# CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This research is guided by a qualitative tradition. It is a descriptive inquiry based on four case studies regarding writers' identity by means of voice analysis and gender differences on voice expression in written discourse. Case studies, as mentioned by Yin (1994, cited in Barone, 2004), gather different source of evidence such as papers, interviews and recordings to develop the analysis. Indeed, this research encloses the analysis of students' academic writing of the conclusions of their BA thesis as well as interviews to the participants after their thesis defense, and a video recording of their professional exam. The purpose of these instruments is for analyzing identity features and they are detailed in section 3.2 of this chapter.

Since this thesis purpose is threefold, it also considers a discourse analysis methodology for the analysis of the writings. Goldman and Wiley (2004, p. 64) claim that this is "a method for describing the ideas and the relations among the ideas that are present in a text". That is, this methodology permits an analysis of the structure of the texts, and as the authors keep saying, such structure depends on the genre in analysis. The particular genre of this research is the concluding chapter of undergraduate theses. A detailed explanation is on Sections 2.5.2.1.2.1 and 3.2.1. One of the reasons I chose BA thesis conclusions chapter as focus is that there is no framework, and almost null research on conclusions analysis (Paltridge, 1997; Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988; Bunton, 2005). Thus, in order to propose a framework for analyzing conclusions, I consider the work from previous genre analysis frameworks on M.A thesis' and PhD dissertations' conclusions (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988; Bunton, 2005). Section 3.3.1 of this chapter presents a discussion on the considerations to the proposed framework.

For a better understanding of the methodology applied into this particular context, this chapter contains, in section 3.1, a description of the writers who participated in this research. Then, a description of the materials and instruments used to collect the data for the study is included in section 3.2. Afterwards, an account on explaining and analyzing voice features in writing is presented in section 3.3, as well as a discussion on the adapted framework for analyzing conclusions. In section 3.4, I list the procedures followed to carry out the data collection and analysis. Finally, I include in this chapter a 3.5 section that provides the limitations faced during the research.

## 3.1 Participants

This is a case study research where two male and two female cases where analyzed. The participants were chosen considering that they had finished their English written BA thesis in TESOL and AL studies and they were about to present their thesis defense. This selection was done on purpose since the participants are much involved in the process of writing a thesis and defending it. The period for choosing the participants considered those students who presented the thesis defense between August 2007 and February 2008. The selection of the participants also considered the fact of having me as the thesis director of two of the research participants, and since I am also the researcher of this thesis, my analysis could have been subjectively seen. This last claim follows the assumption that a thesis director influences the work of their students, so the other two participants had a different advisor than me. Two male and two female participants where chosen so a comparison on gender voice expression could be made, since the gender study is merely comparative and based on voice features.

The ages of the participants range between 24 and 29 years old, and they studied the BA in EFL and TESOL/AL at a public University in the center of the Mexican Republic. The specific characteristics of each participant are included in the results section (particularly section 4.2 when explaining voice of each case study) for a better understanding of the case and identity expression.

## 3.2 Materials and Instruments

The materials used in this research are the four students' BA thesis conclusions section, and the instruments are transcripts of interviews, and recordings of each thesis defense. These materials and instruments are detailed below.

### 3.2.1 BA Thesis Conclusions

The conclusions sections of the four participants' BA thesis are the materials to analyze voice expression of each writer, and to develop the framework. Conclusions are chosen for this analysis since this is the section where the writer posts their reflections, point of view and assessment of the research (McKinlay, 1984, Peng, 1987, Dudley-Evans, 1986, cited in Paltridge, 1997; see section 2.4.2.1.2.1), and therefore, the writer's voice as author (the *self* as author) as well as their voice in the text (*discoursal self*) could be analyzed (Ivanic, 1998; see section 2.6.1.1). The conclusions are obtained directly from the original sources, that is, from the thesis with the students' consent.

### 3.2.2 Interviews

As a first instrument, surveys took place. It was face-to face interview with a semi-structured format. That is, I interviewed the participants personally and face to face following

questions previously written, and considering new ones if the data gathered was relevant for the research (Leavitt, 2001). Surveys were chosen to analyze writers' perceptions of their academic identity, how they manage to express their voice in the academic situation of writing a thesis and how the academic environment influences this and/or shapes the expression of their identity in writing. I first designed this instrument, and it was checked by my thesis advisor for validity and reliability. Then, it was piloted with one student interviewed three days after presenting her thesis defense. The instrument was finally validated and finalized. The instrument consists of two sections: section one gathers general information from all participants regarding voice in writing, and section two is more specific on particular and individualized questions to each participant according to their topics. Section one consists of 12 questions and Section two varies between on or two questions per participant. This different number of questions was based on the type of research they did. The interview questions are presented in Appendix A. Each interview was administered once the students had presented their thesis defense, since it is a retrospection exercise. They were applied within the space of one week after their professional exam due to the experience being still fresh. The appointments for the interviews were scheduled before each student's professional exam with their previous consent. The data gathered from these interviews is presented in quotes of each participant's answer in the corresponded section of Chapter Four.

An interview was also administered to the other thesis director in order to compare his view in the students writing of thesis with that of the students'. This interview consisted of 13 questions relating to students writing and their main constrains when writing the thesis, the participants' investment in their project, his tutoring and requirements for the students to write the thesis. The questions of this interview are shown in Appendix B. Extracts from the

interviews are presented in Chapter Four to contribute and support the point in discussion. The conventions to present such extracts follow Ivanic's (1998, pp. 120-121) conventions.

### 3.2.3 Video-Recordings of the Professional Exam

The information gathered from the interviews was also complemented by recording the students' professional exams, with their permission previously given. The recordings covered the student's thesis presentation as well as the defense of the same; that is, the presentation of their topic as well as the committee questioning and student's answers. This was done to analyze the similarities of their answers in the defense stage with the ones obtained in the interview. As a member of the committee, I actually asked questions regarding their own identity as writers in the development of the thesis. Besides, the examination was recorded since other members of the jury might ask questions relevant to identity and voice in regards to professionalization. I, as a participant observer, took some notes to complement the recording, and I included them in the analysis whenever I considered them worthy and pertinent to mention.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed according to my main research purposes: analysis of conclusions' framework, voice analysis, and gender differences in voice expression. For a better understanding of each analysis, this section explains how and why such analyses were developed in that way.

### 3.3.1 The Conclusions Framework

One of the purposes of this research is to propose a framework for developing further research on genre-discourse analysis on BA thesis conclusions. Thus, this section discusses the most relevant works and contributions for setting the bases for developing such framework. As mentioned in section 2.5.2.1.2.1, the conclusions genre has had only recent focus on its study and therefore no framework has been established for its analysis. Indeed, most of the studies that work conclusions address the genre of *research articles' conclusions* section (Peacock, 2002; Holmes, 1997; Yang and Allison, 2003), yet the conclusions I analyzed in my study belong to the *thesis genre*. Bunton (2005, p. 207) points out that in "thesis the *Conclusion* […] has the status of a separate chapter" which is not the case of the conclusions in a research article. Therefore, the frameworks developed for analyzing conclusions of research articles (Peacock, 2002; Holmes, 1997; Yang and Allison, 2003) are not used in my research, yet as Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) and Bunton (2005) analyze the structure of MA and PhD thesis (see discussion further in this section), I use their studies as a basis for developing and proposing a framework for the analysis of BA thesis conclusions.

Writing a thesis is a genre that is usually seen as complex (Bitchener and Basturkmen, 2006), and writing the conclusion is the "section students have the greatest difficulty with" (Peacock, 2002, p. 483). This difficulty to write conclusions chapter responds to the uncertainty of what to include and the lack of awareness of such genre (Bitchener and Basturkmen, 2006). The lack of awareness of the conclusion genre relates them as part of the thesis as main genre, yet as Bathia (1993) says, conclusions chapter are the subgenre (see section 2.5.2.1.2.1). In fact, Thesis as genre and particularly conclusions are not frequently researched due to this lack of awareness of the genre. The genre analysis as explained in section 2.5.2.1.2 makes use of moves to explain the text functions. A move is "a segment of

text that is shaped and constrained by a specific communicative purpose" (Holmes, 1997, p.325). That is, a move fulfills a communicative intention within the particular genre. Because genres are usually analyzed in terms of moves and with a considerable amount of texts of the same genre type, the analysis turns to fit the quantitative research tradition. Thus, studies such as Peacock's (2002) and Holmes' (1997) draw conclusions regarding the number of moves, their order, and some interdisciplinary variations proper of their research. This type of research was done with the purpose to find out if the text in analysis followed or not the characteristics and conventions established for the genre and how the text differs in the different disciplines. However, my concern was not such, but rather to propose a descriptive framework for analyzing the BA thesis conclusions' organization. I, similarly to Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988, p.114), approach this analysis with a more "fairly delicate and comprehensible approach in terms of its functional utility". At this point it is worthy to mention that genre can be approached from both traditions. In my particular study I analyzed a text type that includes categories which although can be counted, were just analyzed for the communicative purpose and function they fulfill. In this analysis, features of intertextuality can be found, and this makes my study bias to a more qualitative view.

For a better understanding of the analysis, I turn now to discuss Bunton's (2005) and Hopkins and Dudley-Evans' (1988) studies which were the ones which served as a basis to develop my framework. As already said, studies on genre type consider moves in their analysis. Bunton's (2005) research makes reference to Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) moves or cycles (as they call it). He actually adapts their framework for developing his analysis. He claims that a conclusion must contain "summary of main results, summary of main claims, and recommendations of future work" (Bunton, 2005, p. 208). These are necessary moves in a conclusion, yet in his study, he concludes that conclusions generic

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structure varies on the discipline of study. That is, a conclusion of a thesis in humanities and social sciences is different from a conclusion of a thesis in science and technology. This is indeed true, if I consider Fairclough's (1992, cited in Ivanic, 1998) view on language analysis. The social context is different, yet if I consider that the genre under study is conclusions of thesis, I can say that the communicative function is for both areas, the same: to close the paper.

Closing a paper requires of many functions, and at this point Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) recall the *interactional*, *transactional* (Halliday, 1994) and logical perspectives. They developed a study in order to propose a descriptive framework for analyzing conclusions as well, yet their focus was on articles and dissertations conclusions. The framework they propose is in Table 1 (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988, p. 118, italics in original).

1. *Background information*
2. *Statement of Results* (*SOR*)
3. (*Un*) *expected Outcome*, in which the writer comments on whether the result is expected or not.
4. *Reference to Previous Research* (comparison), in which the author compares his or her result with those reported in the literature.
5. *Explanation of Unsatisfactory Result*, in which the writer suggests reasons for a surprising result, or one different from those in the literature.
6. *Exemplification*, in which the writer gives an example to support his or her explanation.
7. *Deduction*, in which the writer makes a claim about the generalizability of the particular results.
8. *Hypothesis*, in which the writer makes a more general claim arising from his experimental results.
9. *Reference to Previous Research* (support), in which the writer quotes previous work to support his or her deduction or hypothesis.
10. *Recommendation,* in which the writer makes suggestions for future work.
11. *Justification,* in which the writer justifies the need for the future work recommended.

**Table 1: Hopkins and Dudley-Evans Conclusions Analysis Framework (1988, p. 118)**

To clearly understand what the moves refer to, I provide an explanation of each of them. The first move, *background information*, analyzes the function of summarizing the research purpose and methodology in order to recall the audience what it is being done. The second move, *Statement of Results* (*SOR*) is where the writer actually discusses the main findings and claims their conclusions. This is, according to the authors, the only one obligatory move in all conclusions, and thus, it is the most important when analyzing the conclusions genre. Move three, (*Un*) *expected Outcome,* is a move in which the writers had the outcome as something they expected or not, and so they decide to comment on. Move four, *Reference to Previous Research* (comparison) and move nine *Reference to previous research* (support), serve the writers to compare or support, respectively, their results with the ones they discussed in the literature. I assume that in this part it is more likely to find features of intertextuality in the conclusions section and how the author makes reference to them. Move five, *Explanation of Unsatisfactory Result* functions as a way to explain why the results were different to what was expected or to what is stated in the literature. Move six, *Exemplification,* has the function to illustrate and support the writer's findings. Move seven, *deduction*, as it is suggested by the authors, is where the author makes claims about the generalizability of results. Move eight, *hypothesis*, has as a function to do a general claim about results. These last two moves support that the authors refer to a more quantitative research tradition, which is not the case of my study; yet genre analysis is evolving and claiming a need to develop studies with a qualitative view. Thus, my research contributes with this qualitative view to analyze conclusions. In move ten, *Recommendation,* the writer suggests ideas for further research in the same line of investigation and/ or to continue with the present research. Finally, move eleven, *justification*, serves the author to explain why it is important to do the further recommended work.

The order in which the moves are presented responds to the order Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) presented in their framework, yet as they discussed in their article, the order varies in three main cycles; a cycle is "the main unit of organization in long informing sections, it is made up of obligatory and optional moves" (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988, p. 8). Thus, the order of moves is not the obligatory order follow. At this point it is relevant mentioning that the framework they proposed followed a quantitative tradition (which was the stronger research tradition during 1990's), and therefore, the order was important to consider three main cycles and draw more generalizable results. However, due to the qualitative nature of my research, I expect to find differences in move presence and organization. From this, I am proposing a framework for analyzing BA thesis conclusions which I expect will constitute significant contributions to studies on genre. In my particular analysis I followed these steps:

1)      I analyzed the BA thesis conclusions in terms of Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) framework in order to:

   i.  Analyze if the eleven moves they propose for dissertations and research articles conclusions are present in the BA conclusions.

   ii.  Analyze the order these moves follow and why they follow such order.

2)      Consider other aspects not included in Hopkins' and Dudley-Evans' (1988) framework.

3)      Compare and contrast the moves I found, and suggest a more suitable framework for the analysis of BA conclusions.

For this analysis, I used the four conclusions already described in section 3.2.1. Because of the size of the conclusions chapters, I only considered extracts[1] to exemplify the

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[1] The complete chapters are available upon request.

moves. The suggested framework is presented, discussed and explained in detail in Chapter Four, since it is actually one of the outcomes this research has as purpose.

### 3.3.2 Voice Analysis

As pointed out by Atkinson (2001) in his article: *Reflections and refractions on the JSLW special issue on voice,* the study of voice has come to be one of the most complex and subjective issues for analysis. In his account, he discusses the main issues of the articles presented in that special number on voice (Ivanic and Camps, 2001; Prior, 2001; Matsuda, 2001, Hirvela and Belcher, 2001). Such articles, as well as Matsuda and Tardy's (2007) and Stapleton's (2002) contribute to the study and analysis of voice from different angles. Based on this special issue, I will now describe the framework that I used for the analysis of voice.

As justified in Chapter Two, I am analyzing voice from the study of the *self as author* and from the *discoursal self* (Ivanic, 1998). For analyzing *self as author*, I refer to Ivanic and Camps' (2001) analytical framework to study self representation in L2 writing. In addition, I am working with this framework due to it also considers the Halliday's (1994) systemic functional analysis and it is the Hallidayan approach the one that guides this research in regards to voice expression in writing. It is, however, worth mentioning that although Ivanic and Camps' (2001) framework has been criticized and questioned in its outcomes as an individualistic view of voice, it is the only one which provides us with "a theoretical basis and some practical tools for doing [...] discourse analysis related to voice and self representation on student texts, and it is notable as the only sustained empirical analysis of students' texts" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 116). In addition, the critics to Ivanic and Camps' framework are contradictory to their theoretical discussion on voice as socially constructed (discussed in Section 2.6.1.1); this fact diminishes the critics made to their framework (for a deeper

discussion on the questionability of the framework see Stapleton (2002) and Atkinson (2001).

Hence, I am using Ivanic and Camps' (2001) framework as a foundation. Yet trying to address

some of the limitations for which it has been criticized, I am incorporating other ideas from

Stapleton (2002) when analyzing generic reference.

### 3.3.2.1 Self as Author

As mentioned, the analysis of self as author was based on Ivanic and Camps (2001, p.

11). I turn now to the explanation of the framework I adapted from them. This framework is

summarized in Table 2 for an easy interpretation and practicality in the study.

| TYPES OF POSITIONING | IN RELATION TO | LINGUISTIC REALIZATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| **Ideational positioning** | • Different interests, objects of study, methodologies;<br><br>• Different views of knowledge-making. | (i) Lexical choice in noun phrases<br><br>(i) Verb tense,<br>(ii) Verb type,<br>(iii) First person reference. |
| **Interpersonal positioning** | • Different degrees of self-assurance and certainty;<br><br>• Different power relationships between the writer and the reader. | (ii) Evaluation,<br>(iii)Modality,<br>(iv) First person reference.<br><br>(ii) Mood,<br>(ii) First person reference. |
| **Textual positioning** | • Different views of how a written text should be constructed. | (i) Noun phrase length,<br>(ii) Clauses structure<br>(iii) Linking devices. |

**Table 2: Three Simultaneous Types of Subject-Positioning (Adapted from Ivanic and**

**Camps, 2001, p. 11).**

As shown in the figure, this framework corresponds to the three language functions proposed by Halliday (1994), *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual* (discussed in section 2.4.3). Ivanic and Camps (2001) illustrate these three functions into linguistic realizations for the analysis of a text, and they consider as well Halliday's systemic functional approach. Because I assume the reader is familiar with Halliday's terminology and approach, I only comment briefly of these and exemplify these realizations.

Since my purpose for this section is to describe the data analysis I followed to study voice, I present an extract in which I exemplify the realizations of the three voice positioning and an explanation and interpretation of them is in order. The extract is taken from Ivanic and Camps's (2001, p. 12) study samples, and it is following presented.

*Extract*:

Transient and permanent entities are distinguished by the symbol ("X"), it maps into a Terminate Action, i.e., the object will be destroyed. Additional information, such as the maximum number of instances of an object and the frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation, should be stated clearly as comments in the diagram.

### 3.3.2.1.1 Ideational Positioning

Ivanic and Camps (2001, p. 12) use *ideational positioning* to refer to "the way in which the selection of voice types positions the writer as having particular ideas, particular views of the world". This, as Table 2 suggests, considers (i) interests, objects of study and methodologies, and (ii) knowledge making which can be analyzed by the (i) grammatical-lexical choice, and (ii) verbs (process type: action, mental, existential), tense and first person

reference. I following present an example of analysis of ideational positioning and its interpretation.

Regarding the (i) lexical choice to analyze interest, objects of study and methodologies, the extract uses particular words (noun phrases) that place the writer as a member of a specific discourse community. Examples of these noun phrases in the extract are: *Transient and permanent entities, the symbol (x), frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation, the diagram, a terminate action.* With this type of noun phrases, it can be assumed that the writer probably belongs to a business discourse community and that is why he uses such lexis.

The other realization of ideational positioning, (ii) different views of knowledge making, is relevant for this study since it places the writer in relation to the topic to write (Ivanic and Camps, 2001). I then develop this analysis considering verb tense (*absolute tense* which locates a process in time relative to here and now point of view, present, past and future; and *relative tense* which further locates the process relatively to the absolute tense –see Halliday (1994) for a deeper explanation, verb type (process type), and first person reference (personal and impersonal usage). In the extract, it is seen that the verb tenses enclose: one present tense in passive, one present tense in active, one future in passive voice, and one modal (which is considered in the interpersonal positioning realization and that is the reason why it is later explained). Regarding the process type, the first one, second and third ones are action processes, and the last one is a verbal process. Thus, the verbs system is summarized in Table 3.

| Verb | Tense | Process Type |
|------|-------|--------------|
| *are distinguished* | Present –passive | Action |
| *maps* | Present –active | Action |
| *will be destroyed* | Future –passive | Action |
| *be stated* | Modality –to be analyzed in interpersonal positioning | Verbal |

**Table 3: Summary of Verb System Sample Analysis**

The writer uses is mostly present and future absolute tenses with verbs that express action. He uses present tense to refer to facts, and future tense to exemplify the cause of one of those facts. All these are action verbs since they imply something that can be physically and/or observably done. The verbal process occurs as a mental realization that can be expressed and the writer considers worthy to claim it for the suggestion he is making in the extract. From this, it is seen that the way the writer makes knowledge is based mostly on facts and from them proposing what should be done.

To close the last aspect of ideational positioning, I explain the specific and first person reference (personal and impersonal). As mentioned in Chapter One, writing in impersonal or personal has been a largely discussed issue (Stapleton, 2002; Ivanic, 1998, Ivanic and Camps, 2001). According to Stapleton (2002), the use of "I" is actually a discursive feature associated with voice, and since my study seeks to analyze voice I consider this discursive feature. Tang and John (1999, cited in Stapleton, 2002, p. 185) propose six categories for the explanation of the first person. These entities are: "*representative* –'In English, *we* have words such as…'; *guide* –'So far, *we* have said nothing about…'; *architect* –'In *my* essay, *I* will examine…'; *recounter* of the research process –'All of the papers *I* read were…'; *opinion-holder* –'*I* would

like to show that…'; and *originator* –'*My* ideas rest on the assumption that…'. In an attempt

to analyze this feature I decided to quote the authors' examples since in the extract I am using

as model, there is no use of first person which suggest two things: the writer did not consider

appropriate to use personal for his purpose (Tang and John, 1999, cited in Stapleton, 2002) or

"the writer is withdrawing from all responsibility from an academic [paper]" (Ivanic, 1998, p.

306). Thus, I used Tang's and John's (1999, cited in Stapleton, 2002) categorization for

explaining the use of first person in my data when explained in the results.

### 3.3.2.1.2 Interpersonal Positioning

It is time now to turn into the *interpersonal positioning* analysis. The two aspects to

analyze in this section deal with (i) the degrees of self-assurance and certainty and (ii)

different power relations between the writer and the reader. The first point is analyzed

considering modality (the likeliness of things to happen), first person reference and evaluation

as linguistic realizations. As mentioned in the ideational positioning, there is a case of

modality in the extract. This modality is considered as mid level since the writer is using

*should* which implies a suggestion. The analysis of first person reference is performed as

suggested by Tang and John (1999, cited in Stapleton, 2002), and by this, I can observe how

the writer positions himself in the text. The evaluation is analyzed by certain words that

express self-assurance. In the extract the word *'clearly'* is an example of the writer's

conviction regarding the suggestion previously expressed.

This section also makes use of the discourse analysis approach in the analysis of (ii)

power relationships between writer and reader by analyzing the *mood* (indicative, imperative

and subjunctive) of the sentences in the text and the first person reference. In the extract, it is

observed that the mood is indicative since the writer is declaring facts, and his attitude towards

the message is then factual. His position is neutral since he expresses himself with facts; he does not take any position, and this is certainly assured with the non-use of first person.

### 3.3.2.1.3 Textual Positioning

Finally, the *textual positioning* considers how the written text is constructed. Its analysis considers the length of noun phrases and linking devices. The extract I am using as a sample analysis has only 2 sentences (numbered) with a total of 51 words, and 12 **noun phrases** (**bolded**). The second sentence, longer than the first one, contains extremely long noun phrases which suggest that the writer elaborates his constructions.

> *Extract:*
>
> 1) **Transient and permanent entities** are distinguished by **the symbol ("X")**, **it** maps into **a Terminate Action**, i.e., **the object** will be destroyed. 2) **Additional information**, such as **the maximum number of instances of an object** and **the frequency distribution**, **mean** and **standard deviation**, should be stated clearly as **comments** in **the diagram**.

The writer's noun phrases elaboration suggests complex clause structure. A clause structure is actually determined by lexical density. This involves "counting (a) the number of lexical words in an extract, and (b) the number of clauses in it, then dividing (a) by (b)" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 260). The (a) lexical items are in *italics* in the text and the (b) clauses are underlined and numbered.

*Extract*

1) *Transient* and *permanent entities are distinguished* by the *symbol* *("X")*, 2) it *maps* into a *Terminate Action*, 3) i.e., the *object will be destroyed*. 4) *Additional information*, such as the *maximum number* of *instances* of an *object* and the *frequency distribution*, *mean* and *standard deviation, should be stated clearly* as *comments* in the *diagram*.

The analysis of the extract in discussion regarding lexical density is shown in Table 4.

| Lexical items (a) | No. of clauses (b) | Lexical density (a)/ (b) |
|---|---|---|
| 31 | 4 | 7.75 |

**Table 4: Lexical Density Sample Analysis**

In Ivanic's (1998) study of lexical density, she claims that having an indicator of 5 or more as average implies high lexical density, and having 2 or less means low lexical density. Therefore, as noticed in the long noun phrases, the writer has an elaborated way to construct his sentences. Ivanic (1998, p.260) points out "language varies in the way clauses are structured", so the contribution of lexical density in studies of voice is a way to "probing the fine detail of discoursal heterogeneity" (*ibid*. p. 261). In other words, lexical density and structure elaboration permits to analyze how the writers construct their written identity and positions themselves in the particular discourse community following the genre conventions. If high level of lexical density is obtained, the writers show a high complex construction in their writing, and their identity constructed is seen as elaborated. In the particular context of this thesis which analyses the writing in a foreign language, this complexity or simple

language structures may be influenced by the participants' first language, yet this is only a hypothesis.

To develop the analysis of *self as author*, I considered pertinent to choose an extract from the *Statement of Results* (*SOR*) section from the BA thesis conclusions since it is in this section where the writer discusses the main claims and concludes with the research (see section 3.3.3 for a discussion on this). Halliday (1989) and Ure (1971) cited in Ivanic (1998), propose the length of the extract of at least 100 words because it is a way of making comparisons. Thus, the length of the extracts considered in this study is of 100 words approximately. This number ranges actually from the 15% to 20% of the students chapters. I do not consider the absolute 15% nor the 20% of the texts since the length of the conclusions considerably differs from each participant. In addition, the extracts are not taken from the same part of the participants' conclusions since the *SOR* is a move whose place is not established yet. The discussion of this is presented in section 3.3.1. Therefore, the extracts are of approximately 100 words, and they are taken from the section in which the participants discuss the main claims.

### 3.3.2.2 Discoursal Self

Analyzing the *discoursal self* implies the consideration of language conventions within the genre in analysis. As discussed in section 2.6, the concept of intertextuality then takes place in this analysis. Therefore, the model proposed by Fairclough (1992, cited in Ivanic, 1998) is used. This analysis considers: *manifest intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. In the first one, the analysis of quotations, paraphrasing, copying, irony and presupposition are considered in the text analysis and how the writer makes use of them. In this regard the, the information presented in Figure 1 turns to be of great importance since Fairclough describes

the interaction of the text itself, the interaction between writer and reader, and the interaction of the text with the social context. Therefore, my analysis considered the way the writers used and constructed their writing, how the authors addressed their audience, and if their academic writing in BA thesis conclusions section followed the conventions for that specific context in AL/TESOL.

When analyzing these languages conventions within that specific genre, interdiscursivity analysis takes place since it refers to "intertextual relations to conventions" (Fairclough, 1992, cited in Ivanic, 1998, p. 48). In other words, the particular way the writer socializes with the academic context was considered. For the sample analysis of the *discoursal self*, I took the same extract as for the *self as author*. As mentioned, each extract is of approximate 100 words (this number may vary since I want to include complete sentences, so it may be nearly to that number with some more or some less words), included in the *SOR* move (an explanation of this is in section 3.3.1) of each conclusion under analysis.

### 3.3.3 Gender Voice Analysis

This analysis only summarizes the analysis of voice in the four case studies, and makes a comparison of the most distinctive features of each one. This analysis was done with the purpose of finding out if there were differences of voice expression between genders, and what those differences were, if any. With this analysis I covered the second part of the purpose regarding voice analysis and differences in gender voice expression.

### 3.4 Procedure

The procedure to develop this research required a series of careful steps. First of all, it was important to select the participants of the study in regards if they fulfilled the

requirements (previously described in section 3.1). Secondly, it was important to tell them about the research that I was carrying out and have their consent for participating in lending their conclusions for analysis, being recorded in their thesis defense and interviewed after the defense. Once the participants agreed, the data collection and analysis processes were carried out. As a requirement of the institution, the theses are given to the committee at least within a week before the professional examination takes place. The analysis of the *self as author* and *discoursal self* were carried out with this data. Recording the thesis defense and analyzing it also supported some of the analysis done in the conclusions analysis. The recording of the exams as mentioned was done with the consent of the participants, and in some cases the data obtained from it was irrelevant for the analysis, and therefore was not used. The interviews were a complement in the analysis of identity, voice expression, gender distinction and general academic writing perceptions in regards to thesis conclusions. Quotations from the interviews were considered to reinforce the conclusions analysis; only relevant and pertinent fragments were included[2]. The data gathered in the interviews was classified according to the section in analysis. Therefore, section on voice analysis considered questions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and b (in the personalized-individual questions) from the interview (see Appendix A). Gender distinction considered questions 3, 4, 5, and 8 as well as (a) and (b) of the individualized questions (Appendix A); and the analysis of conclusions considered some questions in the supervisor's interview (Appendix B). Finally, the analysis of the conclusions was conducted and thus, the framework proposed.

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[2] Complete interview transcripts (loose format) are available upon request.

### 3.5 Limitations

As every research and human activity face limitations, this research is not the exception. Thus, for the sake of the project, foster further research in the area and/or do a replica of it, I consider it necessary to point out the main concerns that probably impede or affect the results obtained. As a first constraint, I point out the ungeneralizable aspect of the research. It is a case study research whose results are true only for the participants under study. I cannot call out to make generalizations on voice analysis or gender distinction on voice expression since only four cases were considered. Although the number of participants is considerable, it is recommended to include more in the study, and in this way propose more valid implications for the L2 teaching of writing.

Another concern of this project deals with the analysis of voice. As pointed out I am considering extracts of only 100 words which is a small sample of written discourse to analyze voice and with it determine a person's identity. The use of interviews, though is of help in analyzing voice, could have been richer in the sense that more information regarding the difficulty of writing conclusions could have been collected. Data about this concern is not considered from part of the students since one interview took place in August 2007, and it was at the beginning stage of this project. I had to use this information as the data collection depended a great part on when the students presented their professional exam (this is described in section 3.2.3). I could not change the interview format later on for validity and reliability issues. The interview has to be equal with all participants. Thus, the interview misses information regarding participants view on conclusions. Regarding the framework of analyzing conclusions, as discussed in the literature, thesis conclusions is a genre which needs more work, the framework proposed is an encouragement to further conduct similar studies.

Finally, another limitation lies on theoretical issues. I present a review on the main theories behind this study, yet there are still some theoretical problems in the analysis of voice (which is a current and very subjective topic). This need of wider theoretical review responds also to the amplitude of the areas in which this research is based on and the necessity to limit the area of study. This issue is, however, beyond the scope of my study.

For the particular interest of my research, the theories and methodologies discussed are considered suitable to develop my study and achieve its purpose. I turn to apply them to the data gathered and obtain the results. These are presented and discussed in Chapter Four.