The Author Identity in Academic Writing

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وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

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سورة طه

Dedication

To our greatest and most honored prophet Mohammed May peace and grace from Allah be upon him

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Abstract

Students often see academic writing as an alien form of literacy designed to disguise the author and deal directly with facts. Style guides and textbooks commonly portray scholarly writing as a kind of impersonal, faceless discourse, and teachers direct students to remove themselves from their texts.

The objective of this study was to explore the social aspects of writing as reflected in the mutual relationship between the writer and the reader. The focus is on the ways in which the writer conceptualizes his/her identity as an author of his/her essay.The writer makes use of linguistic choices may project stronger authorial selves. Higher educationshould provide better opportunities and resources for students to learn how to achieve visible authorial presence in the academic texts they write in English.

Section One

The Writer's Identity and Academic Writing

1.0 Introduction

Academic writing is a genre that has a unique role in higher academic literacy. Students construct, reflect and develop their knowledge, and make it visible for a particular reader or a group of readers. It has become among the other instruments that is indicative of whether students achieve academic success. This article aims at exploring the basic features of academic writing and the elements and aspects writers use to make their authorial presence visible when they present their message to the audience. Such interaction has its influence on the choice of linguistic options available to achieve this end.

1.1 Writer's Identity

The abstraction "identity" is rather tricky to define. This is largely because the term can be used in a variety of ways, and because related words such as self, person role, persona, position, subject are used interchangeably by researchers in diverse disciplinary contexts, and may carry differently connotations depending on those contexts. Among various definitions offered for identity is a well-known definition is given by Hyland (2008: 28)"the ways writers express their personal views, authoritativeness, and presence". The four constituents for identity are: assertiveness, self-identification, reiteration of central point and authorial presence (Stapleton, 2002).

On the other hand, Ivanič (1998:32) declares a strong connection between writing and a writer's identity in that "writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped subject possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody".In this sense, Shen(1989: 466) concluded that writing is about gaining an appropriate identity:

Looking back, I realize that the process of learning to write in English is in fact a process of creating and defining a new identity and balancing it with the old identity. The process of learning English composition would have been easier if I had realized this earlier and consciously sought to compare the two different identities required by the two writing systems from two different cultures

1.2The Construction of Writer Identity in L2 Academic writing

According to Ivanič (1998) identity is a plural, dynamic concept encompassing four interrelated optionsthat L2 students bring to any act of writing to construct andconvey, consciously or unconsciously, the authorial presencethey want their audience to identity.

1.2.1 Autobiographical self

What a writer brings into his or her act of writing is "autobiographical self," which refers to the writer' self-history-the sense of the write's roots that reflect who he or she is in text. It is historically constructed and shaped by the experiences and literacy practices with which he or she has been familiar (Ivanic, 1998: 24).

1.2.2 Discoursal self(choices of form)

Discoursal self is the self-manifestation in text, which emerges from the text that a writer creates. It is constructed through citations practices from certain sources, linguistic choices, and organization of their papers. L2 students use these elementsbecause they believed that they would help them align with their professors' research interests and thus create for themselves a privileged position in the academia (Ivanič, 1998).

The rhetorical term ethos is related to both "autobiographical self" and "discoursal self" because ethos refers to a writer's credibility and morality, which the audience perceive, and it is a somewhat accurate reflection of a writer's characteristics, which will influence the writer's credibility (Cherry, 1988: 268).

1.2.3 Authorial self (choice of content)

Authorial self represents a sense of self-worth as author or a writer's voice in that he/she projects his/her position, opinions, and beliefs that enable him or her to writer with authority, to establish an authorial presence in the text (Ivanič, 1998).

In particular, the sense of authoritativeness is an important characteristic of a writers' discoursal self in academic writing. Authoritativeness in academic writing has been

considered with the following questions: How do people establish authority for the content of their writing? To what extent do they present themselves or others as authoritative. (Casanave, 2002:251).

1.2.4 Possibilities for self-hood in the socio-cultural and institutional contextsof writing

This aspect is a more abstract notion of writer identity concerning the "socially available possibilities for self-hood" within sociocultural and institutional contexts and how they shape and constrain individual acts of writing. It relates to the circumstances in which students are expected to write. (Ivanic, 1998:24-29).

A writer can construct the "discoursal self" and the self as author" by choosing one type of possibility that is supported by particular sociocultural and institutional contexts where he or she is writing. A writer may struggle to choose one among many possibilities and eventually learn to use preferred language over time as he or she takes on a particular discoursal identity. For example, ESL writers are exposed to many "possibilities for selfhood," and eventually they work toward situating themselves in a particular discourse community by adopting appropriate and beneficial writer identities. These four elements or strands are intertwined to make up the concept of a writerly self (Starfield, 2007:881).

1.3 Features of Academic Writing

Academic writing is conducted in several sets of forms and genres, normally in an impersonal and dispassionate tone, targeted for a critical and informed audience, based on closely investigated knowledge, and intended to reinforce or challenge concepts or arguments. It usually circulates within the academic world ('the academy'), but the academic writer may also find an audience outside via journalism, speeches, pamphlets, etc. Typically, scholarly writing has an objective stance, clearly states the significance of the topic, and is organized with adequate detail. Strong papers are not overly general and correctly utilize formal academic rhetoric (Hamid, 2004:5).

However, as Harwood and Hadley (2004:87) has pointed out, the amount of variation that exists between different disciplines may mean that we cannot refer to a single academic literacy. While academic writing consists of a number of text types and genres, what they have in common, the conventions that academic writers traditionally follow, has been a subject of debate. Many writers have called for conventions to be challenged, for example

Pennycook (1997) and Ivanic (1998), while others suggest that some conventions should be maintained, for example **Clark (1997).**

Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise. Characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective (usually), a clear focus on the research problem under investigation, and precise word choice. As specialist languages adopted in other professions, such as, law or medicine, academic writing is designed to convey agreed meaning about complex ideas or concepts for a group of scholarly experts (Ibid.).

Although the accepted form of academic writing in the social sciences can vary considerable depending on the methodological framework and the intended audience, most college-level research papers require careful attention to the following stylistic elements:

1. 3.1 The Big Picture

Unlike fiction or journalistic writing, the overall structure of academic writing is formal and logical. It must be cohesive and possess a logically organized flow of ideas; this means that the various parts are connected to form a unified whole. There should be narrative links between sentences and paragraphs so the reader is able to follow your argument and all sources are properly cited. The introduction should include a description of how the rest of the paper is organized (Lester, 1999:31).

1.3.2 The Tone

The overall tone refers to the attitude conveyed in a piece of writing. Throughout your paper, it is important that you present the arguments of others fairly and with an appropriate narrative tone. When presenting a position or argument that you disagree with, describe this argument accurately and without loaded or biased language. In academic writing, the author is expected to investigate the research problem from an authoritative point of view. You should, therefore, state the strengths of your arguments confidently, using language that is neutral, not confrontational or dismissive (Lester, 1999).

1.3.3 Diction

Diction refers to the choice of words you use. Awareness of the words you use is important because words that have almost the same denotation [dictionary definition] can have very different connotations [implied meanings]. This is particularly true in academic writing

because words and terminology can evolve a nuanced meaning that describes a particular idea, concept, or phenomenon derived from the epistemological culture of that discipline. Therefore, use concrete words [not general] that convey a specific meaning. If this cannot be done without confusing the reader, then you need to explain what you mean within the context how that word is used within a discipline (Lester, 1999).

1.3.4. The Language

The problems of language proficiency always seem to be more urgent to helping students manage the presentation of their information. Clear use of language is essential in academic writing. Well-structured paragraphs and clear topic sentences enable a reader to follow your line of thinking without difficulty. Your language should be concise, formal, and express precisely what you want it to mean. Avoid vague expressions that are not specific and precise enough for the reader to derive exact meaning ["they," "we," "people," "the organization," etc.], abbreviations like 'i.e.'   ["in other words"], 'e.g.' ["for example"], and contractions, such as, "don't", "isn't", etc (Leki,1998:11).

1. 4 Academic Writing Conventions

Citing sources in the body of someone's paper and providing a list of references as either footnotes or endnotes is a very important aspect of academic writing. It is essential to always acknowledge the source of any ideas, research findings, data, or quoted text that you have used in your paper as a defense against allegations of plagiarism. The scholarly convention of citing sources is also important because it allows the reader to identify the sources you used and independently verify your findings and conclusions (Leki, 1998).

1.4.1 Evidence-Based Arguments

Assignments often ask you to express your own point of view about the research problem. However, what is valued in academic writing is that opinions are based on a sound understanding of the pertinent body of knowledge and academic debates that exist within, and increasing external to, your discipline. You need to support your opinion with evidence from scholarly sources (Leki, 1998).

 It should be an objective stance presented as a logical argument. The quality of your evidence will determine the strength of your argument. The challenge is to convince the

reader of the validity of your opinion through a well-documented, coherent, and logically structured piece of writing. This is particularly important when proposing solutions to problems or recommended courses of action (Ibid.).

1.4.2 Thesis-Driven

Academic writing is "thesis-driven," meaning that the starting point is a particular perspective, idea, or "thesis" applied to the chosen research problem, such as, establishing, proving, or disproving solutions to the questions posed for the topic; simply describing a topic without the research questions does not qualify as academic writing (Ramageet al ,2003:67).

1.4.3 Complexity and Higher-Order Thinking

One of the main functions of academic writing is to describe complex ideas as clearly as possible. Often referred to as higher-order thinking skills, these include cognitive processes that are used to comprehend, solve problems, and express concepts or that describe abstract ideas that cannot be easily acted out, pointed to, or shown with images (Ibid:68).

Section Two:Interaction in Academic Writing

2.0 Introduction

Interaction in academic writing essentially involves 'positioning', or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold contrary points of view on those issues. In claiming a right to be heard, and to have their work taken seriously, writers must display a competence as disciplinaryinsiders. This competence is, at least in part, achieved through a writer–reader dialogue, to establish relationships between people, and between people and ideas. That is, in pursuing their personal and disciplinary goals, writers seek to create a recognizable social world through rhetorical choices which allow them to conduct interpersonal negotiations and balance claims for the significance, originality and plausibility of their work against the convictions and expectations of their readers.

The motivation for these writer–reader interactions lies in the fact that readers can always refute claims and this gives them an active role in how writers construct their arguments. Any successfully, published research paper anticipates a reader's response. Results and interpretations need to be presented in ways that readers are likely to find persuasive, and so writers must draw on these to express their positions, represent themselves, and engage their audiences. Evaluation is therefore critical to academic writing as effective argument represents careful considerations of one's colleagues as writers situate themselves and their work to reflect and shape a valued disciplinary ethos. These interactions are managed by writers in two main ways.

2.1. Stance

This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement.

2.2 Engagement. Writers relate to their readers with respect to the positions presented in the text(Hyland, 2001) by means of which writers acknowledge and connect to readers focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guidingthem to interpretations.Hyland 2001 and 2005

3.Metadiscourse

The use of metadiscourse is a linguistic realization by means of which a writer or speaker attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text. Hyland (2005) later refined metadiscourse as an umbrella term to include an apparently heterogeneous array of cohesive and interpersonal features, which help relate a text to its context. The use of metadiscourse is a major feature of communication in academic writing and Hyland sub-categorized metadiscourse into interactive and interactional categories to show more distinctions in communicative intent.

The interactive function helps readers to move through the text while the interactional goes a step further in deeper reader involvement. Thus, textual functions are given interpretations and writers are able to account for their actions in text development. For many L1 writers, these functions are part of systems used in language expression, but for L2 writers much are learnt consciously in the form of guided instruction.

According to Hyland (2005),metadiscourse increase the writer's presence in the text and make the writer more engaged with it. He also claimed that metadiscourse marked the writer's "friendly" attitude to the reader; and theyalsopromote coherence

Figure 2. Hyland's Metadiscourse Model (2005)

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	**Help reader to guide through the text**	**Resources**
Transition	Express relations between two clauses	In addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	Finally; to conclude
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see Fig; in section 2
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X; Z states
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meanings	Namely; e.g.; such as
Interactional	**Involve the reader in the text**	**Resources**
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might; perhaps; possible
Boosters	Emphasize certainty or close dialogue	In fact; definitely; it is clear
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately,; I agree; surprisingly
Self mentions	Explicit reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see that

Section Three: the Challenges of L2 Writers in Projecting their Identity

3.1 Academic Writing and Its Jargon

The very definition of jargon is language specific to a particular sub-group of people. Therefore, in modern university life, jargon represents the specific language and meaning assigned to words and phrases specific to a discipline or area of study. For example, the idea of being rational may hold the same general meaning in both political science and psychology, but its application to understanding and explaining phenomena within the research domain of a discipline may have subtle differences based upon how scholars in that discipline apply the concept to the theories and practice of their work (Hult and Huckin,2001(.

Given this, it is important that specialist terminology [i.e., jargon] must be used accurately and applied under the appropriate conditions. Subject-specific dictionaries are the best places to confirm the meaning of terms within the context of a specific discipline. These can be found by searching in the USC Libraries catalog. It is appropriate for you to use specialist language within your field of study, but avoid using such language when writing for non-academic or general audiences (Hult and Huckin, 2001).

3.2 Challenges in Academic writing

Academic writing in English is challenging L2students to construct and express a powerful authorial voice in their writing to become legitimate members of English academic community for a number of reasons.

3.2.1 Academic writing in L2 is influenced by the students' cultural, educational and linguistic background in their L1 as well as their social identities.L1 and L2 may be linguistically and culturally distant languages.

3.2.2It requires L2students to take on new identities for writing in various contexts.

3.2.3 Unfamiliarity with the dominant discoursal features that work better to let students sound like a member of an English-speaking academic community.

3.2.4 It is it difficult for them to take a position expected in academic writingand substantiate it with supporting data.

3.2.5 L2 students are reluctant to express an authoritative writer identityas their culture prefers 'collective' identityas opposed to 'individualism.

3.2. 6 Some L2 students show resistance to adopt L2 writing conventions and continued to write in their own way.

3.3 Problems with Opaque Writing

Traditional academic writing can utilize needlessly complex syntax or jargon that is stated out of context or is not well-defined. When writing, avoid these problems in particular:

3.3.1 Excessive use of specialized terminology: it is appropriate for people to use specialist language and a formal style of expression, but it does not mean using "big words" just for the sake of doing so. Overuse of complex or obscure words or writing complicated sentence constructions gives readers the impression that your paper is more about style than substance; it leads the reader to question if you really know what you are talking about. Focus on creating clear and elegant prose that minimizes reliance on specialized terminology (Ibid.).

3.3.2 Inappropriate use of specialized terminology. Because persons are dealing with the concepts, research, and data of their subject, they need to use the technical language appropriate to the discipline. However, nothing will undermine the validity of their study quicker than the inappropriate application of a term or concept. Theyshould avoid using terms whose meaning they are unsure of--do not just guess or assume! Consult the meaning of terms in specialized, discipline-specific dictionaries (Sword, 2012:68).

Conclusion

This paper indicates that academic is a complex process that involves a social interaction between the writer and the targeted audience. An effective academic writing can markan impression of the writers' identity through the **presentation of their ideas and**

thoughts in particular manner.L2 writers need to recognize the linguistic choices available to them and apply them to be better able to gain control over their writing and meet the considerable challenges of academic writing in L2. These writing practices are not simply concerned with technical formal matters, but they also help writers to make their voices visible.

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