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Identity in Written Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of theoretical and research issues in the study of writer identity in written discourse. First, a historical overview explores how identity has been conceived, studied, and taught, followed by a discussion of how writer identity has been conceptualized. Next, three major orientations toward writer identity show how the focus of analysis has shifted from the individual to the social conventions and how it has been moving toward an equilibrium, in which the negotiation of individual and social perspectives is recognized. The next two sections discuss two of the key developments—identity in academic writing and the assessment of writer identity. The article concludes with a brief discussion of the implications and future directions for teaching and researching identity in written discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Identity has become an important consideration in the study of written discourse. In the early years of written discourse analysis and language teaching, identity did not receive much attention partly because the application of written discourse analysis focused primarily on academic writing instruction in a limited range of classroom genres, and the pragmatic goal of helping writers conform to the native-speaker norm was widely accepted. Many of the assumptions that motivated the study and teaching of written discourse have changed over the years, however. The use of the native-speaker norm as the benchmark for language analysis or instruction has been problematized (see, e.g., the debate between Carter & McCarthy, 1996, and Prodromou, 1996a, 1996b), and many corpus researchers have begun to incorporate proficient users of the genre regardless of the language background (e.g., Hyland, 2000). The globalization and diversification of languages have also come to be widely acknowledged, and the need to negotiate individual and social variations in writing has become an important consideration (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010), although the impact of these changes on written discourse—especially academic writing—is not always visible (Belcher, 2009; Fløttum, 2012). The modernist conceptions of identity and language have also been widely critiqued, opening up new space for the consideration of dynamic and multiple identity constructions and their implications in academic (Hyland, 2012a; Hyland & Sancho Guinda, 2012; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009) and professional (Beason, 2001) contexts as well as in digital discourses (DePew & Miller-Cochran, 2010; Hewings, 2012; Hyland, 2012a; Lam, 2000; Matsuda, 2001, 2002; Yi, 2007, 2010).

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Identity in written discourse is a complex phenomenon that involves both empirical reality that can be described and measured (e.g., demographics and textual features) and phenomenological reality that exists in people's perceptions (e.g., social constructs). In understanding identity in written discourse, it is important to distinguish between the identity positions of the writer that is external to discourse, such as the demographic information (e.g., Shen, 1989; Cox, Jordan, Ortmeier-Hooper, & Schwartz, 2010), and identity as constructed and negotiated through discourse, which is captured by concepts such as ethos and voice. Although these two aspects of identity are inextricably tied to each other, this article is mainly concerned with the latter—contemporary approaches to identity in written discourse not as the material reality (essentialized self) projected through writing but as a social construct that is mediated by written discourse. In other words, identity does not just reside in the text. It is not simply the sum of its parts—textual features—either. Rather, it is a social construct created in the complex interaction among various elements of writing (Silva, 1990), including the relationship between the writer and the reader, who interact through the text in a particular situational context (Hyland, 2008a; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007). As such, studying identity in written discourse requires not just an understanding of textual features but the perceptions and experiences of identity both by writers and readers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One of the major strands of the study of identity in written discourse is rooted in ancient rhetoric. The institutionalization of first-year writing requirement and the development of the field of rhetoric and composition in the mid-20th century facilitated the rise of "new rhetoric" (Enos & Brown, 1992) as a disciplinary foundation for the study of written discourse production in North American higher education. While rhetoric since antiquity was mainly concerned with the study of persuasive speech—especially in legal, political, and religious contexts—many of the concepts from classical rhetoric were adapted as heuristics for college-level writing instruction (Corbett, 1965; Lunsford & Ede, 1984). Among the rhetorical precepts that found application in the study and teaching of identity in writing was the Aristotle's notion of *ethos,* which "is concerned with the character of the speaker"—defined in terms of wisdom (*phronesis*), moral character (*arete*), and good will (*eunoia*)—"as portrayed in the speech itself" (Cherry, 1988, p. 253). The notion of *ethos* was taken up by Connor (1990; Connor & Lauer, 1985, 1988), who sought to integrate perspectives from text linguistics and rhetorical analysis. Beason (2001) examined how errors in written discourse contribute to business executives' judgments of the writer as a writer, as a business person, and as an organization representative. More recently, Gross and Chesley (2012) examined the role of *ethos* in medical research articles.

Another concept that has been playing a key role in the exploration of identity in written discourse is voice. Gross and Chesley (2012) characterized Aristotelian *ethos* as "the origin of stance and voice as objects of scholarly inquiry" (p. 86), but this claim needs to be examined carefully for historical accuracy. Although ethos

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and voice have evolved into similar concepts over the years, and although it is likely that the evolution of voice was influenced by ethos and other conceptions of writer identities in some ways, it would not be accurate to say that voice originated from ethos. Both ethos and voice began to enter the shared lexis of North American writing teachers in the mid-1960s and, at least initially, ethos was a much more social and interpersonal construct than the early conception of voice, the development of which will be discussed next. Over the last five decades, ethos and voice developed in parallel to one another; voice was favored by writing teachers who focused on genres that draw on personal knowledge, while ethos was the term of choice among rhetorically minded writing specialists with a focus on persuasive writing in academic, professional, and public contexts.

The notion of voice has evolved considerably over the last four decades. It initially emerged as a rather intuitive, metaphorical application of physical voice, which is unique to each individual and can be used for identification. As such, it focused on the unique individual quality in writing, which was considered to be an expression of authentic self (Coles, 1988; Elbow, 1968; Macrorie, 1970; Stewart, 1969). An underlying assumption behind this early conception of voice was that writer's identity existed in the material reality external to discourse, and that identity was being projected through discourse. In this conception of writer identity as *projected self*, honesty, or the accuracy of self-representation, was an important concern, and some writing teachers and researchers emphasized the presence of authentic self as the sine qua non of good writing (Coles & Vopat, 1985). In this view, identity can be discussed and assessed in terms of its presence or absence, as well as the authenticity of self-representation. Although early proponents of voice continued to develop the notion by recognizing the multiplicity and constructed nature of voice (Elbow, 1981, 2007), early definitions of voice continue to be influential perhaps because of their intuitive appeal. As Jeffery (2011) documented in her study of high school teachers, some teachers continued to value authenticity of voice in student writing.

By the late 1980s, the critique of modernist conceptions of self as singular, coherent, and static was already in full swing (Faigley, 1989; Hashimoto, 1987), and the late 1990s saw another wave of publications that problematized the individualistic assumptions in the notion of voice as practiced in writing textbooks and instructional practices (Bowden, 1999; Harris, 1997; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996). Associating the notion of voice with the ideology of Western individualism, Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996) argued that the concept of individual voice prevalent in U.S. composition classrooms is "difficult for mainstream students" and "even more problematic for students from non-US cultures" (p. 22). They explained that the notion of voice is "largely culturally constrained" and "relatively inaccessible to students who are not full participants in the culture within which they are asked to write" (p. 22). Pursuing a similar line of argument, Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) also critiqued the notion of voice in the context of L2 writing classrooms, counting it among the "principles and practices of US university writing pedagogy in which the ideology of individualism appears to be strongly, if tacitly, implicated" (p. 46).

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Arguments against voice are also based on an earlier conceptions of voice as the expression of individuality. The critics of voice are not necessarily unaware of the various definitions of it. For instance, Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) acknowledged the presence of various conceptions of voice, including authentic voice (Stewart, 1972), situational voice (Ede, 1989), and intertextual voice (Yancey, 1994). Similarly, Stapleton (2002) prominently mentioned a Bakhtinian conception of voice (Wertsch, 1991), and both Stapleton (2002) and Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) cited sources that take a broader perspective, encompassing both individual and social dimensions of voice (Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Matsuda, 2001; Prior, 2001).

DEFINING IDENTITY IN WRITTEN DISCOURSE

Defining identity in written discourse has not been an easy task because the conception of voice has evolved drastically over the last few decades and because the shift has been a gradual and layered process, with multiple definitions coexisting. Recognizing the multiplicity of definitions, Petrić (2010) interviewed 30 master's degree students in gender studies at a university in Central Europe to identify how those students defined voice. Petrić found that students expressed varied views, ranging from individual voice and writers' choices to interactions with other voices. Jeffery (2011) examined how U.S. secondary school teachers conceptualized voice by interviewed 19 teachers using a think-aloud-protocol method. The teachers associated students' voice to features such as tone, diction, specificity, sentence structure, coherence, and development. The teachers also associated voice with intentionality of the writer, using terms such as "'choice,' 'control,' 'command,' and 'deliberate'" (p. 108). They also considered voice to contribute to the strength as well as weaknesses of the text.

Despite the existence of various definitions of voice, contemporary definitions in the published literature seem to be converging. Ivanič (1998) provides a useful, overarching framework for understanding identity in writing. Ivanič posits four aspects of writer identity: "autobiographical self," "discoursal self," "self as author," and "possibilities for self-hood" (p. 23). Since this is a complex idea that is often misunderstood, it warrants some detailed discussion.

The *autobiographical self* refers to the writer's sense of self—"a writer's sense of their roots, of where they are coming from"—which is socially constructed (p. 24). Ivanič describes this aspect of self in terms of Goffman's notion of a *performer* who brings previous life experiences and social positions to the performance of self. Ivanič also compares the autobiographical self to Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus" or "a person's disposition to behave in certain ways" (Ivanič, 1998, p. 24). For example, my autobiographical self in writing this chapter involves, among other things, what I have read and heard about identity in written discourse, my disciplinary backgrounds in both applied linguistics and rhetoric and composition, my previous experience in presenting and discussing ideas about identity in writing, and my interest and experience in historiography.

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The *discoursal self* refers to the impression that is created through the features of written discourse, which is also referred to as voice (Ivanič, 1998; Matsuda, 2001). This idea, which corresponds with Goffman's notion of *character* that is portrayed as a result of the writer's performance, is at the heart of voice in written discourse. In this article, I am constructing the voice of an academic writer in the field of applied linguistics, by drawing on certain discursive features that are associated with academic articles in the field, such as nominalization, use of hedges and boosters, reporting verbs, APA style citations, self-mention, and so on. The impression is also created through nondiscursive features, such as the choice of topic, the points of emphasis in the discussion, and the attention to historical details. These choices are informed by my authobiographical self, but it is also a result of deliberate decisions to construct myself in the eyes of the intended readers—applied linguistics with varying degree of interest and experience with the research on identity in written discourse. It is also important to point out that some of the impressions that you as a reader have from your reading of this piece may be quite unexpected, based on some inadvertent choices on my part.

The *self as author,* an aspect of the discoursal self, is the sense of being the author that the writer perceives and projects in written discourse. This idea is similar to what Foucault (1977) calls "author-function" (p. 125). It is a sense of authorial identity that the writer develops and is perceived by the readers. The same piece of writing may be valued and assessed differently depending on the level of confidence and authority that is projected by the writer and perceived by the reader. The authorial identity also creates more room for negotiating discourse conventions, as readers are more willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the author if they believe that the author is an accomplished writer. Williams (1981), for example, has demonstrated that readers tend to overlook obvious errors in articles that are published in a prestigious journal. My authorial self in this article is derived in part from the explicit and implicit references to my previous work on this topic as well as the status of *ARAL* as a by-invitation-only publication.

As Ivanič makes clear, these aspects of writer identity are neither completely discrete nor mutually exclusive. They are also both enabled and constrained by the *possibilities for self-hood*, socially available identity options and discursive resources. The notion of possibilities for self-hood resonates with Gee's (1990) notion of "'Discourse' with a big 'D'" as an "identity kit" (p. 142). That is, Discourse is not just a set of textual features but it embodies socially shared assumptions and practices that allow people to construct their identity or ways of being in society. Those resources may include various discourse features and argumentative strategies from various genres that enable the writer to construct a sense of identity appropriate for the situation.

Matsuda (2001), building on Ivanič (1998) and Johnstone (1996), defines discursively constructed identity in written discourse, or *voice*, as "the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoire" (p. 40). Like Hatch, Hill, and Hayes (1993), who examined how readers form impressions about the writers' personalities, and like Rubin and

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Williams-James (1997), who investigated the effects of perceived nationality of the writer on the reader's evaluation of the text, Matsuda's (2001) definition of voice as the effect recognizes the role of the reader as well as the writer and the text. In this definition, voice is a phenomenological concept; the writer's discursive identity—which is created by the writer's choices and the textual manifestations of those choices—is ultimately perceived by the reader. This definition also accounts for the *indexicality* of various features of the text in creating social meaning (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Davila, 2012), thus putting into perspective feature-based definitions of various aspects of writer identity. In addition to language and discourse features, this definition also takes into consideration nondiscursive features such as document design and visual elements such as images, video, and even sound effects that are integrated into multimedia texts. This phenomenological conception of voice as effect (see also Hashimoto, 1987; Yeh, 1998) suggests that a full understanding of identity requires the consideration of the writer, the text, the reader, and their interactions. In other words, the writer's identity does not singularly reside in the writer, the text, or the reader; rather, identity is part of the interpersonal meaning that is negotiated through the interaction among the writer and the reader mediated by the text.

It is important to note, however, that not all of these elements have to be examined in a single study. It is useful to examine each of these elements separately in order to understand how they contribute to the construction and negotiation of voice, although these elements are contributing factors and not voice itself. In applied linguistics, which has a strong tradition of describing textual features and functions, many researchers have focused on one of the elements of writer identity—that is, textual functions and features that contribute to the construction of writer identity (i.e., textual realizations of identity). Textual functions that are associated with the expression of writer identity in the text include *appraisal* (Hood, 2012; Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005), *evaluation* (Hunston & Thompson, 2000), *judgment* (Coffin, 2002), *stance* (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Conrad & Biber, 2000; Gray & Biber, 2012; Hyland, 2012b), *intensity* (Labov, 1984), and *posture* (Grabe, 1984). Hyland (2008a) proposed a model of identity-in-interaction or *positioning* in terms of two key constructs: stance and engagement. Hyland defined *stance* as "community recognized personality, an attitudinal, writer-oriented function which concerns the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions and comments" (p. 7). Hyland identified three main components of stance as *evidentiality* (Chafe, 1986), *affect* (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989), and *presence*, which is materialized with features such as *hedges*, *boosters*, *attitude markers*, and *self-mention* (Hyland, 2008a). *Engagement*, an aspect of audience awareness, is "more of an alignment function, concerning the ways that writers rhetorically recognise the presence of their readers to actively pull them along with the argument, include them as discourse participants, and guide them to interpretations" (Hyland, 2008a, p. 7). Engagement is marked by such features as *reader pronouns*, *personal asides*, *references to sharedness*, *directives*, and *questions* (Hyland, 2008a, p. 11).

Text-oriented definitions of voice are useful in identifying and describing how identity is manifested or constructed through textual features, thus making

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available some of the discursive repertoire. Yet, an understanding of identity is not complete without a consideration of the writer's choices as well as the readers' perceptions that is triggered by various discursive and nondiscursive features (Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Sancho Guinda, 2012; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009). Contemporary definitions of discursively constructed identity resonate with the dialogic and sociohistoric view of voice (Bakhtin, 1981; Prior, 2001; Voloshinov, 1973; Wertsch, 1991), as well as the notion of language as meaning making resources (Halliday, 1978). All of them have come to share a number of key assumptions, including the following:

- Identity is not optional; all texts says something about the writer, although some are more marked than others.
- Identity is multiple and dynamic.
- Identity is constructed through socially shared resources for meaning making.
- Identity is both individual and social.

As Prior (2001) pointed out, however, there has been a tendency to dichotomize individual and social voice. As with any major shifts, the recognition of constructed identity have sometimes led to the blind acceptance of the social perspective and a dismissal of individual voice—by delimiting the scope of consideration to transactional (Britton, 1971) or referential (Kinneavy, 1980) genres. To fully understand the complexity of the tension between individual and social perspectives, it would be useful to explore the how different conceptions of writer identity fall along the epistemological continuum between two extreme positions: the subjective, individualist position that valorize writer's individuality and agency, and the objective, social-constructionist position that denies agency for the writer (Matsuda, 2011; see also Tardy, 2012).

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIONIST ORIENTATIONS

On one end of the continuum is the personal orientation, a traditional conception of voice that sees voice as an expression of unique individuality. Voloshinov (1973) called this position "individualistic subjectivism," which "sees language as generative activity; sees creative, meaningful speech acts of the individual as the heart of language; and sees the readymade system of language as 'the inert crust, the hardened lava of language creativity' (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 48)" (as quoted in Prior, 2001, p. 58). This orientation emphasizes writing as authentic individual expression, which is best learned implicitly, rather than through explicit study of language features. Identity is not a teachable construct because everyone has a distinct identity and the only person who can discover it is the writer. In a sense, students are expected to learn to write by writing. Voice in this definition comes from within the individual and is achieved by writing on personal topics and by resisting the constraints of the genre conventions. The individualist perspective sees voice

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to be emerging from the sense of self that each person has, and this perspective is facilitated when writing in personal genres or on personal topics. An extreme version of this perspective may resist social conventions as constraints even though the use of language requires the use of social conventions. This perspective may also see the organization of discourse as something that is organically developed as the writer discovers his or her identity and meaning; yet, this perspective fails to account for the regularity that is observed in the resulting texts. The assessment of voice in this view is based on the presence of the sense of individual; the goal of teaching voice is to achieve the state of markedness in discourse, which is often described as unique, original, or authentic. This orientation tends to be associated with creative nonfiction genres such as autobiography, memoir, and personal essay.

The other end of the continuum is the social-constructionist orientation, which may or may not acknowledge the possibility or desirability of individual voice but focuses more on the adoption of socially accepted and frequently occurring features. Voloshinov (1973) calls this position "abstract objectivism" that "views language as a readymade stable system of normatively identical forms, as an autonomous domain, a closed system independent of ideological and cognitive systems" (as quoted in Prior, 2001, p. 59). This orientation focuses on functional relationships between language use and socially constructed goals for communication in writing instruction. Voice in this view is achieved by acquiring the means for occupying socially sanctioned identity positions; genre, therefore, is an enabling force, while individual differences are considered to be a source of distraction. Although this perspective is useful in identifying and providing discursive resources for novice writers, it often focuses on normative language use while overlooking variations across individuals and over time. The assessment of voice in this view is based on the absence of marked variations or anomalies; the goal of teaching voice, if it is taught at all, is to achieve the state of unmarkedness in discourse, which is often described as "appropriate" usage.

Researchers who occupy individualist and social-constructionist perspectives have tended to see themselves at odds with each other; the former is considered to be important for personal writing, while the latter is deemed more appropriate in academic and professional contexts. Occupying the space between these two extreme positions is a more recent conception of voice, a social-constructivist view. Influenced in part by a sociocultural view of language (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1973; Wertsch, 1991), this view of voice accounts for both individual and social nature of voice by recognizing how individuality and social conventions are both mutually constitutive and inevitable (Ivanič, 1998; Matsuda, 2001; Prior, 2001). In other words, all utterances rely on the discursive resources provided by previous utterances, and while each utterance is unique because it responds to a unique context, it also influences future utterances by becoming part of the discursive resources. It is also sociohistoric in recognizing variations across time and contexts (Atkinson, 1999; Prior, 2001).

Caught in the individual–social dichotomy that exists in the minds of teachers and researchers, however, the subtle yet important distinction between social-constructionist and social-constructivist views often gets lost (Matsuda &

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Bommarito, in press; Tardy, 2012). Those who take a more personal orientation, on the one hand, may conflate social constructivism with social constructionism—perhaps because it posits that individuality is socially constructed. On the other hand, those who lean toward the constructionist end of the continuum may mistake constructivism for individualism—perhaps because it recognizes individual agency in negotiating conventions. For this reason, a further explanation of the distinction between social constructionism and social constructivism might be useful.

SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIONIST AND SOCIAL-CONSTRUCTIVIST ORIENTATIONS

In general, social constructionism is a sociological concept that describes how a group of individuals develop a socially shared set of assumptions, artifacts, and practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This perspective is highly compatible with descriptive studies of discourse that seek to identify patterns in discourse use. Social-constructionist descriptions of discourse tend not to emphasize how individual writers make decisions as they integrate various socially available repertoire, and pedagogical applications of social-constructionist descriptions of discourse features have tended to focus on making social conventions available for adoption while paying less attention to individual agency in appropriating, resisting, or negotiating those conventions.

This is not to say that there is no agency in following socially sanctioned conventions; writers can choose to conform in order to gain access or to avoid standing out. Yet, there is a difference between choosing to use certain conventionalized forms, which is agentive, as opposed to using them because the writer does not know otherwise. In other words, social constructionism sees the locus of agency to be in successful communication, while social constructivism sees the loci of agency in both successful communication and in negotiating the tools. This is analogous to the difference between successfully conducting an empirical study by adopting a method from a previous study and successfully conducting an empirical study while also proposing a methodological innovation, which might eventually be integrated into conventionalized use.

Pedagogical practices that are based on the extreme view of constructionism—that is, teaching only the dominant practices within a single genre—may be appropriate in preparing students for highly predictable situations, but not for unusual rhetorical situations or for different or new task environments; the difference is comparable to that between training and education. Furthermore, the social-constructionist orientation tends to reify the established conventions by encouraging language users to follow them (based on the frequency of occurrences) while implicitly or explicitly discouraging deviations from the perceived norm, even though deviations are a natural and inevitable part of human language use (Johnstone, 1996).

In contrast, social constructivism is a psychological concept that refers to the process of taking socially available artifacts and making meaning with them

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(Vygotsky, 1978). Like its social-constructionist counterpart, the social-constructivist view of voice takes the formation of social conventions into consideration; yet, unlike the social-constructionist perspective, the social-constructivist perspective focuses not only on how social norms arise and become stabilized but also on how individuals shape the form and meaning by using the tools provided by the norms—or socially available discursive repertoire. In other words, the social-constructivist perspective is concerned with how the social conventions are appropriated by individual writers as they respond to the particular rhetorical situation in the process of writing, while at the same time influencing the evolving conventions.

Another important yet subtle difference among these three conceptions of voice is the locus of voice itself: The personal orientation to identity tends to locate voice in the writer; social-constructionist orientation tends to seek voice in the text; and the social-constructivist theories of voice seek voice in the perceived reality that results from the text-mediated interaction between the writer and the reader. In this view, individual users contribute to the creation of social conventions, and social conventions help individuals create meaning (Matsuda, 1997).

As Tardy (2012) has explained, these three views on voice are perspectives, and they are not essentially tied to any individual researcher or teacher; in fact, teachers and researchers often advocate one position but slip into another. Proponents of individual voice have incorporated many of the assumptions that are associated with more social orientations (Elbow, 2007). Text-based approaches to the study of identity also seem to be shifting from social-constructionist to constructivist orientation (Hyland, 2010, 2012a). In other words, the pendulum is now moving toward equilibrium.

IDENTITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING

In the study of written discourse, academic writing has been the dominant focus of analysis, perhaps because its relevance is obvious and because it tends to be familiar and accessible to researchers. While identity had been an important consideration in North American writing studies since the 1960s, descriptions of written discourse in applied linguistics have tended not to include consideration of writer identity.

Writing and Identity by Roz Ivanič (1998) was among the first to articulate the role of identity in academic writing (see also Clark & Ivanič, 1997). In *Disciplinary Discourses*, Ken Hyland (2000) also helped to call attention to the importance of interpersonal meaning in shaping interactions in academic writing genres, paving the way for studies of social identity in academic writing. Yet, because of the prevalence of the traditional, individualistic view of voice and identity, the study of identity in academic writing did not take off as a major focus of research, and as soon as the discussion began, it was met with some resistance. In 2001, when the *Journal of Second Language Writing* published a special issue on voice (Belcher & Hirvela, 2001), it was immediately followed by a strong argument against voice in academic writing research. Stapleton (2002) argued that the place of voice was

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overstated in the professional literature and called for a shift of emphasis to topics that were more important for academic writing, such as ideas and argument. Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) also raised questions about the importance of voice in the context of academic essays in college-level writing classrooms. Some of these arguments seem to reflect the strong emphasis on academic writing in the study and teaching of written discourse. While it is an important emphasis, written discourse exists outside of academic contexts, and theories of identity need to account for more than what is relevant in academic contexts.

Somewhat ironically, Stapleton's (2002) plea to redirect research efforts from identity to ideas seems to have motivated researchers to focus even more on voice and identity in academic writing, demonstrating the relevance of identity in academic writing. Stapleton himself contributed to this effort by conducting a collaborative study to examine the relationship between voice and writing quality (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). The study was later replicated by Zhao and Llosa (2008).

Matsuda and Tardy (2007) investigated how readers construct the image of the author in a simulated double-blind manuscript review process. They found that readers do think about the author's identity and that their images of the author were triggered by both discursive and nondiscursive features of the text. These findings were confirmed in a follow-up study. Tardy and Matsuda (2009) surveyed the perceptions of editorial board members for several international journals to see whether and how they consider the author's voice. Aspects of writer's identity that editorial board members considered included, in the order of frequency, field experience, disciplinary background, language background, nationality, gender, institutional affiliation, level of education, ethnic background, and age. The features of the manuscript that triggered the editorial board members' construction of author voice included both discursive features (e.g., signs of author's language background, sentence structures, careful editing, and writing style) and nondiscursive features (e.g., breadth and depth of knowledge, topic choice, representation of the field, description of the research setting, theoretical framework, and research method).

Hyland (2008a) also examined voice in academic discourse as manifested in textual features and functions. Focusing on an aspect of voice—the writer's positioning in social interaction—Hyland described how the writer's stance and audience engagement were manifested in a corpus of 240 research articles in eight disciplines: mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, marketing, philosophy, sociology, applied linguistics, physics, and microbiology. He argued that "all writing has 'voice' and that it is an integral aspect of self-representation in academic discourse." In another study, Hyland (2008b, 2010) examined individual identity in academic contexts through the analysis of two corpora of academic publications by Deborah Cameron and John Swales. He concluded that "identity is, at least in part, constituted through our consistent language choices" (Hyland, 2010, p. 181; see also Johnstone, 1996; Matsuda, 2001). Hyland (2012a) extended these studies and examined how academic identity is constructed in relation to their disciplinary affiliations.

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Studies of identity in academic writing have been expanded to include a wide variety of academic genres. *Stance and Voice in Written Academic Genres*, a volume edited by Hyland and Sancho Guinda (2012), featured descriptions of stance and voice in such genres as research articles (Gross & Chesley, 2012; Hood, 2012; Silver, 2012), academic bios (Hyland, 2012a; Tse, 2012), textbooks (Bondi, 2012), PhD theses (Thompson, 2012), graph commentaries (Sancho Guinda, 2012), email (Hewings, 2012; Matsuda, 2002), blogs (Hewings, 2012), websites (Hyland, 2012a), and book reviews (Salger-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza, & Luzardo Briceño, 2012).

IDENTITY AND WRITING ASSESSMENT

In some educational contexts, such as U.S. secondary schools, identity, particularly voice, has been deeply ingrained in writing assessment practices for many years (Matsuda & Jeffery, 2012). Jeffery (2007) documented that the notion of voice appears in the learning objectives of 96% of the states. Jeffery (2009) also analyzed 40 rubrics used for high school writing assessment and found that 50% of them included voice as a criterion. The conceptions of voice in these rubrics, however, is not always consistent. Jeffery (2010) analyzed the 20 rubrics that included voice and found that 10 of them included voice as a category of its own, while the rest of them combined voice with other categories such as style, language use, and written expression. In many cases, the conception of voice in also shifted from personal to social-constructionist to social-constructivist within individual teachers and rubrics. National Writing project Analytic Writing Continuum tried to avoid the heavy reliance on personal view of voice by replacing with voice with stance (DiPardo, Storms, & Selland, 2011), which gets at an aspect of voice but does not quite capture the larger conception of voice.

Matsuda and Jeffery (2012) documented the conspicuous absence of voice from standardized writing assessment rubrics (i.e., IELTS, TOEFL iBT, SAT) and the ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, & Hughey, 1981), which are commonly used in U.S. higher education for admission, placement, and even outcomes assessment. In contrast, they pointed out that 50% of states used rubrics that included voice as a category or as part of descriptors (Jeffery, 2010), and that U.S. secondary school teachers and students valued voice, though their definitions varied widely (Beck, 2006; Jeffery, 2009; Llosa, Beck, & Zhao, 2011). They also pointed out that the Writing Programs Outcomes Statement—nationwide guidelines for first-year composition programs developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (2014)—included voice as one of the desired outcomes of writing instruction. In other words, there is a gap between what is valued by students and teachers, and what is measured by writing assessment rubrics.

This gap may be attributed partially to the difficulty of operationalizing identity. Because identity in writing is situated not just in the text itself but in the larger context of immediate interaction, it defies easy codification. Even with the difficulties, it is important to account for the place of identity in assessing the quality of

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writing because the perceived identity of the writer does play a role in how readers evaluate and act on a piece of writing (Faigley, 1989; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009), and if left unspecified, may unduly influence the scores. As Haswell (2005) has pointed out, the outcome of writing assessment depends on what is measured or not measured.

The perceived identity or voice does seem to influence writing assessment, although not always in ways that is expected. Rubin and Williams-James (1997) examined the relationship between the nationality of the writer as perceived by the readers and its impact on the rating of the overall quality of writing. The researchers led the raters to believe the student essay they were reading was written either by a Southeast Asian, Northern European, or U.S. native English speaker, and they found that the raters assigned significantly higher scores when they believed it was an essay written by a Southeast Asian student than when they thought it was written by a native English speaker from the United States. This study seems to highlight the phenomenological nature of writing assessment (see also Williams, 1981).

There have been a number of attempts to develop rubrics that incorporate the notion of voice. Recognizing the role of Aristotelian rhetorical proof in writing assessment as well as the teachers' conceptions of voice in secondary school settings, Yeh (1998) sought to develop an analytic rubric that incorporated credibility and affective appeal. The definition, however, focused on a personal conception of voice as "fresh, vivid, honest expression of one's opinions" (p. 128). The descriptors used for voice also pose some problems because different criteria are at play at different levels. The lowest level is described as "no voice (credibility or emotional appeal)," while the rest of the levels are assessed in terms of maturity or immaturity of voice, "defined as: appropriate, sophisticated, audience-centered, vivid language filled with conviction." Furthermore, "no voice" is considered to be less effective than "extremely immature voice" (p. 140).

Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) developed what they called the Voice Intensity Rating Scale, in an attempt to capture a few textual functions and features that are associated with voice in the discussion of voice in some of the research publications. The criteria used in this scale includes assertiveness, self-identification, reiteration of the central point, and authorial presence and autonomy of thought. The first two, *assertiveness* and *self-identification*, are based on linguistic features at the sentence level, such as hedges, intensifiers, and first-person pronouns. The third and fourth criteria, *reiteration of central point* and *authorial presence and autonomy of thought*, are designed to account for the "overall presence of the author's voice and to account for the intangible quality of identity in writing." It is important to note that, given the purpose of the study—to examine the relevance of the current discussion of voice to the college-level writing classroom—the Voice Intensity Rating Scale was not a comprehensive measure of voice but a way of operationalizing individual voice as represented in the existing literature.

Some studies have also investigated the relationship between identity-related constructs and the assessment of overall writing quality. Connor (1990) examined the relationship between the amount of ethos (credibility appeal) and the overall holistic rating of an argumentative text. Although Connor did not find a correlation,

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Yeh (1998) later pointed out that "the strength of credibility and affective appeals is a qualitative, rather than quantitative issue, since overreliance on either appeal detracts from an argument's persuasiveness" (p. 128). In a validation study of an analytic rubric, Yeh found a positive correlation between voice and content development.

Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) compared the scores of Voice Intensity Rating Scale with the overall quality of writing measured by ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et al., 1981), one of the most widely used L2 writing assessment rubrics. They did not find a significant correlation between voice and overall effectiveness. The lack of correlation, however, may have been due to different constructs being assessed by the two rubrics; the ESL Composition Profile does not include a voice-related criterion. In fact, Zhao and Llosa (2008) conducted a partial replication study of Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) by comparing the scores obtained with the Voice Intensity Rating Scale with those from a holistic rubric that included voice as one of the criteria, and found that the scores were significantly correlated.

These rubrics may be useful in measuring a more traditional, personal conception of voice to some extent. Yet, these constructs do not capture the social nature of voice adequately, nor do they account for features such as ideas and argumentative strategies that cannot be identified with the analysis of textual structures and functions. More recently, Zhao (2012) developed an analytical rubric for the assessment of voice strength in argumentative writing based on a mixed method involving the analysis of 400 writing samples and qualitative analyses of four raters' think-aloud and interview data. This rubric considers that voice is realized through the clarity of ideas, presentation of ideas, and writer and reader presence.

The social-constructivist view of writer identity poses challenges to the development of rubrics because identity does not reside entirely in the text; instead, it exists in the interaction between writers and readers that is mediated by the text (Hyland, 2012a; Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Prior, 2001). Even though there are raters in writing assessment, the rubric that uses constructs that do not account for identity factors or those that adopt purely text-based definitions do not account for identity-related issues (Faigley, 1989; Rubin & Williams-James, 1997). Furthermore, as Jeffery (2011) points out, the social-constructivist view does not automatically assign positive or negative values to markedness or unmarkedness in the text; instead, it values the "critical awareness" (Ivanič & Camps, 2001, p. 3) of the "linkages of institutional position and audience to discursive identity" (Prior, 2001, p. 76).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Presence and honesty in self-representation is indeed relevant in some genres, such as memoir, autobiography, and academic authors' biographical statements, as well as political campaign ads and job application letters. Identity, however, is not just a matter of asserting one's own individuality or conforming to socially sanctioned identity positions. The consideration of genres that emphasize referential and

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persuasive functions, which is often the case in academic and professional contexts, requires a broader conception of genre.

Developing the writer's identity means become more deliberate in presenting self by developing a larger repertoire and becoming more aware of the effects of their own choices. As Zhao and Llosa (2008) aptly put it, "student writers and writing instructors should always consider … features of voice not as rigid rules to follow but, instead, as a set of tools that[,] when applied appropriately and in the right context[,] can help create an effective authorial voice, which subsequently could help improve the overall quality of a piece of writing" (p. 164). That is, a successful social-constructivist voice balances markedness and unmarkedness purposefully and strategically in achieving the particular rhetorical goal; this voice can be described as "agentive" voice.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that being aware and having a larger repertoire does not guarantee effective voice. A case study participant in Matsuda and Tardy (2007), for example, was aware of his own choices and their possible impact, and he tried to avoid sounding masculine and aggressive in his manuscript. Yet, the readers' perceptions defied his intentions—the two blind reviewers identified the author as male based on what they considered to be characteristics of male discourse. As Faigley (1989) put it,

> No matter how well we teach our students, we cannot confer power as an essential quality of their makeup. We can, however, teach our students to analyze cultural definitions of the self, to understand how historically these definitions are created in discourse, and to recognize how definitions of the self are involved in the configuration of relations of power. (p. 411)

The development of voice, then, may also involve the development of field knowledge and audience awareness as well as an awareness of how self is situated in complex relations of power.

With the renewed awareness of writer identity among teachers and researchers, the study of identity in written discourse will continue to be an important agenda in writing research and instruction. Descriptive studies of various textual features and functions will no doubt continue, providing important understanding of the role texts play in the construction and negotiation of writer identity. To understand how these features and functions interact with various contextual factors, future studies need to examine identity-related features in a wider range of genres—personal, academic, professional, and public. It is also important to examine the role of nondiscursive features, including knowledge and relationships that are represented in the text as well as visual features. The study of identity also needs to pay greater attention to the process of identity construction in the context of the interaction between the writer and reader. Identity is a complex phenomenon, and as such, research methods and assessment rubrics will also need to reflect the complexity.

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Davila, B. (2012). Indexicality and "standard" edited American English: Examining the link between conceptions of standardness and perceived authorial identity. *Written Communication*, *29*(2), 180–207.

This study explores the relationship between the indexicality of textual features—those that are associated with standard and non-standard edited American English—and the perceived identity of the writer—particularly the writer's ethnic background. The researcher interviewed composition instructors and found that the influence worked both ways—the perception of non-standard textual features shaped the readers' perceptions of the author while the perceptions of author's ethnic background influenced the readers' identification of non-standard texts. This study offers an additional way of exploring author identity that goes beyond the analysis of textual features by highlighting the reader's role.

Hyland, K. (2012a). *Disciplinary identities: Individuality and community in academic discourse*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book explores textual manifestations of writer identity in academic contexts by bringing together a series of corpus-based studies. Adapting the perspective that identity is constructed through the negotiation between individuals and social conventions, this book examines textual features are used to construct writer identity in academic contexts. Using corpora of various academic genres such as thesis acknowledgments, web pages, biographical statements, undergraduate reports and journal articles, this study shows individual identity is constructed through the use of various socially shared conventions.

Hyland, K., & Sancho Guinda, C. (eds.). (2012). *Stance and voice in written academic genres*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

This edited collection brings together represent various theoretical and methodological traditions to explore two key terms that have come to play an important role in the understanding of identity in academic writing: stance and voice. It begins with overviews of recent conceptions of stance and voice, followed by examinations of these concepts in various academic genres—including both professional and student genres. Professional genres examined in this collection include academic and medical research articles, biographical statements and textbooks. Student genres include PhD theses, undergraduate students' final year reports, student essays, and graph commentaries. The final section explores variations in stance and voice across various media, disciplines and cultures.

Jeffery, J. V. (2011). Subjectivity, intentionality, and manufactured moves: Teachers' perceptions of voice in the evaluation of secondary students' writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *46*(1), 92–127.

This study examined how voice, an aspect of writer identity, is manifested in writing assessment, focusing on how students' identity was constructed in secondary-level writing teachers' assessment of student writing. The researcher conducted a series of interviews with nine secondary school teachers as they read narrative and expository texts, and identified which textual features were associated with voice and how those perceptions varied across genres and individual readers. The results suggested the importance of writer's intentionality as perceived by the readers, which is associated with literary description and appraisal features that amplify the subjectivity of the writer.

Matsuda, P. K., & Tardy, C. M. (2007). Voice in academic writing: The rhetorical construction of author identity in blind manuscript review. *English for Specific Purposes*, *26*, 235–249.

Drawing on Matsuda's (2001) definition of voice as the "amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires" (p. 40), this study examined the construction of author identity in the blind review process of a manuscript for an academic journal. The study established the importance of writer identity in academic context and showed that writer identity is constructed by the readers not through a pre-determined set of textual features but through the use of discursive and non-discursive features that became salient in the process of reading and evaluating an academic

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manuscript. The finding of this study, was later verified in a survey study of editorial board members for various international journals.

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