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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages

# MASTER THESIS

Letters and  
Foreign  
Languages English  
Sciences of the  
language

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Submitted and Defended by: **SAADA Haizia**

On:

**Identifying Subjectivity Signs in Academic Writing: The  
Case of Graduate Students Theses at Biskra University.**

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## Board of Examiners:

<b>Mr. SENOUCI Zakarya</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>	(MAA: University of Biskra)
<b>Dr. MEDDOUR Mustapha</b>	<b>Examiner</b>	(MCA: University of Biskra)
<b>Mrs. AICHAOUI Thaldja</b>	<b>chairperson</b>	(MAA: University of Biskra)

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## *Dedication*

*By the care of Allah and all the courage and  
patience he has in me brought from those years of study that I  
can now see the fruit of my labor this modest memory.*

*I dedicate this work*

*To my father who suffered a lot for us that life be us better*

*Thank you Father.*

*To my mother who gave dear and who sacrificed so much so  
that I could reach the good part Thank you my Mother.*

*To all my family, my brothers and my sisters. All my friends.*

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those who have helped me throughout my career.*

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory study intended to qualify objectivity as an important element in academic writing, and in scientific papers especially dissertations. In order to provide answers to the research problem and research questions; the researcher adopted a corpus based analysis approach. The corpora were five dissertation's results and discussion sections written by postgraduates of Language Sciences stream at the department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. However; the choice of corpora was random to avoid any bias or subjectivity. The qualifications were based on the analysis of passive voice as objectivity marker, and on the analysis of active voice and personal pronouns as subjectivity markers. The research findings provided answers to the research questions and the aim of this research process was achieved. The dissertations were qualified in terms of objectivity and subjectivity. To conclude, the methodology and writing style of master two students were determined by supervisors, who follow usually the APA writing style. They did not have choice over which methodology to use.

*Key words:* Objectivity, Subjectivity, Corpus Analysis, Qualitative research.

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### الملخص



## **List of Abbreviations**

AW:	Academic Writing
EAP:	English for Academic Purposes
EBE:	English for Business and Economy
EFL:	English Foreign Language
EOP:	English for Occupational Purposes
EST:	English for Science and Technology

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# General Introduction

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### General Introduction

Academic writing is a very essential skill for higher education graduates. Students at the university should be able to write clearly on topics related to their research fields. However, to master academic writing they have to be familiar with its demands and principles.

#### 1. Statement of the Problem

Academic writing is one of the most important skills that any student or scientific researcher must master, as it is the most logical type of writing for documenting the scientific effort undertaken by the researcher. However; mastering this skill may refer to mastering the four features of it that are formality, academic structure and vocabulary, and objectivity. In order to master any skill, a learner must have fair knowledge about it and practice and re-practice it.

English curriculum at university of Biskra and the academic writing course within the same curriculum does not contain a unit or lesson that is meant for discussing the four features of academic writing in details. Specifically; The objectivity feature is introduced in one or two paragraphs as an advice from EAP teachers to their future potential researchers to “remove themselves from their reports”; But how enough is this advice? This focus on one aspect of objectivity is actually a disservice to students; it might be better to raise their knowledge of the available options to them as academic writers. Additionally; from what have been noticed from previous years academic writing final assignment (theses); master two students tend to show their research efforts and contributions while reporting their research process.

In this paper the researcher will look at the most common subjectivity signs made by students in their theses; by analyzing the discussion of results section, of 07 master dissertations at English division at Mohammed Khider University.

#### 2. The Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How successful are the graduating candidates in maintaining the feature of objectivity of academic writing?

## General Introduction

**RQ2:** What are the most common subjectivity fallacies that students make when discussing their research results?

**RQ3:** how does the researcher level of competency in academic writing may affect the quality of the dissertation?

### **3. Aims of the Study**

The aims of this study are:

1. Identify students' academic wrong practices made in their theses.
2. Identify common subjectivity signs in student's theses.
3. Identify how often do EFL students maintain the features of academic writing in their theses

### **4. Significance of the Study**

The study may be an addition to all those studies done in this area of research, especially to those concerned with features of academic writing and more specifically to those interested in the feature of objectivity.

As well the study may be of great help to future master two students to manage their objectivity and their future research papers.

### **5. Methodology**

Due to the qualitative nature of this study the researcher uses a corpus analysis approach. The nature of the study has determined the research methodology; therefore, the researcher opted for a qualitative approach to address the overall content objective and to give a better understanding of the research questions.

The corpus analysis approach that was adopted for this study was mainly to get qualitative data, to deal with linguistic features rather than numbers or statistics. A thematic corpus analysis enables the researcher to go back and forth in the corpus for a better representation. The findings displayed extracts and examples from the used corpora in the study to address the research problem.

### **6. Population and Sample**

“The quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted” (Cohen et al; 2007, p, 100).

Alvi (2016) see sample as “a group of relatively smaller number of people selected from a population for investigation”. Because the researcher uses document analysis as the research method, the population is master two graduate students’ theses from the English division at Biskra University from the years 2018 and 2019. However; corpus chosen in this study comprised five results sections from master dissertations written 2018 and 2019 (the LMD system). They were selected from Language Sciences stream at the department of English, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The choice of the results section is due to the fact that it is the part where researchers are supposed to display their results as they are and at the same time persuade the readers of their reliability and establish credibility.

### **7. Structure of the Study**

The present report is divided into two main chapters that are: the first chapter is a narrative of studies on academic writing and subjectivity. It is divided into two parts: the first part discussed the concept of academic writing generally and its types and features. Whereas; the second part discussed the feature of objectivity and its alternative subjectivity. the researcher provided different scholar’s definition of its concept, its importance and then it specified what is objective and what is non-objective in academic writing. The Second chapter is field work; it provides theoretical overview of the research approach, data gathering tools, population and sampling, the results and their discussion, and the study limits and future recommendations.

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# Chapter 1

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## Theoretical background

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# Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

## **1. Section One: Academic Writing**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This part provides a literature on academic writing as a part of the EAP field in EFL teaching and learning. It includes different scholar's definitions of the concept of EAP and AW and its types. More importantly, it determines the principles of academic writing in two ways; firstly, set a distinction between academic practices and non- academic ones; secondly, defined the four main features of academic writing that should be present in every academic text or it would not account as academic text.

### **1.2. What is English for Academic Purposes**

Ding and Bruce (2017) argued the nature of this field as a research-informed academic subject at universities; they see EAP as “the act of teaching English for the aim of helping students to study, conduct research or teach in English”; that is that EFL learners are taught the English needed and used in schools and universities context to study and teach in English; or to conduct and report research. General English is not the subject of study in EAP but specific terms and practices used in academic contexts. It is generally recognized that it includes basic skills of literacy analysis, observance of reference systems, synthesis of associated scholars and capacity for critical evaluation.

Basic academic vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical complexity are often used traditionally in academic dialogue and texts. Specifically, academic English refers to words and practices that are necessarily common or encountered frequently in formal conversations and circumstances. Although the language may be more complex than it is in everyday English, good academic writers aim to be as clear, precise, and simple as possible. They think about what their readers already know, and aim to guide them towards less known areas and topics. Close to this view; Hyland, K. and Shaw (2016) look at EAP courses as “mainly language learning outcomes”; the outcomes specified later in their handbook are reading and writing skills that students need in their educational career; they see that EAP is mainly teaching reading and

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writing in English; this brings us to the increasing attention given to this field of study academic writing.

### 1.3. Academic Writing

Academic writing is a formal and impersonal writing method intended for scholarly audience. It tends to rely heavily on research, factual evidence, and opinions off learned researchers and scientists. Scientific essays, research papers, theses, etc. are some examples of academic writing. All of these types of writings have a strict structure and design, which includes an introduction, thesis, overview of the topics discussed, as well as a well writing conclusion. The main goal of academic writing is to inform an audience while providing unbiased information and supporting the author's claims with solid evidence.

This field is seen as a goal (purpose); readers (academics); and content oriented activity. Nilsen (2019) defines academic writing as any kind of “communicated, discussed, and analyzed knowledge generated through research.” As cited by Bougsba (2020); the discourse produced in academic context is a result of a scientific research process and it is reported in a unique form and features that differentiate it from other kinds of writing.

- A list of documents where academic writing is used:
  - Book reviews
  - Essays
  - Research report
  - Research proposal
  - Scientific paper
  - Academic journal
  - Dissertation and thesis
  - Abstract

#### 1.3.1. What is academic and non-academic in writing?

Academic writing like any other subject discipline has its specific and special writing conventions, terminology and types of discourse that learners become familiar with over the course of their degree. In academic writing the writer is expected to

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support his argument by citing evidence from other sources. Additionally, academic writing is an impersonal style of writing while non-academic writing is subjective style of writing.

Principles of academic writing are determined by academic communities; they shaped this method of writing and differentiate it from other methods such as free and creative methods of writing. These principles are determined according to the most common practices and logically related activities; these principles were first delivered to the world in form of handbooks in academic writing by academic communities. For example, APA manual determined many of the principles of reporting and conducting research written by the academic community at Pennsylvania University and is used worldwide. Hamp and Heasley (2006) textbook “Study writing a course in writing English for academic purposes” as well discussed and provided table of academic versus non-academic vocabularies. As well as, the academic word list determined a number of academic vocabularies as well (Coxhead, 2000).

### Figure 1.

*Classification of key attributes of academic and non-academic texts.*

Academic writing	Non-academic writing
<b>Full forms</b> There <i>is</i> The test <i>did not</i> show	<b>Short forms</b> <i>There's</i> The test <i>didn't</i> show
<b>Connectors</b> ▶ The theory appears to provide an explanation for this phenomenon. <i>However</i> , this is not the case on a closer examination of the facts. ▶ The experimental design was weak. <i>Moreover</i> , the methodology was faulty.	<b>Connectors</b> ▶ I want to go to the cinema, <i>only</i> I have to work late. ▶ Because of work, I can't go to London this weekend. <i>Anyway</i> , I don't have enough money.
<b>Use of nominal groups (verbs made into nouns)</b> The <i>application (noun)</i> of the results needs to be carefully considered rather than: We need to carefully consider how we <i>apply (verb)</i> the results.	<b>Use of pronouns</b> We need to carefully consider <i>how we apply</i> the results.
<b>Use of the passive voice</b> In recent years, several analyses of survey data <i>have been published</i> .	<b>Use of the active voice</b> In recent years, researchers <i>have published</i> several analyses of survey data.
<b>Concise vocabulary</b> ... <i>the focus is on x</i> <i>Researchers assumed that ...</i>	<b>Informal vocabulary</b> ... <i>talks about x</i> <i>They thought that ...</i>
<b>Point of view</b> ▶ Objective and impersonal, e.g. <i>This essay attempts to ...</i> ▶ Using qualifying language, e.g. <i>One possible reason may be ...</i>	<b>Point of view</b> ▶ Subjective and personal, e.g. <i>In my essay I will attempt to ...</i> ▶ Asking rhetorical questions, e.g. <i>How can this be so?</i>

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Note: the classifications of academic and non-academic key attributes to academic texts are adapted from “Study Writing: A course in writing skills for academic purposes” by Hamp, L.L and Heasley, B. (2006). Cambridge University Press, New York.





However; non-academic writing is any writing that is not intended for academic audience; it may be general writing; creative writing; personal writing... This is the writing style used in daily life. Although non-academic writing also requires correct spelling and grammar, it is not as strict as academic writing. In addition, there are no restrictions on the use of slang, contractions and other words. Non-academic writing can be informal, formal or semi-formal, but it is easier to understand than academic writing.

### 1.3.2. Types of Academic Writing

Types of writing are generally characterized by the fact that they are used to achieve specific goals, even if the goal is to amuse, express and delight oneself only. Each type of writing has its own recipient. As for the recipients of academic writing, they are the elite professors who supervise the student or researcher. The scientific researcher uses a specific style of writing to address these recipients, which is to reach the scientific research from the point of the question and the scientific problem, to the point of reaching the desired or supposed scientific results in the form of scientific hypotheses in the research Scientific.

**Figure 2.**

*Types of academic writing.*

Type of Writing	Descriptive 	Analytical 	Persuasive 	Critical 
<b>Purpose</b>	Introduce facts and information to the reader.	Analyze a topic to understand it better from different perspectives.	Convince reader to adopt a perspective.	Exhibit the writer's thorough and solid understanding of the topic.
<b>Nature of writing</b>	Descriptive, Detailing, Reporting, Informative.	Comparative, Investigative, Survey	Convincing, Argumentative, Logical, Compelling.	Critical, Opinionated
<b>Examples</b>	Description of people, places, reports, etc	Most academic writing in general is analytical in nature.	Academic essays.	Research Thesis, Literature Review, etc.

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Note: Types of Academic Writing are retrieved from: [eveylearning.com/academic-content-writing/](http://eveylearning.com/academic-content-writing/)

### **1.3.2.1. Descriptive Writing**

Descriptive writing describes phenomena in a way that enables the reader to visualize it or personalize it, if needed. Furthermore, descriptive writing can be defined as the literary tool through which the writer can transform reading from an abstract mental process to a complete mental, sensory and emotional experience, and it is the way in which words transform from abstract symbols to images, sounds and feelings, so the purpose of the description is to deepen the reading experience on the psychological and physical side. And the mental by employing sensory details in a world made of abstract symbols, called sentences and word.

Descriptive writing is often considered to be the simplest form of academic writing because it only aims to enrich readers with facts and information. What, when, where and who are the best words to answer in this style of writing. The best examples of descriptive writing are a summary of an article or the results of a scientific experiment. Some of the words teachers use to refer to the fact that the descriptive writing style they want is to summarize, group, define, narrate, report, and identify.

### **1.3.2.2. Analytical Writing**

It's rare for a university-level text to be purely descriptive. Most academic writing is also analytical. Analytical writing includes descriptive writing, but also requires reorganization of the facts and information described into already existing categories, groups, parts, types or relationships, or they will be created according to the nature of the research problem.

Therefore, the analytical article is based on dealing with current facts and events, and then working on linking them with the topics and facts that have been deduced from the surrounding environment, so that all trends and opinions are identified in addition to the conclusions related to the event, and it determines future expectations towards it.

Analytical writing requires a view to the text or the object critically, examining it through an analytical framework.

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### **1.3.2.3. Persuasive Writing**

Persuasive argumentative writing has received increasing attention in studies, researches, seminars, and conferences; In terms of showing its importance, developing its skills, or analyzing its stylistic mechanisms and techniques, it also received some attention in preparing programs and plans to develop its various skills.

The writer places in the written text a set of factors that help persuade the other through argumentative techniques and linguistic activities, those activities that are related to the rational approach that use all its energies to persuade, and influence opposing opinions.

### **1.3.2.4. Critical Writing**

Critical writing is about developing a person's own academic voice within his or her subject area. It is the result of an ongoing process of reflecting, researching, note-making, reading and writing. It means scholars do not accept information at face level.(Atac and Bengü, 2015).

While persuasive writing requires the researcher to have his or her own point of view on an issue or topic, critical writing requires him to consider at least two points of view, including his own. The kinds of instructions for critical writing include: 'critique', 'debate', 'disagree' and 'evaluate'.

## **1.3.3. Academic Writing Genres**

According to Swales (1990), “Genre is a recognized communicative event with a shared public purpose and with aims mutually understood by the participants in that event. ... In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience”. However, Essays, research papers, theses and dissertations are types of academic writing, commonly known among students.

### **1.3.3.1. Essays**

Essays are a structured piece of writing, written by students at educational institutions, usually found at the university level. Students at primary, secondary and high schools usually write short compositions as writing assignment. Essays are non-

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fictional and expository, narrative. They discuss deferent topics from deferent fields such as politics, health, education and even more subjective topics such as memories...etc.

Essays are extended academic papers; which establish a restrict organization that is introductory paragraph, including a thesis statement, body paragraphs that support the thesis statement, and lastly a well written conclusion that summaries all the essay and open door for new writings. Moreover; essays, as a genre of academic writing, follows the principles of academia.

### **1.3.3.2. Research articles / papers**

Research paper is a report of a research processes, it describes and reports all the methodologies and procedures, as well, the collected data and obtained results from a research problem. Swales (1990), in definition, a research article is “a written text usually limited to a few thousand words, which reports on some investigation carried out by its author or authors”. (p. 93). It contains citations and a list of references, yet it is 80the author own words.

### **1.3.3.3. Theses**

Thesis is the written report of the doctoral research process; it is conducted to fulfill the requirement for PhD degree. It is the result of years of research. It uses the same research process as other genres of academic writing. It began with literature review of previous studies to reach generalized findings. However; it is more evaluated and criticized. Thesis should not be lengthy to explore the topic at hand; the length of the thesis varies from one academic institution to another.

### **1.3.3.4. Dissertations**

Dissertations are documents prepared to fulfill the requirements of master degree. Although all dissertations share the same structure and principles of scientific research; each dissertation is unique in its own way with its topic, tools and language. For example; there are Dissertations which does not require data collection and analysis, as such dissertations would be an examination of policy, philosophical research problem, or study theory.

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

### **1.3.3.4.1. Construction of dissertation**

Structure of dissertations, generally, is three chapters the two first ones discuss the two variables of the research problem; third chapter is field work along with results and discussion. They are preceded by a general introduction and followed by general conclusion. At the end of the dissertation there is a list of references, and if needed some appendixes. The first pages of the dissertation contain an abstract, list of contents and other lists of figures, abbreviations, tables ...etc.

APA manual sixth edition suggests the following structure of dissertations:

#### ➤ **Title**

Title should be one concise and precise statement which summaries the research problem, its main function is to inform the reader about the topic under investigation. Each word first letter in title should be typed in uppercase and preposition in lowercase letters. Moreover; the title should be centered between the left and right margins, and positioned in the upper half of the page.

#### ➤ **Abstract**

Abstract is a summary of the content of the dissertation. Bandra (2017) states “abstract must be fully self-contained and make sense by itself, without reference to outside sources or to the actual paper”. There are three types of abstracts that are: abstracts of an intended research project, abstract of an ongoing research project, abstract of a completed research.the abstract word limits vary from journal to journal and typically range from 150 to 250 words.

#### ➤ **General introduction**

The body of the dissertation starts with introductions which presents the specific problem under investigation; and identify the research questions and aims. as well as the researcher hypotheses. Moreover; it describes the research methodology, research methods and procedures and materials. Finally; it ends with a description of the structure of the dissertation. However; general introduction should give the reader a firm sense of what was done and why and how.



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### ➤ **Chapters**

The APA manual referred to this point as “method” and “results” and “discussion”. Chelli (2016) suggested two main parts of the dissertation, generally. First part is theoretical overview of the research problem that may be a chapter or two; it discusses the variables of the research problem under investigation and provides literature about previous studies done in the same area of research as the dissertation, it uses mainly critical or analytical writing type. Second part is field work; it displays the results of the study and discuss them in light of the research aims and questions; it uses mainly an analytical and persuasive writing types

However; he states that this division of the dissertation structure does not apply and work with all dissertation, for example a dissertation in philosophy may do not need a field work part. Moreover; the proposed division is the very basic, and logical, division of applied linguistics dissertations.

### ➤ **General conclusion**

The last pages of the body of the dissertation are deduced to general conclusion. It clearly answers the research questions, summarize the research and finally provide recommendations for future work on the topic. It is written in concise and precise language it extends few paragraphs, two pages maximum.

### **1.3.4. Features of Academic Writing**

Hutchison and Waters (1987, 165) encourages EAP teachers teach ‘the common features which ‘characterize all good writing’ (Zamel, 1993, 35). Even though academic writing shares some features with general writing, some elements cannot be ignored; those Characteristics of academic writing is those elements found in every academic written texts but not any other type of writing. R.R. Jordan (1990)“The main features of academic writing are as follows: it is formal in an impersonal or objective style; ... the structure of the writing will vary according to the particular type (genre); ...” Moreover; Citations and a list of references or sources is another important feature in academic writing.

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### **1.3.4.1. Formality**

Formality is perceived to be a continuous property. (Keppens, 2015).The language used in this type of writing must also be scientific, reliable and technically relevant. For example, when writing a technical article on how to use a washing machine, the writer of the article must be familiar with all the technical terms in this field, and write the article using a direct and scientific style without any exaggerations..On the other hand, it is important to state that writing with precision and clarity involves choosing language that communicates the intended meaning clearly.

### **1.3.4.2. Construction of Academic Writing**

Academic writing has a tendency to hint a logical and simplified factor structure. In its most basic shape and structure, at the university level, it carries three chapters. Generally divided into theoretical background that tends to stream crucial information and data in a systematic way for the two first chapters; each chapter for a variable; and the third chapter is for the field work, display, discuss and analyze data.

### **1.3.4.3. Objectivity**

Objectivity is the attempt to view things as they are, that is, moving away from cultural, mental, societal, religious, etc. bias. In addition, the scientific method used in analyzing and reaching results is another way to garnet objective. Of course, this is more in the pure sciences than in the human sciences, although the researcher in any science is supposed to be objective. Moreover; Objectivity is multifaceted and complex concept, encapsulating the assumption that claims, methods and results can be stated free from the influence of “particular perspectives, value commitments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors (Nunn.R et al. 2018)

Objectivity is one of the most prominent characteristics of a disciplined academic writing, and it helps to achieve the goal of the research, and then add more to the balance of human knowledge if the research is academic theory, or the development of frameworks to address the negatives caused by a problem if the research is applied in the field, and the philosophy of scientific research focuses on

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trying to reach the highest degree of logicality in explaining the problem or phenomenon, and the logical itself may be a product of rational inference, or a product of the numerals produced by statistical analysis.

### **Conclusion**

Academic writing is receiving increasing attention, and more studies are targeting this area of research. Academic writing studies are within the area and across other disciplines. However; academic writing is broad and large area next two sections broke it into narrower topics.

Genres of academic writing are so many from one paragraph composition to whole dissertations and theses. However dissertation is the main concern in this chapter as it is a part of the study research problem.

### **2. Section Two: On objectivity and subjectivity**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Second part discussed the point of the feature of academic writing that is objectivity, to provide different researchers definition of it and of its alternative “subjectivity”. Additionally; it includes a summary of what is objective and what is non-objective in academic writing.

#### **2.2. Objectivity**

The objectivity element is a level of competency that is highly required in different types of writings such as EAP; EOP; EST, EBE writings. Researchers in those disciplines are supposed to write objective reality, collect and present data with evidence and abstain from personal choice and thoughts. However; objectivity may refer as well to “neutrality” that refer to refraining from personal values, but also to neutral selection of sources, or neutrally described events.

“Objectivity” is a multifaceted, complex and philosophical concept that may have Different meanings depending on the context (Eisner, 1992). However, generally, most scientists see objectivity as consciously deport individual ideas and thoughts from the research process. Hacking, (2015) Provided connotes to the concept: “[...] disinterestedness; emotional detachment; rule-governed procedures; quantitative methods; openness to criticism; responsiveness to evidence, or accountability to a mind-independent reality, among others.” (p. 25)

Arnaudet and Barrett (1984: 73) see that the absolute aim of academic writing is being ‘objective’. However; Reiss and Sprenger (2016, n.p.) assume that claims, methods and results should be stated free from the influence of “particular perspectives, value commitments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors.

However; objective writing is self-evident that knowledge exists only through the researcher, the researcher who brings it out of nothingness into existence, whether it is literary, philosophical, or mathematical. Here begins the link between knowledge and subjectivity, and its departure from objectivity. The individual in and of himself is the one who produced knowledge, who saw the problem as a problem, who assumed

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the hypotheses, and who chose the methodology that he believed to be “objective” and “scientific” to study his hypotheses. These stages are the stages of knowledge production, specifically scientific knowledge. As it turns out, it's interestingly subjective. In the first stage, the researcher uses a large part of his feelings, which will accompany him in the course of his research.

As for the “objective” methodology, it is only a clear confirmation of the dominance of subjectivity. As the researcher believes, and in some cases is certain and has a radical position, that the approach he will adopt is an objective approach. The same is true of numbers, which are the reason for making mathematics an objective field. Even our view of numbers as an objective thing, it is a point of view that we inherited just as we inherited culture, religion, customs and legacies, so we accepted the idea that it is objective. We ourselves saw it as being objective and we introduced it into our system, meaning that we paid attention to it and realized that it is - and is known about it - objective, so we adopted it as such, so this action is subjective par excellence.

### **2.3. Objectivity: Some alternatives**

#### **2.3.1. Daston and Galison Objectivity alternatives**

The two books of Daston “the image of objectivity” and “objectivity” with Galison and Oosterhoff (1992; 2011) provided some alternatives to the concept of objectivity by setting what the label ‘objective’ is applied to. Objective research process that they called it “Mechanical objectivity”, that is excluding oneself from research process; and objective research findings that they called it as “ontological objectivity” by Daston and “truth to nature” by Galison, that is excluding oneself from the research findings; and approaching objective reasons and values that they called it “aperspectival objectivity” by Daston and “trained judgment” by Galison, that is excluding oneself from the reasons and values of the research if the researcher is conducting a casual case study; as showed in table 1.

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**Table 1.**

*Definitions of objectivity.*

	<b>Metaphysical Objectivity</b>	<b>Methodological</b>	<b>Moral</b>
<b>Refer to</b>	Objective process	Objective findings	Objective reasons and values
<b>Daston</b>	Mechanical	Ontological	Aperspectival
<b>Galison</b>	Mechanical	Truth to Nature	Trained judgment

Note: Definitions of objectivity are adapted from “A Corpus-Based Comparative Study of the Use of First Singular, First Plural Personal Pronouns, and Passive Voice in Master Dissertations Written by Postgraduates of Language Sciences and Anglo-American Studies in the Department of English” by Beghou, B and Haouam, K. (2018).

### 2.3.2. Subjectivity

Daston and Galison (1992) state that it is impossible to approach the concept of “objectivity” without the interference of the concept of “subjectivity”. Subjective writing is a type not intended for an academic audience. It is written for the general public. This type of writing may be personal, impressionistic, or sentimental in nature. Researchers should not express their own ideas, but merely adopt communicative abilities which stretch beyond the limitation of personal thoughts. Nonetheless, personal exploration of ideas could be useful to some extent. Texts including these ideas should however not be intended for external readers, but merely written for own purposes. This depends on the fact that such projections are considered informal. . (Nunn, et al.2018)

Language in subjective writing is informal and does not follow any writing principles. Newspaper articles, memos, magazine articles, personal or business letters, novels, websites, text messages, etc are some examples of subjective writing. Often, subjective writing is non-academic; the content of these writings is often a general topic, as opposed to academic writing, which focuses primarily on a specific field. Moreover, the main goal of subjective texts is to inform, entertain, or persuade

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readers. Most non-academic writing does not include references, citations, or a list of sources. Nor is it as widely researched as academic writing. Moreover, subjective texts often do not have a strict structure as academic writing. It often flows freely and reflects the style and personality of the writer.

### 2.4. Objectivity Vs Subjectivity

This is a comparison between the two notions of “objectivity” and “subjectivity” in terms of deferent definitions; these definitions were grouped in categories that are: Common Use Definitions, Grammatical Definition, Syntactical Definition, and Current Consciousness Studies Definition.

**Table 2.**

*Categories of definitions of the two notions of objectivity and subjectivity.*

<b>Categories of Definitions</b>	<b>Subjectivity</b>	<b>Objectivity</b>
Common Use Definitions	Biased, not impartial, based upon opinion, exists only in one's mind, no physical existence, interior experience	Free of bias, impartial, based upon facts, something having physical existence, exterior reality
Grammatical Definition	Pertains to the subject of a verb	Pertains to the object of a verb
Syntactical Definition	At the cause of an action, i.e., “I”	At the effect of an action, i.e., “me”
Current Consciousness Studies Definition	Interior experience, immeasurable, nonphysical (or metaphysical) content	Exterior reality, measured physical bodies

Note: Table of Categories of definitions of the two notions of objectivity and subjectivity. Retrieved from: <https://google.photos.com/>

#### 2.4.1. Common Use Definitions

It is commonly known that, objective writing is free of bias, impartial, and based on facts. Reiss and Sprenger (2016) defined “objectivity” as faithfulness to

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facts, (transfer the general truth as it is), value-freedom (transfer facts away from personal values and beliefs), and freedom from bias (researchers should present and deal with all facts equally). However; subjective writing is biased, not impartial, and based on opinions and personal judgments.

### **2.4.2. Grammatical Definition**

From a grammatical perspective, an objective statement is one which pertains to the object of the verb, thus an objective statement priority is the action not the subject. However; a subjective statement is one which pertains to the subject of the verb, thus its priority is the subject not the action.

### **2.4.3. Syntactical Definition**

From a syntactical perspective, objectivity is at the effect of an action i.e “me”. Objectivity focuses on the direct or indirect object; it is at the receiver of the action or at the result of the action. However, subjectivity is at the point of an action i.e “I” . Subjectivity focuses on the subject; it is at the doer of the action.

### **2.4.4. Current Consciousness Studies Definition**

Current consciousness studies, define objectivity as exterior reality that can be observed and scientifically or socially experienced. However; they define subjectivity as interior experience, immeasurable, non-physical (or metaphysical) content.

### **2.4.5. Lack of objectivity in academic writing**

Birhan, Y. (2015) conducted a study with the aim of assessing the qualities of academic writing. He used three data collecting instruments that are document analysis, focus group discussion and semi-structured interview. He states concerning the quality of objectivity “Students writings were full of personal expressions because they explained ideas through using personal pronouns. The words they used are also emotional”. He quoted student C words to provide an evidence “As I indicated in the above table, majority of the students agreed that their teachers provide them with pre reading activities” (Senior essay document/paper 23, p. 8). Additional evidence was the claim of the instructors from the interviews that their students write subjectively. Therefore, he argued that students are not that successful in maintaining the quality of



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objectivity in academic writing and that does appear in their use of personal pronouns and emotional words. And finally he suggested these solutions to avoid this problem “Students should avoid the personal language in their writings, and use passive rather than active constructions, and use impersonal phrases like, “it is believed that”, “ it has been asserted that”, and other related impersonal expressions”.

However; Hayland (2002) conducted a research for the sake of studying authority and invisibility in academic writing i.e the authorial identity of the researcher. Pittam, et al (2009), in definition, of author identity is “the sense a writer has of themselves as an author and the textual identity they construct in their writing [sic]” (p. 154). Although, the whole dissertation is considered as the author intellectual property, some novice researchers report their work with continuous representation of themselves as the owners and doers of the research process, somehow showing their research efforts. However; Hyland (2002) argues that the author identity is depicted through the use of the personal pronouns “a writer’s identity is created by, and revealed through, the use or absence of the I pronoun” (p. 352).

He used as data collecting instruments, interviews with students and their supervisors and he analyzed 64 final year project reports produced by undergraduate students, compared with 240 ten research journals articles.

The results of his study were as follows: five deferent functions of the two authorial pronouns “I” and “we” that are: Explaining a Procedure, Stating Results or Claims, Elaborating an Argument, Stating a Goal or Purpose, and Expressing Self-benefits. Researchers, generally, use the authorial pronouns to perform one or more of these functions. However, he even classified these functions according to their degree of the risk of using them as it showed in table 3.

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**Table 3.**

*Classifications of risk functions of personal pronouns.*

<b>Degree of Risk</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Models of verbs used for these sections</b>
<b>High risk function</b>	Stating Results or Claims	We find, we found We assume We can propose We notice We suggest We recommend We infer We recapitulated We can demonstrate We confirmed We accept We deduce We conclude We can say, we may say We ensure We denote We exclude We expect We opt for We cannot limit We may attribute We suppose We reject We can observe We can see, we see We regard We got

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		We are confident
		We understand that
	Elaborating an Argument	We feel
		We agree
		We believe
<b>Partly High Risk Functions</b>	Explaining Research Procedures	We evaluate
		We manipulate
		We give
		We organized
		We obtain
		We maintain
		We have to examine
		We may explain
		We have treated
		We have applied
		We have divided
		We can locate
		We relay
		We have designed
		We analyze
		We investigated
		We held
		We asked
		We have chosen
		We have selected
		We used
		We tackle
		We conducted
		We interpreted
		We made
		We worked
		We compare
<b>low Risk Functions</b>	Stating a Purpose	We try
		We follow
		We move to

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We went into  
We need to  
We will discuss  
We administer  
We are going to  
We decide  
We then consecrated  
We will see  
We have come to  
We will deal with  
We will provide  
We will reach  
We will talk  
We put  
We will focus  
We will look  
We attempted  
We did not intend

Expressing Self-benefits We hope	We hope
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Note: classifications of risk functions of personal pronouns are adapted from “Options of identity in academic writing” by Hyland, K. (2002).

These two studies are recently done, and there are even more newly studies in this growing area of research. However, these two studies should be given the credit for the utility of their results.

## 2.5. Key attribution to objectivity and Subjectivity

### 2.5.1. Key attribution to objectivity

Objectivity is the other face of the same coin with academia thus any subjective practice is non-academic

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### **2.5.1.1. Use of Passive Voice**

The passive voice is widely known to be a detached impersonal expression. Passive voice the subject receives the action expressed in the verb. It is used in formal academic writing more often than the active voice; As Germano (2005) stated “The hallmark (a distinctive feature) of academic writing is the passive” (p. 111); “the passive voice is, after all, the voice of academia” (p. 112). For the one simple reason that is that the passive voice allows the researcher to sound more objective and that gives credibility to the research report. Passive voice is composed as follows: “to be”+ past participle.

### **2.5.2. Key attributions to Subjectivity**

#### **2.5.2.1. Use of Personal Pronouns “I” and “we”**

Traditionally, first person pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ are characterized in academia as a taboo. The two first singular and plural pronouns refer to the authorial identity of writer, which is contra the principle of impersonal and objective writing. However, Hyland (2002) states ‘style guides and textbooks commonly portray scholarly writing as a kind of impersonal faceless discourse ...’He argues that ‘academic writing is not uniformly faceless prose as it is often thought to be, but displays considerable differences between disciplines’. Therefore; a number of studies suggest that academic writing do not totally exclude the authors’ presence. In fact, showing the authors’ presence is a growing trend among members of the academic community.(Ivanic R.(1998); Hyland K. (2002); Harwood N. (2004)).

Hyland (2002) argues that the use of personal pronouns is ‘...a powerful way of strong writer identity’. However, APA manual allow the use of the first plural pronoun “we” So the researcher refer to himself as a part of group of researchers or a part of scientific organization.

“Personal pronouns I, you, we tend not to be used in more formal writing (except in letters, etc). Instead the style may be more impersonal. (R.R. Jordan, 1990).

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### **2.5.2.2. Use of Active Voice**

In the active voice the subject performs the action expressed and the focus is on the agent that does the action. It is usually used in non-academic writing (subjective writing) thus little studies were done about it in the academic context almost none. Even though; active voice is used in academic texts but the passive voice is seen as the voice of academia.

### **Conclusion**

Academia is formal and impersonal style of writing; it is very strict and structured. Students at university level are supposed to write all genres of academic writing with high level of formality, accurateness, and objectivity. However; the issue addressed in this study is the objectivity related issues (signs of subjectivity).

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# Chapter 2

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# Field Work

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# Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

## **1. Section One: Methodology**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter displays the chosen research methodology for this study and the rationality behind this choice; as well the data gathering tools and data analyses methods.

### **1.2. Research Design and Methodology**

#### **1.2.1 Corpus Collection**

The corpus chosen in this study comprised five Results and Discussion sections from master dissertations written 2018 and 2019 (the LMD system). They were selected from Language Sciences Studies stream at the department of English, Mohammed Khider University of Biskra.

. Dissertation “A” entitled “Toward Integrating Research Papers along the Curriculum to Enhance EFL Students’ Academic Writing: The Case of Second Year Master EFL Students at Biskra University.” Published 2018 The aim of this study is to “shed light on some of the closely observed writing challenges which are encountered by EFL postgraduate students in writing their final research papers”. Dissertation “B” entitled “Investigating The Role of Research Papers in Developing EFL Students’ Critical Thinking The Case of First Year Master EFL Students of Sciences of the Language at Biskra University” published 2019 it studies the role of assigning research papers as a technique to develop EFL learners’ critical thinking. However; Dissertation “C” published 2019 under the title “An Investigation into the Role of You Tube Videos as a Pedagogical Tool in Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition: The Case of third Year Students of English at Biskra University” it is conducted to “investigate the role of adopting an educational innovative technique, You Tube videos, as an active teaching/learning strategy to enhance EFL learners’ vocabulary acquisition.” Moreover; dissertation “D” entitled “The Role of Oral Presentations in Reducing EFL Learner’s Speech Anxiety The Case Study of Second Year EFL Students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra” published 2019, Investigates “the importance of using oral presentations to reduce speech anxiety.” Additionally; dissertation “E” entitled “The Impact of Cooperative Learning Strategy



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on English Vocabulary Acquisition in the Oral Sessions a Case Study of Second Year LMD Students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra” It investigates “the impact of Cooperative Learning as a strategy to improve Vocabulary Acquisition”. They were randomly chosen from deferent topics.

**Table 1.**

*Dissertations used in the present study.*

<b>Theses Letter</b>	<b>Authors Names</b>	<b>Theses Title</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>
<b>A</b>	Bouhafsi Siham	Toward Integrating Research Papers along the Curriculum to Enhance EFL Students’ Academic Writing: The Case of Second Year Master EFL Students at Biskra University.	2018
<b>B</b>	HAMADA Soundous Marwa	INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF RESEARCH PAPERS IN DEVELOPING EFL STUDENTS’ CRITICAL THINKING The Case of First Year Master EFL Students of Sicences of the Language at Biskra University	2019
<b>C</b>	CHAIB Riane	An Investigation into the Role of You Tube Videos as a Pedagogical Tool in Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition: The Case of third Year Students of English at Biskra University	2019
<b>D</b>	DEHBI Lamia	The Role of Oral Presentations in Reducing EFL Learner’s Speech Anxiety The Case Study of Second Year EFL Students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra	2019
<b>E</b>	NIBOU Karima	The Impact of Cooperative Learning Strategy on English Vocabulary Acquisition in the Oral Sessions a Case Study of Second Year LMD Students of English at Mohamed Kheidher University of Biskra	2019

In 2019, dissertations were for the first time availbe in electronic format online, thus dissertations before that year were found in electronic format either with the researcher’s supervisor or with the researcher himself.

However the choice of the results and discussion section was not random, the choice of this section out of the whole body of the dissertation was due to the used

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type of academic writing in this part of the dissertation that is persuasive writing. As have been mentioned in chapter one section two under the sub-title (chapter three), This section of the dissertation displays the results and discuss them, normally saying with keeping the objectivity feature, yet the researcher is supposed to persuade the readers with the reliability and credibility of his/her findings. This contradiction between the two principles was the gap of study in the presence study.

### **1.2.2.Method**

The researcher proposed a 3-stage academic analysis for the five selected sections. In this shorter discussion of text here, the researcher mainly refers to two deferent tables to analyze the objectivity and subjectivity signs. However; the researcher used some extracts from the sections as a supporting tool to highlight other objectivity and subjectivity expressions. She used a color coding to clarify what she chose to emphasize in corpus analyses and discussions.

### **1.2.3. Subjectivity signs analysis**

Based on the literature reviewed in the first chapter second part, the researcher analyzed the results and discussion sections of five dissertations written by majors of Language Sciences stream at department of English, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra for subjectivity signs (use of personal pronouns and the active voice).

First, the personal pronounswere classified and then they were identified with illustrative examples. However; active voice expressions were managed to provide their objective form. The researcher presented and discussed the results obtained.

### **1.2.4. Objectivity expression analysis**

Based on the literature reviewed conducted in the first chapter second part, the researcher analyzed the results and discussion sections of fiveof master dissertations written by postgraduates of Language Sciences at the department of English, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra forobjectivityexpressions (passive voice). The researcher used all models of passive voice to analyze the corpus then identified their function according to Alexander (1990), and then she presented and discussed the results obtained.

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### 1.2.5. Extracts from science papers

The two previous analyses of subjectivity and objectivity were supported with extractions from the chosen samples. This color coding that was adopted to highlight the signs:

- **Blue** = person pronoun
- **Green** = active use
- **Yellow** = passive use
- **Red** = Verb to be as main verb

### Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to methods of sampling and methods used in analyzing the corpus. It explained how the corpora were analyzed and how the results were displayed in the third chapter.

## 2. Section Two: Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Introduction

This section presents data collected through document analysis; this chapter is an attempt to provide an answer the research problem questions. It also attempts to present and analyze the different findings, which were collected from the analysis of Five dissertations, results and discussion sections, written by language science majors at the department of English, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra.

### 2.2. Results of document analysis

The present research is based on a corpus-based analysis approach. It seeks to identify subjectivity signs that are likely to occur in the results section of master dissertations written by language sciences majors at the department of English, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. It highlights the use of first singular and first plural personal pronouns which indicates subjectivity, in addition to the use of active and passive voice.

#### 2.2.1. Results of Subjectivity Analysis Signs

##### 2.2.1.1. Results of First Person Pronouns Use “ I, Me, My, Mine, we, us”

Five dissertations results and discussion sections written by language science majors were analyzed. The findings were presented in the following tables.

**Table .2.**

*Use of personal pronouns.*

	<b>Example</b>	<b>Correction</b>
<b>Use of personal pronoun “we”</b>	- We also note that the p-value in Shapiro-Wilk test is ... - We learned from research courses that abstract refers to the summary of the conducted study and it should be written in one block. Figueiredo (2010, p.24).	- The p-value in Shapiro-wilk test is ... - Abstract refers to the summary of the conducted study, written in one block. Figueiredo (2010, p.24).



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**Table 3.**

*High Risk functions of the first plural personal pronoun “we”*

<b>Degree of risk function</b>	<b>The pronoun function</b>	<b>The model</b>	<b>Extraction from the sample</b>	<b>Dissertation Code</b>
			“We found that (40%) of teachers stated that their teaching expertise extends 6years; and the same result with who extends 4 years.”	D
			“We found out that students want to enhance their speaking skills but they encounter speech anxiety.”	D
			“When reading about research we found that research takes several forms such as thesis, dissertation, report, and research paper”	B
			“We notice in the figures below (1 and 2) that all the data are clustered around a straight line, showing the normal distribution of the data in the two samples in both pre- test and post- test.”	C
			“We notice in this item that the most of participants chosed the first option.”	D
			“As we notice, (100%) of teachers agree that oral presentation is a helpful tool to enhance students’ interactions in the target language.”	D

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	“Initially, from students’ responses we deduced that learning EFL at university is somehow difficult”	B
	“From teachers’ responses, we deduce that critical thinking is a matter of objectivity”	B
	“We can deduce that EFL teachers based their coursework and examinations on memorization and neglect all the other mental capacities which caused the students impassivity and weak level of critical thinking”	B
	“We believe a replication of this study in another study could realize why we have had attained this result.”	C
	“We believe that such a result in mainly because the treatment group did not show a remarkable difference between the pre and post-test.”	C

Table .3 shows that, majors used personal pronoun “we” to state results or claims, often more than to elaborate a argument.

Majors are at high risk to fall in subjectivity, while they are reporting the results pr or claims, for example, when they say “the researcher notice or found” or “it is noticed / found that...” would be more objective than to use the personal pronoun “we” that explicitly refers to the majors attribution.

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The table suggests that the majors are using only the model “we believe” when they are elaborating arguments, however this function is considered to be of high subjectivity risk

**Table 4.**

*Partly high risk functions of the first plural personal pronoun “we”.*

Degree of risk function	The pronoun function	The model	Extraction from the sample	Dissertation Code
			“Then, we asked them to justify whatever their answers (yes or no).”	B
			“we asked this question to collect ideas from teachers.”	B
			“we asked teachers to specify the relationship that exists between critical thinking and research”	B
			“As a sub-question, we asked respondents who have been selected “your own choice” to justify their answers”	B
			“Then, we asked them to classify them according to their level of influence.”	B
	we have chosen		“we have chosen first year master EFL students because we observed that they practice research papers as assignments...”	B
	We used		“To test the normal distribution of the data we used Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and ShapiroWilk tests, alsoQQ Plot, the results are showed in the Table 1.”	C



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We tackled	“This chapter deals with critical thinking. We tackled its definitions, history, process, standards, importance and approaches in addition to the main characteristics of critical thinkers.”	B
We worked	“from this item we estimated to know teachers, who we worked with, degrees...”	B

Table 4 suggests that majors use the models for explaining research procedures more often than the models of the two previous functions.

The major’s use of this function of the pronoun “we” reflects their level of competency in academic writing, that is average. The higher risk function majors use the lower their level is.

**Table 5.**

*Low risk functions of the first plural personal pronoun “we”*

Degree of risk function	The pronoun function	The model	Extraction from the sample	Dissertation Code
lowRiskFunctions	Stating a Purpose	We will discuss	“we will discuss speech anxiety from different angles. We will define the term anxiety, which occurs in foreign language learning...”	D
			“Finally, we will discuss the teachers’ role in raising learners’ awareness of the importance and appropriate way to make an oral presentation.”	D
		We decided	“We decided to distribute the questionnaire online..”	B
			“We decided to work with 25 students of	B

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	first year Master of Sciences of the Language at the University of Biskra.”	
We will focus on	“We will focus on how to prepare structure and how to deliver a successful...”	D

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The table shows that majors fall into subjectivity while they were stating the purpose of their studies by employing the personal pronoun “we”, which as stated before refers explicitly to the majors contribution.

The majors did not use any of the models of the last unction that is expressing self beliefs, which indicates that they are approaching the truth objectively away of bias and personal values. This shows a good level of competency in objective writing.

However, After Examining all classifications and their models, it can be noticed that:

- Graduates used the authorial pronoun “we” at all the classifications levels thus they range from high to low degrees of subjectivity.
- However; dissertation “A” did not use neither the pronoun “We” nor was at any class of the functions. The results suggest that the level of competency of the researcher as academic writer determines the objectivity or subjectivity of his writing.
- The last function that was “expressing self beliefs” was totally absent from the five dissertations, this function classified under the head “low risk function”. This result again suggests that the level of competency of the researcher as academic writer is higher than to be at a low risk of subjectivity.

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### 2.2.2.2. Results of analysis of the use of the active voice

**Table 6.**

*Use of active voice.*

	<b>Example</b>	<b>Correction</b>
<b>Use of Active Voice</b>	-The researcher will discuss the results of the students' questionnaire in order to check the validity of the research hypotheses.	-The results of the students' questionnaire were analyzed and discussed in order to check the validity of the research hypotheses.

In table 6 the priority is given to the researcher, as the one who performed the action (analyzed and discussed the questionnaire), yet academia and academic writing gives priority to the action, thus the use of the active voice in this situation is inappropriate.

However, we have noticed that the active voice is more used than the passive voice, exactly in the results sections of the dissertations. k. Hayland (2002) "These results are all the more interesting because second language speakers often find it easier to construct active sentences."

### 2.2.3. Results of Analysis of Objectivity Signs

#### 2.2.3.1. Results of analysis of the use of passive voice

Alexander (1990) argued that the passive voice is used for three main reasons: Evacuation of responsibility, focus on the action not who or why, and to avoid vague subjects like someone, and to shift the interest from the agent to the receiver of the action in order to sound objective and to reduce the attribution of the self in the text.

However; these reasons were adapted to this study to illustrate the function of the extractions.

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

**Table 7.**

*Use of passive voice.*

Passive voice	Extracts from the dissertations	Function	Dissertation letter
	“... a basis upon which content analysis is done.”	Focus on the action	A
	“It is noticeable from the previous table (8) that a majority (80%) of English teachers at ...”	To sound objective	A
	“ ... Which are needed to enrich this study with useful and valuable information.”	Focus on the action	A
	“... there are difficulties in learning at university”	Focus on the action	B
	“... These questions are divided into three sections...”	Evacuation from responsibility	E
<b>was</b>	“This question was composed four choices. It was possible for the respondents to tick more than one box.”	Sound objective	C
	“At the end the stated hypothesis was positively confirmed and the research questions were answered.”	Evacuation of responsibility	E
	“A total of 15 questionnaires were distributed to 15 teachers of different modules.”	Focus on the action	A
	“difficulties they have faced when learning at university”	Focus on the action	B

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

	“Initially, the findings that have been reported from the above description of using the test as a data collection method were negative.”	Avoid vague subjects	C
	“Indeed, the findings have shown a positive attitude towards Cooperative Learning as a teaching tool.”	Evacuation of responsibility	E
	“In this questionnaire, it has been attempted to analyze teachers’ feedback ...”	To sound objective	A
	“The choice of the method has been determined by the nature of the study.”	Focus on the agent more than the receiver	D
	“understanding has been selected by (24%) of the respondents while interest got a percentage of (16%)”	To avoid vague subjects	B
<b>Had</b>	“They had reported that they watch the online videos before”	Sound objective	C
<b>Will</b>	“the more their critical thinking and research skills will be developed.”	Focus on the action	B
	“...the more their critical thinking and research skills will be developed.”	Focus on the agent more than the receiver	B
	“In small groups, students will easily be engaged in the task....”	Focus on the action	E
<b>Can</b>	“Also, they can be observed by the teacher easily and we can avoid some uncooperative behaviors.”	Focus on the agent more than the receiver	E
	These activities can be used integrated with one another or	Focus o the action	D

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

	separately...”		
<b>Could</b>	“Critical thinking could not be evaluated, but rather it could be boosted and used in every stage of the lesson.”	Focus on the agent more than the receiver	B
<b>should</b>	“Thinking critically needs some cognitive skills that should be developed inside or outside the classroom.”	Focus on the agent more than the receiver	B
<b>Would</b>	“(teacher 8) claimed that it would be better if EFL teachers adopt research papers as assigning tool starting from 2nd year and raise the difficulty of learning.”	Focus n the action	B

Table 7 shows that:

- The graduates have used passive voice and communicated their research process through it very successfully.
- However, the use of passive voice, in dissertation “A” resulted in the absence of personal pronouns.
- Some passive voice models such as “ought to” and “must” were not used in the sample used for this study.

### 2.2.4. Extracts from the corpus

These extracts are used as supporting arguments to the previous analysis, it uses this color code to highlight other pronouns, active voice use, and other passive vice use.

- **Blue** = personpronoun
- **Green** = active use
- **Yellow** = passive use
- **Red** = other pronouns

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

- **Dissertation « B »**

“On the other hand, the second division as (teachers 1, 2, and 3) **providedus** with **the method they use to evaluate****their** students’ level of critical thinking.”

“From this item, **we** **opened door for teachers to provideus** with **strategies that can be effective to develop students’ critical thinking”**

.” Through this item, **we****demand** from teachers to comment or add any suggestion, some of **them** as (teachers 1, 2, 3, 7, and 9) merely **supportedus** and **showedtheir** admiration towards the topic”

Furthermore, **it****helpedus** to have an idea about if students consider themselves as critical thinkers and what **characterises****them**.”

- **Dissertation « C »**

“**It****servedus** in the piloting stage. In below a description of this questionnaire.”

“**Our** supervisor **made some correction and remarks about** the students’ questionnaire. **He****recommendedus** to add some choices to question three named (To be improved or poor, No idea and Excellent. **He****omitted** a choice (less than average).

« Do not waste **your** students’ time. This **means** that EFL teachers **need** to focus on the target topic of the recorded video and **avoid** speaking about irrelevant topics. »

- **Dissertation « D »**

“According to Nikitina (2011) oral presentation is described as a process in which **you** express **your** thoughts orally and affect your listeners’ views.”

- **Dissertation « E »**

“Also, **it has been noticed that** in one group **you** can find mixed abilities”

The extractions show that researchers used other pronouns rather than personal pronouns “I” and “We” such as: it, he ; they , us ... and even the non-academic and

## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

the subjective pronoun “you”. This shows some degree of subjectivity. However; the extracts shows as well the use of passive voice with yellow color and the use of active voice with green. However; it is clear that majors employed the active voice with these personal pronouns.

### **2.3. Discussion of the results**

The obtained data from document analysis have provided us with a wide range of rich information that is beneficial to answer some of our research questions that are intended to be investigated. From the analysis of the documents, we came at the conclusion that the use of the personal pronouns, specially “We”, is much more than the use of any other subjects such as “it is” and “there are”.

However; what caught our attention is the use of « you » pronoun in the dissertations which is considered as totally non-academic and subjective practice almost a taboo in academic English. This use of the pronoun “you” is inappropriate and unacceptable in academic writing. Researchers should never address the audience directly.

It is generally known that objectivity in academic writing in general and in master dissertations, specifically, is marked by the use of the passive voice. However; from the obtained results it is clear that majors still use active voice. Hence some degree of subjectivity is present in their work.

Examples of active voice from the dissertations:

- “The student is responsible for his own...” Dissertation “E”
- “Then, we asked them to justify...” Dissertation “B”

The results show that the researcher competency controls the successful he is in keeping the objectivity principle. For instance; dissertation “A” did not contain any personal pronouns and rarely used active voice in the other hand it contained extensive use of passive voice. and other subjects that are not personal pronouns.

Examples from dissertation “A”:

- “The results reveal that (70%) of the ...” rather than “we found that...”



## Identifying Subjectivity in dissertations

- “The analysis focused also on candidates’ ability to present ...” rather than “we focused on...”
- “The findings reveal that (70%) ...” rather than “we found that ...”

However, the findings showed that most of the EFL learners at Biskra University are struggling to be objective and they are successful at that to some extent. Major’s dissertations were written based on the main features of academic writing, such as formality and structure along with objectivity.

### **2.4. Study Limitations**

The corpora studied were only five results and discussion sections written by postgraduates of Language Sciences stream at department of English, Mohamed Khider University f Biskra. The selected corpora were from the years 2018 and 2019, due to the unavailability of previous dissertations in electronic forms.

### **2.5. Future Recommendations**

In light of the research findings, it can be suggested that further studies tackle such topic, first, to gather more data and enlarge the number of corpora in order to have more representative sample for the whole population and more trustworthy results. Also it suggests studying subjectivity using a sentiment analysis approach. Sentimental analysis is a new and fresh area of research. It is quantitative method of research, it is usually used to quantify the sentiment related issues in corpora such as polarity, subjectivity...etc.

We suggest as well tackling this study using software managers such as AntConc and Textblob. These managers study more corpora than the usual thematic analysis. However, we advice the future researchers to choose the manager better fits with the aims of the study under investigation.

We recommend studying “nominalization” as a key attribution to objectivity along with passive voice. Nominalization is the process by which any part of speech is used as a noun, for example the verb “explain” is used as noun to be “explanation”. It may refer to the derivation of a noun phrase from an underlying clause as well. (Geoffrey.L,2005).

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# General Conclusion

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This study was an attempt to qualify objectivity using a corpus-based study of the results and discussion sections of five dissertations written by majors of Language Sciences stream at department of English. It aimed to answer three main questions: How successful are the graduating candidates in maintaining the feature of objectivity of academic writing? What are the most common subjectivity fallacies that students make when discussing their research results? how does the researcher level of competency in academic writing may affect the quality of the dissertation?

The first question aimed to qualify the present work either it is highly objective or it does contain subjectivity. The aim of this question is achieved and the corpora were qualified as it does contain subjectivity the work cannot be totally objective; in a way or another the author identity is present.

The second question aimed to search for the subjective practices in academic writing related to the literature provided in chapter one section two. The subjective elements that were looked for are the use of personal pronouns and active voice. the answer to this question was stated in chapter two. The authorial pronoun “I” was totally absent, however the plural pronoun “we” was extensively used to illustrate shared responsibility between the researchers and their readers.

The third question aimed to find a relation between the researcher level of competency in academic writing and his success in maintain the objectivity principle. and the answer was as follows: Researcher’s level of competency in cadmic writing controls the objectivity of his dissertation. However, the door was let open for more research in the nature of the relation between the two variables.

## General Conclusion

Passive voice is the key attribution of objectivity in academic writing and personal pronouns are the first clear and as well a main key of attribution of subjectivity. The researcher relied on the extensive analysis of these two elements to qualify the corpus either objective or subjective.

The analysis of active voice and the use of other pronouns were supporting strategies in order to support the findings from the two previous main analyses.

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## المخلص

تسعى هذه الأطروحة للبحث في الموضوعية كعنصر مهم في الكتابة الأكاديمية والأطروحات العلمية عموماً و تخصص البحث لفصل النتائج أين يقدم الباحث نتائجه و يدافع عنها لإقناع القارئ بها. بينما يحاول الباحث إقناع القارئ بما توصل له من نتائج. قد قع في نوع من الذاتية. لذلك فهذه الأطروحة قدمت تحليلاً لهذا الفصل من الأطروحات وأجابت على أسئلة البحث؛ بهدف تقصي مدى موضوعية و ذاتية هذه الأطروحات، و ذلك بدراسة مؤشرات كل منهما.

تم اختيار خمس من فصول النتائج لخمس من الأطروحات، من تخصص علوم اللغة، فيقسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خضر بسكرة اختياراً عشوائياً. تنقسم هذه الأطروحة لفصلين: يتحدث الفصل الأول عن الكتابة الأكاديمية، ما يميزها عن أنواع الكتابة الأخرى ثم أنواعها و خصائصها. بينما يقدم الفصل الثاني نتائج التحليل و يعرضها و يناقشها. أظهرت النتائج أن الأطروحات مؤهلة من حيث الموضوعية و رغم ذلك قد تحتوي على بعض من الذاتية مرتبطة بمستوى الكاتب. و لإنصاف هؤلاء الباحثين تم التصريح بأنهم تحديد منهجية و أسلوب الكتابة لطالبنا ماجستير من قبل المشرفين، بشأن المنهجية التي يجب استخدامها. و لإنصاف المشرفين فقد تم التصريح بأن المشرفين يرشدون الطلبة لاستعمال الطريقة التي تحددها المؤسسة التعليمية.