferences and self-representation in writing are significantly influenced by these dynamics. Since readers are also the assessors when it comes to writing assignments at universities, the reader holds the power in this scenario (s). Ivanic (1998) claims, "What writers assume about these readers who are in a position of power over them affects but does not determine the way in which they present themselves in their writing" (p. 242).

We discuss how much my participants satisfy or defy the expectations of their readers. When we talked to Khushi about how readers' expectations and values affected her writing, she said*: "No, in fact, my thoughts and what I have read about the articles in the past are my top*

*priorities when working on my assignment. At first, I am completely unaware of the teacher's thought process, but as I get going and am summarizing the assignment, much like when writing an abstract, I discuss with the teacher primarily in terms of language use and linguistic pattern. Furthermore, as this is my perspective and part of my project, I don't regard what the reader will think about this.*

We: But you would receive grades from your teacher, aren't you worried about that?
Khushi: *I would occasionally, but not often. When you are conducting research for a project that is especially personal, in my opinion. I'll start by saying that I'm not concerned about my teacher's opinion. I will respond, "Okay, I won't change because this is my concept," if she asks for changes. "Give me the concept, and I'll get to work". If she had given me the idea or the topic, I might have been concerned about what she wanted, and as long as she is judging me fairly, that's okay. This is your assignment; you must complete it. Because I recall a moment when I was working on my "Literary Theory" assignment, my teacher said, "You are working against my notion." But for me I was not constrained by any idea at the time. It's acceptable if she had one concept and I had another. So it's okay to break the trend.*

Khushi has resisted doing anything that would make her adhere to the professors' preferences since she is keen to express her own personality in her work. Additionally, there have been times when both Khushi and Haider have catered to readers' expectations; we list the examples of these reactions below.
Haider conforms since he is obviously motivated to get good scores.
Haider: *readers ki expectations hamesha mery zehn mein hoti hain likhte huey,kis terah ki writing unhein pasand hai aur unhain kya acha lagta hai that I always skeep in mind, aur ye k reader isko kesay dekhay aur kya desired results honis k jo desired results hain, quite often un ki pasand k mutabiq mein apni  identity bhi negotiate kardeta hun, achay grades he meray liye success hai filhal.*
*[I always consider the reader's expectations, including what they like, the intended results and the way in which I want my work to be interpreted by the reader. In order to live up to those expectations, I negotiate my identity. Currently, our success is measured by our academic performance.]*

*Depending on their preferences, teachers also have different standards for marking assignments. Haider noted as follows:*
Haider: *mein kisi b teacher k marking criteria ko zehn mein rakhta hu, lenghthy kaam acha lagta hai kuch teachers ko, aur kuch teachers ko short aur specific islye mein achay grades*

*k lye khyal rakhta hu in cheezo ka. [In order to get outstanding grades, I also take in mind the marking requirements. Some teachers appreciate lengthy work, while others prefer short, sharp responses.]*

**Writing Issues and Disciplinary Rules**

When discussing the issue of compliance or non-compliance with disciplinary rules, a variety of responses came to the forefront.

Khushi's response is quite telling in that, while she acknowledges that the writing conventions taught to students are ineffective, she also concedes that, for the most part, these directives serve to stifle students' ability to write independently and creatively and to place restrictions on them in a variety of ways, as she discussed:

Khushi: *There are advantages and disadvantages to anything, therefore when writing something, you need guidance. In my opinion, the assignment's completion pattern provides that guidance. On the other hand, we are constrained by numerous prohibitions, such as not doing this or that. The reference section poses a challenge to the student because we have to provide references for everything we learn. Because once we have an idea, we are required to write it down, and when a boundary is there, we limit it; either we stop adding it, or we never do because we must provide a reference if we do.*

According to Haider, academic standards and writing guidelines are quite helpful because they help readers understand what is being written while also giving the writer an exceptional and ideal impression.

Haider: *When I wrote academically, I always followed the rules. Hmain jo writing instructions di jati hain wo wo muje lagta hai k hmari behtari k lye hoti hain. Academic standards aur rules jo hain wo hmare faiday k lye hain ye University aa k muje maloom hua aur ye b k in se hmara acha impression b banta hai* [I can see that whatever guidance we receive is for our benefit. I didn't realize these academic customs were helpful or gave a positive impression of us until I started at the university.*]*

Me:  Mean, they convey good impression about you …

Haider: *acha impression bhi detay hain aur reader k lye samghna bhi asaan hota hai [Yes, they help the reader understand the material and make a favourable impression too.]*

Khushi is not particularly happy with her scores because she feels that the time allotted for doing this task was insufficient to allow her to generate a remarkable product. She says this when talking about the assignment:

Khushi: *No, I wasn't at all satisfied; this task was given to us as a way to gauge our comprehension, and we were expected to conduct further research after that semester. I was not*

*happy with my assignment overall, but I did manage to come to a conclusion. We should all have our own opinions about the specific assignment, so I wasn't satisfied when I was working on it. If you were to finish that assignment in three days, you would need at least a week to have a recap, additional readings, and research on the topic.*

Khushi has trouble discussing and quoting other people's thoughts in her work because she prefers to express her own.

Khushi: *You are not allowed to write anything from your own during that period, especially as I was completing my theoretical assignment. The theorist's or philosopher's argument must be written down. My inability to write anyone else's ideas on the page has been a shortcoming of mine since the beginning. So it has turned out to be quite detrimental to my academic career. The fact that I am unable to put anyone else's thoughts on writing, even when I am using theory to support my work, shows that this is one of my weaknesses.*

Haider: *muje likhne mein jo ziada problems hain wo mery second language learner ki waja se hain, iss k ilawa mera personal writing problem time management ki waja se b hai. [The first issue with writing arises from the fact that we are second language learners, and another issue I myself have is time management]*, Haider said when describing the challenges he faces in writing.

By and large their responses indicate a sense of dissatisfaction with the disciplinary norms and conventions of writing.

**Perceptions of Success in a Course**

Each of our participants has a different perspective on what they believe is crucial for academic success. Khushi values knowledge above everything else since she sees it as the foundation of learning.

Khushi: *I believe there should be only knowledge. Because I choose knowledge, I'm not concerned with my grades, my degree, or anything else; this is how the authors think they want to know about everyone who has ever lived so they may relate their work. All I wanted was a better understanding of the language.*

She also recognizes the value of writing proficiency and practice as being crucial in succeeding.

We: Wouldn't simply knowing be sufficient?

Khushi: *However, this is based on my writing experiences. Some of the M. Phil students in my class struggled to express their knowledge in writing despite the fact that they had planned everything and knew everything. However, once you practice writing, you can express your*

*knowledge. When you practice that, the phrase is something else and it appears. Nobody can write anything or share their knowledge on paper, which makes it more difficult for someone who hasn't developed a writing practice.*

For Haider success in academics has to do with getting good grades and hence doing good job in exams; for *good grades you must improve your language skills and know how to impress your reader,* Haider shared his thoughts.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The data's findings are crucial because they highlight the key elements that influence not only students' writing practices but also how their identities are portrayed in their academic writing. The established writing conventions in academia, the reader-writer power dynamics, and the evaluation procedures are important considerations.

The results demonstrate our research participants' satisfaction with their ability to identify with the standards of their field and academics in general, because this affiliation represents them as knowledgeable individuals. However, occasionally they seem unsure about how they come across in writing and show ambivalence about how they align with the dominant academic norms. They simultaneously want to portray themselves in their work, and also want to meet the expectations of academia by adopting their chosen persona in order to do so.

Both of our research participants have also separated themselves from their written works in some circumstances. They do not want to be associated with how they have portrayed themselves in their writing, because they did not choose how to do so; rather, they were somewhat constrained in doing so. Because writing takes place in an institutional context that contains power relations, the reader-writer connection and writing conventions seem to be the key elements that have the biggest impact on students' linguistic decisions, and how they portray themselves in their writing.

There are no gender disparities that are particularly noticeable in the investigated data. Despite their unique variations, positioning, and perspectives, both of our research subjects are multilingual and come from broadly comparable socio-cultural origins. To elaborate, we would state that Haider seems to be more compliant than Khushi, we have not seen any opposition on his part in complying with academic standards; whereas Khushi has her own worries and grievances. Analysis of their narratives and reactions show that there are not many obvious gender differences.

The study provides information about institutional norms, student-teacher interactions, and how these factors affect students' writing. The study of writing and multilingual identity, as well as the knowledge of students' writing issues in relation to the predominant institutional practices, is all impacted by the research. Even when we have gathered data from a single discipline in its whole and even within itself, we still encounter a variety of reactions and point of views that add to the study. If there had been more disciplines, it would have rendered a study with greater complexity and depth.

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## Appendix

### Written Narratives of the Research Participants

### i.       Khushi

She is fluent in both English and Urdu, and she has been writing since she was a little child, when she kept a diary and contributed to a magazine. At the moment, she writes for Word press, a website, reviews books, and produces research papers. She had grown accustomed to speaking and writing in English since she was little because she attended a school where English was the primary language. We learned from her narrative and conversation that she enjoys writing, perhaps as a result of her expertise in the subject matter language and her extensive preparation. She said:

*I find no difficulties at all in meeting deadlines, because writing theoretical assignments and research articles has been my practice. It's a benefit that I also have a habit of turning in homework in one or two days.*

However, Khushi still has some areas where she struggles, as she explains, "*Even now, writing an abstract is still a huge challenge for me."*

### ii.      Haider

Haider is fluent in Punjabi and Urdu; he solely uses English in the classroom. He describes his experience of learning English.

*Since I was a young child, I have been studying English. Due to the lower educational standards of government schools, my initial experience of learning English at the primary level was not that great. However, when I transferred to a different school (Private English Medium),*

*it was better than the previous one. University education is necessary to be a decent citizen, to find who you are, and to achieve a high status in society. Although I learned English at college, I did so more effectively in university.*

*Writing properly for academic purposes helps me in my studies and will surely be helpful and beneficial in my practical and professional life. I use a variety of resources, including ebooks, the internet, and teacher assistance, to complete my assignments. Most of the time, I turn in my assignments before the due date. If I think the assignment is challenging and unusual, I ask my teachers for assistance so I can research new resources and avenues. I occasionally have trouble gathering the necessary amount of references for my research.*

He discusses the challenge of writing in English.

*Because I frequently think in Urdu before attempting to translate it into English, I am not very good at writing in English.*

*His writing problems also include, I have a slow writing pace, and I still make grammatical mistakes. I prepare myself in advance to offer my best effort throughout tests, which aids me in getting a decent grade.*