

The Discursive Construction of Academic Writing Expertise: A Case Study of Developing from an Outsider to a Contributor Role in a Discourse Community

Farzaneh Dehghan* 

Assistant Professor of TEFL, Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran, Iran

Received: September 09, 2021; **Accepted:** December 19, 2021

Abstract

This study aims at exploring the developmental process from a novice writer to an expert academic contributor from a discursive viewpoint. Using a cross-sectional research design, the researcher was in contact with five graduate students (from M.A. to PhD) via semi-structured interviews and online communication. Based on the ideas of intertextuality and community of practice, the results obtained through text analysis showed two categories of intertextual references relevant for constructing genre knowledge, namely text-oriented practices (based on the discursive authority of texts) and expert-oriented practices (based on the discursive authority of experts). Moreover, novice writers were highly dependent on both text-oriented and expert-oriented practices but they favoured the former in their writing practices. Furthermore, since professional identity is an important aspect of genre knowledge, two identities of outsider and contributor were identified regarding this discourse community and its audience. The study concludes with implications for improving the discursive practices of the local academic community for developing professional identity of its novices.

Keywords: Discursive construction; Academic writing expertise; Intertextuality; Genre knowledge; Professional identity

*Author's email: f_dehghan@aut.ac.ir

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a professional contributor in an expert writing community or community of practice (Kim & Saemkhum, 2019; Wenger, 1998) is a developmental and transitional process of constructing (or reconstructing) new identities, genres, ideas, ideologies and beliefs related to that discourse community. According to discourse theory, professional community identities are constructed discursively, i.e. in the discourses among the members of those communities (Gee, 2014; Swales, 2016), and these discourses become social realities (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). In the course of acquiring academic writing expertise, novice writers move from the position of an outsider to a new authorial identity (Jamshidi, Rezaei, Hassanzadeh & Dehqan, 2019): a contributor who constructs on the present body of knowledge (Hyland, 2008), making new meanings or realities possible. This new identity, as Gee (2014) proposes, is among the building tasks of language in use or language as a meaning making or reality building tool. Members of academic communities acquire its own identity which provokes distinctive ways of thought and practice (Fealy et al. 2018).

Though there are discipline-specific competences or disciplinarity (Christie & Maton, 2011; Prior, 1998) which involve certain practices related to every specific discipline, there are skills, dispositions, language, and relationships needed for efficient understanding, interpreting and constructing knowledge in all academic discourse communities (Lea & Street, 1998; Lewis, 2007). The comprehension and creation of knowledge by members of a discourse community, which is mostly demonstrated and facilitated through writing, requires a particular type of academic competence referred to as Disciplinary Writing Expertise (DWE; Beaufort, 2004; Prior, 1998). Disciplinary writing expertise can be stated to be a demonstration of language in use, which is the main tenet of discourse theory. The way this expertise develops from the standpoint of a student to the contributing role of a disciplinary writer has attracted many attentions (Beaufort, 2004; Dehghan & Razmjoo, 2017; Hyland, 2008). Some

researchers have studied the concept of academic knowledge from a discursive point of view (Beaufort, 2004; Grealish & Trevitt, 2005; Hafner, 2013; Lee & Kirkman, 2008; Marashi & Yavarzadeh, 2014; McNamara, 2010). As Kim and Saenkhum (2019) assert, few studies have attended to the professional identities of L2 academic writers in spite of the fact that more and more scholars, researchers and graduate students are being added to the mainstream of L2 writers in their related international communities. Therefore, to add to the present state of literature regarding the construction of academic writing and its related identities by using a discursive angle, the present study aims at examining how academic writing expertise is constructed through the discourses (written and oral) novice writers in a foreign language academic context encounter and produce in the transition process of becoming a contributor of the related discourse community.

Academic Writing and Writers' Professional Identity

The principal role of writing in the construction of new knowledge and ideas in academia through interpreting and acting upon those ideas is well researched (Hunter & Tse, 2013; Wingate & Tribble, 2012). As Anderson and Hounsell (2007, p. 472) state, the inter-relatedness of learning the content and the “discursive practices associated with that content” emphasize the role of writing in the process of knowledge creation and development. Accordingly, the development of academic writing expertise cannot be imagined without the discursive practices between the learners and the other more competent participants in a discourse community. During this transitional and developmental process novice, students move from the status of an outsider novice to the role of a knowledge-making contributor or expert. This transformation process can also be defined as acquiring a new social role or identity in the social context in which these individuals participate.

The concept of academic writing expertise has attracted many researchers' attention (Beaufort, 1997, 2004; Bhatia, 2004; Dehghan &

Razmjoo 2017; Tardy, 2009). Bhatia (2004) refers to professional expertise as an integration of other sub-competencies such as discursive competence (including genre knowledge), academic knowledge and professional practice. Bhatia (2004, p.145) defines genre knowledge as “the ability to identify, construct, interpret and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional, disciplinary or workplace genres to participate in the daily activities and to achieve the goals of a specific professional community.” Beaufort (2004) provides a detailed categorization of disciplinary writing expertise. In her model, the most important subcomponents of DWE are genre knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge, subject matter knowledge and process or strategic knowledge. From among these competences, genre knowledge and discourse community knowledge were chosen for more scrutiny in the present study. *Genre knowledge* is related to the text and *discourse community* is related to the writer. Tardy (2009, p. 20) defines genre as “social actions that are used within specialized communities; that contain traces of prior texts in their shape, content, and ideology; and that are networked with other genres in various ways that influence their production and reception. “Disciplinary writing expertise means becoming a member of a particular community of writers or discourse community who share common texts or discourse as well as common values, goals and meta-discourses of the disciplines and make knowledge on each other’s’ works. A discourse community is the specific social context for writing expertise (Beaufort, 1997) or "a particular network of communicative channels, oral and written, whose interplay affects the purposes and meanings of the written texts produced" (Beaufort, 2004, p. 139). Every discourse community establishes norms for particular genres that are specific and unique to that community and specifies roles and tasks for the writer-members of the community (Bartholomae, 1985; Beaufort, 1997).

In addition, one aspect of the rhetorical knowledge is also related to the objective of this study. By definition, rhetorical knowledge comprises knowledge about these elements: the role of the writer, purpose of the

written text, audience or readers of the text, topic, culture, and context (Tardy, 2009). In other words, it refers to the roles writers play in a discourse community related to their audience or readers (Beaufort, 2004). Altogether, these three knowledge components of disciplinary writing are related to text (genre knowledge) and writer or producer of the text (discourse community and rhetorical knowledge). This definition suggests that concepts of genre, rhetorical and discourse community are interdependent and inter-related- i.e. all work together and are part of a whole called disciplinary writing expertise. In Beaufort's (2004) model, there is an overlap among these subcomponents of DWE. As in many other cases, this categorization is for the purpose of a better and deeper analysis and does not mean that the components are separate or mutually exclusive.

According to a discursive theory of identity, professional identities are constructed via the discourses used by the members of that professional group (Ivanič, 1998; Park, 2013). From this point of view, discourse encompasses the structures and functions which are related to language forms of actual use in a society (van Dijk, 1983). Language as a form of reality is a social product which is used to make meaning. In other words, it is created through the interaction among the members of a community (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). This interaction which also happens between individuals and texts and between the texts themselves (intertextuality) draws upon Bakhtin's idea of dialogism which is based on a continual and recurrent dialogue with other texts and other authors; that is a dialogic text is not just the extension of previous texts, but rather continually informs and is informed by them (White, 2009). Intertextuality has been categorized by some researchers, namely Fairclough's (1992) manifest vs. constitutive intertextuality, Kristeva's (1986) horizontal vs. vertical intertextuality and Devitt's (1991) categorization of generic, referential and functional intertextuality. Generic intertextuality refers to different text types or genres used in a discourse community. Referential intertextuality is the formal relationships among these texts and functional intertextuality refers to the functional interactions (purposes) among different genres and texts in a

particular discourse community. This study draws upon Devitt's (1991) idea of *referential intertextuality* which is "reference in one text to other texts" (p. 342). In other words, referential intertextuality can be defined as the dependencies between different types of discourses.

Finally, every social community or language-in-use context defines particular social roles or identities for its participants. Gee (2014) identifies several building tasks of language in social contexts including significance, relations, identities, sign systems or semiotics and knowledge. According to this view, identities or social roles are constructed discursively through language used by the participants in a discourse community (Arneback, Englund & Solbrekke, 2017). This identity construction can be expert-oriented, i.e. dependence of the novice members of an academic community on the more expert members or text-oriented, i.e. among the readers and the texts or among the texts themselves. These dependency relationships are called intertextuality (White, 2009). According to this view which has its roots in Bakhtin's dialogism, there is a continual and recurrent dialogue or a dialogic interaction between the producers of texts with other texts and other authors. In other words, a dialogic text is not just the extension or revision of previous texts, but rather continually informs and is informed or constructs and is constructed by them.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Novice writers, having an outsider or less powerful status in a discourse community have a constant dialogic interaction with the experts in that discipline who mostly have a contributor, more powerful role in that community. This interaction also exists among the texts, i.e. texts produced by novice writers and the feedback they receive from more professional texts or experts, comments, discussions, revisions and reviews. These discursive practices gradually construct the new identities and roles of the novice writers. The present study aims at investigating the way the discursive construction of academic writing expertise occurs. In particular,

the research aim is to find out what discursive practices are utilized by novice and more expert writers. This can show how the transition process of acquiring academic writing expertise is constructed discursively. Accordingly, this study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What referential intertextual practices are used by novice writers in the way of developing genre knowledge for academic writing?
2. What community-related roles are constructed in a particular discourse community through and in the discursive practices used by novice writers?

METHOD

Research Design

This study is a qualitative research using several methods of data collection to add to the rigor of the study. The theoretical frame of the study encompasses several ideas: Beaufort's (2004) conceptualization of academic writing expertise, Devitt's (1991) idea of intertextuality and the idea of social identity. Meanwhile, other related definitions and concepts related to genre knowledge and identity also are taken into account. As the purpose of this study was to explore a developmental process of discursive construction and as it was not possible to use a longitudinal study with the same group of participants (following novice M.A. first year students up to their PhD last year career), it was decided to use a cross-sectional design (choosing cases from each level) to study the changes that may have happened during this developmental process.

Participants

The context of this study was an EFL university setting. B.A. students who have graduated in TEFL, translation studies, and English literature can attend M.A. program of TEFL after an entrance examination. The M.A. program of TEFL lasts for 2 to 2.5 years during which these graduate students pass a course named Advanced Writing to get familiar with

different aspects of academic writing and a course named Seminar in which they are taught basics of proposal writing. In many of their courses they are required to write bibliographies, short essays, reviews and full research papers for the accomplishment of the course. To fulfil their program, they can either write an M.A. research-based thesis or pass some courses instead. M.A. holders of TEFL attend the entrance process of entering the PhD program of TEFL including an examination, interview and the evaluation of their C.V with a focus on high quality published papers. During the program, the PhD candidates are required to write one full research paper for the accomplishment of each course and finally, submit a PhD thesis for the fulfilment of their program.

The five participants of this study were two M.A. and three PhD students of TEFL. They were studying at two state universities at the time of this research. Using a trend study design (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2010) over nearly one academic year (near 10 months), the researcher was in contact with the participants via semi-structured interviews and online discussions (over online social networking applications). In order to keep the confidentiality of their personal information, we call them M.A.1 and 2 and PhD1, 2 and 3. Their age range was 22 to 33. They all volunteered to take part in the study.

In the beginning of this study, two of the M.A. students and one of the PhD students were writing the proposals of their theses. The other three participants were doing their projects, gathering their data and writing their theses. M.A.1 was writing her proposal at the time of the interviews; M.A.2 was writing his M.A. thesis during the project; PhD1, who was in the first year of her doctoral study, was busy writing two research papers as the fulfilment of some of her courses; PhD2 was writing her doctoral proposal and PhD3 was at the end of finishing his thesis project and becoming an expert of the field. The reasons for choosing this particular group were to show the gradual transition and development from novice to expert and to make the researcher able to compare the academic performance of novice and expert writers across a developmental continuum.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Interviews and online discussion were used to gather data from the participants of this study. The interviews were conducted at three points during the study. However, the online discussions continued constantly over the academic term. The aim of having two sources of data collection was to enrich the gathered data due to data triangulation and to add to the credibility of data analysis. The participants talked about their daily practices in their discipline (Teaching English as a Foreign Language or TEFL) such as their assignments and term papers and their thesis projects. This was also the focus of the interview questions. All online discussions and interviews were conducted in Persian. Two points need consideration here. Firstly, the role of particular disciplines in the formation of a professional identity is absolutely important. However, there are certain general academic skills which need to be acquired by all academic experts in a more or less similar way. Though in the present paper participants were students of a particular discipline (i.e. TEFL), the focus was on general academic expertise representations. Secondly, language can be an issue in dealing with academic expertise. The fact is that postgraduate students of TEFL need to develop their writing expertise in English as a foreign language and this can create a difference from other graduate students who develop this same expertise in their native language. These differences can be the topic of other future comparative studies; however, for the present study, it was decided to focus on the development of general academic expertise from a discursive perspective.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of this study happened simultaneously with the data collection procedures. This interactive data collection made a recurring analysis of data possible. So the researcher was able to reformulate the theoretical framework of the study, coming to new questions for future online

exchanges and interviews. Interviews were transcribed at the time of data gathering, making it possible to refer across different sources of available data. The translated data were returned to the participants to check their statements. All data gathered were codified using inductive coding including and open coding, axial coding and selective coding leading to emerging concepts, categories and themes (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2010). For this purpose, instances of references that students mentioned as important in relying on while trying to write were. These instances and examples then were then tried to be compared in order to put them in integrating themes and categories. The coding was checked by two other evaluators to find the degree of correlation between their coding ($r= 0.74$).

RESULTS

The present study was conducted with the aim of exploring how academic writing expertise is constructed discursively through the interaction between texts and writers. It also aimed at what social identities novice writers assign to themselves within their related discourse community. Accordingly, the results obtained through inductive text analysis are divided into two sections, which will be presented below.

Intertextuality and the Construction of Academic Writing Expertise

An emerging pattern during the analysis of the present focus group's discursive practices was dependence on authoritative practice. We identified two main discursive practices used by the informants of the present study, which we named as text-oriented and expert-oriented practices. Text-oriented practices are based on the authority of the text while expert-oriented practices are based on the authority of the experts. Referential Intertextuality or the dependence of one's texts on the discourse of others (Devitt, 1991) can encompass any construction of new texts based on a

dependency relationship with others' discourses. These referential relations can include any dependence on authority within a particular discourse community or profession. Moreover, it was observed that novice writers were highly dependent on both text-oriented and expert-oriented practices but they had more appeal to text-oriented or textual practices in the field. MA1, who was at the novice end of the continuum of academic expertise, explained her high dependence on her advisor's oral feedback for writing a particular genre, i.e. thesis proposal:

I really need my advisor to explain how I have to write my proposal. Without his comments and feedback, I feel lost.

MA2 also emphasizes how these text-oriented and expert-oriented practices from sources of authority have helped him during the process of writing his M.A thesis and research papers.

I modelled published texts and wrote my papers based on them. Direct quotation and patchwriting are two ways to make sure what I am writing is accurate. I didn't feel confident enough to write by myself. (Interview)

In one case, PhD3 explained one case in which he had had a particular problem regarding his thesis project and he had emailed a prominent figure in the international discourse community in this regard.

Her reply to my email was very illuminating, helping me to come out of the dilemma regarding the research design of my thesis.

As writers approach the thresholds of becoming an expert in their related discourse community, they gradually decrease the amount of expert-oriented intertextual dependences. However, appeal to text-oriented authority of the text still exists though not to a similar degree and nature as the novice

participants. PhD students mentioned this in their chats.

Sometimes I notice I am using too many quotations in my writings. However, I next find it difficult to revise and paraphrase those parts (PhD2, Online chat),

I can make this comparison between the background and the discussion parts of the research papers. Previous published papers act as models for writing the introduction and background sections of a research paper. However, such a model does not exist for the discussion part (PhD3, Interview),

Published articles provide a very useful reference not only for ideas and content but for the way the text must be documented (PhD1, Interview).

These intertextual references are the basis of interactions among texts, which lead to the construction of new knowledge in the discipline. In a way, these discursive practices are also the factor forming the construction of an important competence of DWE, i.e. genre knowledge.

Table 1 summarizes the number of intertextual practices (text-oriented and expert-oriented) used by the informants of the study in all transcribed databases.

Table 1: Number of intertextual text-oriented and expert-oriented references across the academic writing expertise continuum

Total number of intertextual practices	Novice end				Expert end PhD3
	MA1	MA2	PhD1	PhD2	
text-oriented	5	5	5	3	2
expert-oriented	7	5	4	2	1
total	12	10	9	5	3

As Table 1 indicates, there seems to exist a decrease in references to the text-oriented and expert-oriented practices over the writing expertise

continuum. This transition or developmental process is constructed through the intertextuality practices of reference to and dependence on the authority of a text or an expert. Considering the two groups of participants (MA and PhD students), there seems to be a difference between the way that they refer to the authority of the text. While MA students refer to the authority of texts in order to have models for their writings, PhD students' reference to the published works is for both modelling and documentation of and citation for what they have claimed in their own writing.

Professional Identity Construction within a Discourse Community or Community of Practice

Another subcomponent of disciplinary writing expertise is related to knowledge of a discourse community and rhetorical knowledge in term of the roles writers play in a discourse community related to their audience or readers. This aspect is related to the roles members of a discourse community play in relation to the culture, values, norms and audience of that community. Across the inductive analysis of the results, two social roles emerged, namely outsider and contributor. Outsiders do not consider themselves as having a knowledge-making role in the community. They mostly write in order to fulfill course and program requirements, defend their thesis and enrich their resume for future exams, promotions and employment. On the other hand, contributors consider themselves to be knowledge makers, trying to extend borders of knowledge in their related fields and introduce new ideas and concepts into the discipline. In the inductive process of data analysis, we identified certain data pieces through which participants assigned a particular role to themselves as writers of particular genres related to their discipline, i.e. TEFL. MA2, for example, stated that he had written two term papers, one proposal and was writing his thesis at the time of the interviews and the discussions.

The only concern I had while choosing my term paper was to publish

it so I can use it for the PhD exam next year. (MA2, Interview)

Similarly, PhD2 and PhD3 stated that they had written research papers mostly because of their program requirements.

In our department, there is too much emphasis over writing term papers and I devote too much time to their completion. (PhD2, Discussion)

I need to write a paper as a requirement for my defense session (PhD3, Interview)

When discussing the issue of the broader discourse community (versus the immediate context of the local discourse community), they clearly distinguished their role as outsiders as opposed to a knowledgeable contributor who is able to extend the borders of knowledge in the international discourse community.

I actually don't think my studies are enough in helping me write at a world level. What I write is marginal and I am aware of this fact. (PhD2, Discussion)

Table 2 presents the frequencies of cases of reference to their roles in particular discourse communities throughout the whole transcribed data.

Table 2: Number of references to participants' roles in a discourse community

Total number of intertextual practices	Novice end				Expert end
	MA1	MA2	PhD1	PhD2	PhD3
outsider	7	8	6	7	5
contributor	0	1	1	1	2
total	7	9	7	8	7

As data in Table 2 shows, the informants of this study mostly attributed an

outsider role to themselves. The only case in which they mostly assigned a contributor role for themselves was regarding choosing their thesis topic.

I took a great attempt to choose a new topic. (PhD3. Discussion)

PhD3 also contends his contemplation for future, thinking about finding several topics for his future career. However, in general, an instrumental rationality was evident throughout their discursive construction of aspects of their professional identity.

One limitation of this study which may have led to the scarcity of data on identity construction is the time period during which we were able to track these graduate students, i.e. over one educational year, which is not in fact, a considerable time for identity formation of these graduate students as a result of their graduation and other occupations. In contrast, the in this trend study, the developmental process was more of a concern by catching sketches of each level of graduate education from novice M.A. to PhD last year level.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of the present study was finding out the discursive ways through which aspects of disciplinary writing expertise is constructed. For this purpose, we focused on two main aspects of academic writing expertise for greater scrutiny. The first aspect is genre knowledge (functional and formal) which, according to a constructivist view, is regarded as a social action within specialized communities and is constructed through interaction with other texts (Tardy, 2009). Based on Bakhtin's idea of dialogism and Devitt's (1991) concept of referential intertextuality, two intertextual references were identified, namely expert-oriented and text-oriented, which reflect the reference of novice writers and their dependence on authority. Expert-oriented dependence exists among the participants of a discipline or between novice and expert members of a discourse community while text-oriented references exist between the texts, i.e. new texts are

constructed based on previous discourses.

As the results indicated, expert-oriented dependence on sources of authority which includes feedback, comments, discussions and tips by the immediate discourse community members, i.e. instructors and advisors, is an important discursive practice for the purpose of constructing genre knowledge especially for beginner writers. According to the social-constructivist approach, academic contexts are social communities that determine the way "students define and approach writing tasks" (Riazi, 1997, p. 106) and writing is a social activity which occurs within a specific context and for a specific audience. As Roca De Larios and Murphy (2001) state, "The language, the focus, and the form of a text are determined for the writer by the discourse community for whom s/he is producing the text" (p. 27). Definitely, genres in every specific discipline comprise formal and functional actions used to produce texts. In this process, referential intertextuality acts as a powerful practice, which broadly encompasses all kinds of interactions and relationships among texts in a particular discourse community (Devitt, 1991). Based on this broad definition, intertextuality in terms of dependence on or appeal to the authority of texts (Hafner, 2013) includes all kinds of discourses through and in which novice writers construct new texts. As these novice writers move toward becoming professional in their field, their dependence on expert-oriented authority decreases and they become more dependent on text-oriented authorities.

Constructing one's text based on previous texts in that discipline, which is the basis of knowledge making, is the most important characteristic of expertise or disciplinarity. The results of this study also indicated that during the transitional process of becoming an expert, writers' dependence on the oral and written feedback of their professors decreased while their dependence on textual authority changed from mere modeling to looking for a basis to construct their own argumentation and text from. This could be an indication of the development of DWE. Similarly, Schillings, Roebertson, Savelberg and Dolmans (2018) have reviewed research emphasizing the important role of dialogic as well as written feedback strategies in

improving academic writing skills. Secondly, text-oriented intertextual dependencies are very common practices among novice writers. They use published texts as a source of authority on which they can confidently construct their own texts. Text-oriented intertextual practices can include a wide range from patchwriting to direct quotations and paraphrases. If intertextuality is not used in an appropriate way, such as in cases of intentional patchwriting and overuse of direct quotations, this is a display of lack of professional and academic expertise in that field (Hyland, 2000, 2008), lack of confidence to write independently (Dehghan, 2018) and a peripheral and marginalized status in the related discourse community. On the other hand, appropriate intertextual references are very crucial in creating commitment and unity among the members of a discourse community, demonstrating expert academic and professional knowledge in the field and displaying a central and contributing role in a professional discourse community.

The second objective of the present study is exploring how another component of DWE which is related to the identity of the writers, i.e. discourse community knowledge, and the way these writers related to their audience, which is part of rhetorical knowledge, are discursively constructed. Analysis of data revealed two basic social roles which we called outsider and contributor roles. Based on a socio-cognitive and situated learning approach, these roles are regarded as apprenticeship roles for (re)constructing the novice writers' selves and roles according to culture of their immediate setting. However, based on discourse theory, these roles can be discussed as displays of different discourses that assign particular social values to different human practices. The discourse perspectives of identity construction view discursive practices as the location in which identity construction processes occur (Gee, 2014). In this view, professional identities are socially constructed, which will in turn become social realities (Fairclough, 2001). Discursive practices can facilitate stereotypical positions and roles. As a result, these discursive practices may construct an identity which is weakly oriented towards the values, norms, and standards of other

discourse communities or communities of practice. According to Wenger and Trayner (2015, p. 1), “communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact.” A community of practice includes three main characteristics: the domain, the community and the practice. What is important in this definition is the role interaction plays in constructing a community of practice and their learning and functioning. In other words, the interactions within the members of an immediate discourse community are important in constructing the professional identity of writers in the field: moving them toward an outsider identity representation or making them professional contributors. The participants of this study seemed to be highly dependent on the norms and values of the immediate discourse community such as the fulfillment of course or graduate program requirements. As Winsor (1996, p. 27) states, “genres develop when members of a discourse community repeatedly need to achieve some purpose. They embody the content, organization, and style that the discourse community believes will fulfill this purpose.” Therefore, one important function of a local community is to familiarize novice writers with the norms of the broader international discourse community, building the contributor identity discursively based on everyday interactional practices that they have with their students.

According to the findings of this study, the curtailed development of novices if the local discourse community is not fully linked into the international discourse community (through interacting with other members of the broader discourse community, taking part in international events such as workshops, forums, and conferences and trying to publish their manuscripts for a broader international audience may be a factor in developing certain identities in the novice writers. To whom you write (international audience or the limited circle of the immediate discourse community) and with whom you interact determines the identity of the graduate student as outsider or contributor.

The findings of the present study are in line with previous studies on

the discursive construction of professional identity by demonstrating the latent content of discourse (Fealy et al. 2018; Hafner, 2013; McNamara, 2010; Zhang, 2017). The discursive practices of this study included intertextual references to authority (expert-oriented or knowledgeable figures and text-oriented or authority of written texts which were shown to decrease in dependency over time. Secondly, the construction of a social role or identity as an outsider as opposed to a contributor role was largely sustained throughout the period of the study (one academic year). However, constructing an academic identity through a discourse that restricts the writer's roles to an identity which is to a greater degree concerned with satisfying the immediate requirements of the local discourse community cannot lead to the academic culture of the broader discourse community, which is mainly focused on building new knowledge. "We perpetually adjust our language repertoires to those we have to communicate with, often coming up with entirely new forms of language usage." (Blommaert, 2013, p. 1). In other words, the discursive practices that novice writers are involved in as well as those with whom they are interacting are two important factors shaping and influencing their professional career.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The announced goal of nearly all graduate programs is to prepare professional contributors who are able to add to the existing body of knowledge (knowledge-making). This developmental process is based on the previously-established authorities in every field, which include authority of the text and authority of individuals. These intertextual references, which are called text-oriented and expert-oriented practices respectively, are important discursive practices upon which novices in a particular field construct their professional identity. The outsider role that a novice graduate student starts with at the beginning of their professional career must develop into a contributor role gradually. The role of the immediate local discourse community is vital in this regard. In addition, the nature of intertextuality

must also change from dependence on texts as a result of lack of confidence (e.g. in patchwriting or overpassivization) to constructing your arguments based on the previous findings and contextualizing the new knowledge in the previous knowledge. According to the findings of this study, the curtailed development of novices if the local discourse community is not fully correlated with the international discourse community leads to an outsider identity who cannot find themselves in a contributor role in the broader discourse community for the purpose of knowledge making. Interacting with other members of the broader discourse community, taking part in international workshops, forums, conferences and events and trying to publish their manuscripts for a broader international audience are different ways for increasing novices' exposure to different discursive practices and helping them become a contributor knowledge-maker.

The study of professional identities such as academic writing expertise as being constructed through discourse is important in displaying how novice and expert members of a particular discourse community imagine themselves. Moreover, the way this identity is constructed through discourse has also certain implications for instructors and expert mentors of novice writers. Experts and advisors should take into account the way norms and values of their local community can restrict novice writers and prevent them from constructing for themselves a contributor role in the broader discourse community. As was mentioned earlier, all discursive practices which involve interaction with members of the broader international community can be helpful, including participation in international workshops, forums, events and conferences, having contacts with these members via email, professional social media (e.g. LinkedIn), membership in professional communities and societies and publishing their manuscripts for a broader audience via international refereed journals (which necessitate comments from reviewers and answering to those comments and defending your positions). In addition, university instructors need to recognize the importance of expert-oriented intertextual references in terms of feedback, comments and discussions in helping novices form genre knowledge as part

of academic writing expertise and to identify how their discursive practices can help novice writers construct a professional, knowledgeable and contributor identity. Moreover, based on a critical discourse analysis perspective and considering the hegemony of English as the dominant language of most international academia and discourse communities, the two social roles of outsider and contributor, can also be examined in terms of power relations or North-South discrepancies (Blommaert, 2013; Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2014; van Leeuwen, 2008). Future studies can examine the concept of academic writing expertise from a critical discourse analysis perspective.

There were some limitations in the present study. In this study, the near-expert or threshold group of experts participated as we did not have access to real experts to take part in a longitudinal study. Future studies should work with real experts, if possible, and novice writers in the same academic discourse community in a longitudinal research design and investigate how the novice group develops their professional expertise, in general, and academic writing expertise in particular as a result of their interactions with the expert group. In addition, in Devitt's (1991) categorization of intertextuality types, functional intertextuality refers to the functional interactions or purposes for which different text types or genres interact with each other in a particular discourse community. The role of functional intertextuality in the development of professional identity and DWE as well as different types of functional intertextualities used by novice and expert groups could be studied by future studies from different theoretical perspectives including a social-constructivist theory, discourse theories and critical discourse analysis approaches.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Farzaneh Dehghan  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3249-7771>

References

- Anderson, C. & Hounsell, D. (2007). Knowledge practices: 'Doing the subject' in undergraduate courses. *Curriculum Journal*, 18(4): 463–78.
- Arneback, E., Englund, T. & T.D. Solbrekke (2017) Achieving a professional identity through writing. *Education Inquiry*, 8(4), 284-298. doi: 10.1080/20004508.2017.1380489.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C.& Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. (8th Ed.) New York, NY: Wadsworth.
- Bamberg, M., De Fina, A., & Schiffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and identity construction. In S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V.L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity: Theory and research* (pp.177-199). Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_8.
- Bartholomae, D. (1985). Inventing the university. In M. Rose (Ed.), *When a writer can't write: Studies in writer's block and other composing process problems* (pp. 134-165). New York: Guilford.
- Beaufort, A. (1997). Operationalizing the concept of discourse community: A case study of one institutional site of composing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 31, 486-529.
- Beaufort, A. (2004). Developmental gains of a history major: A case for building a theory of disciplinary literacy. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 39 (2), 136-185.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse: A genre-based view*. London: Continuum.
- Blommaert, J. (2013). Language and the study of diversity. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, 74, 1-14.
- Christie, F., & Maton, C. (2011). *Disciplinarity: Functional, linguistic, and sociological perspectives*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Devitt, A. (1991). Intertextuality in tax accounting: Generic, referential, and functional. In C. Bazerman & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Textual dynamics of the*

- professions: Historical and contemporary studies of writing in professional communities* (pp. 336–357). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Dehghan, F. (2018). Developing English for research publication purposes in an outer circle university context: problems and educational considerations. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning* 8 (2), 89-100.
- Dehghan, F. & Razmjoo, S.A. (2017). Developing a model for disciplinary writing expertise in postgraduate teaching English as a foreign language programs. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies* 4 (4), 122-103.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd Ed.). London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Fealy, G., Hegarty, J.M., McNamara, M., Casey, M., O’Leary, M., Kennedy, C., O’Reilly, P., O’Connell, R., Brady, A.M., & Nicholson, E. (2018). Discursive constructions of professional identity in policy and regulatory discourse. doi: 10.1111/jan.13723.
- Gee, J.P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis*, (4th Revised Ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Grealish L. & Trevitt C. (2005) Developing a professional identity: Student nurses in the workplace. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19, 137–150.
- Hafner, C.A. (2013). The discursive construction of professional expertise: Appeals to authority in barrister’s opinions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 32, 131-143.
- Hunter, K. & Tse, H. (2013). Making disciplinary writing and thinking practices an integral part of academic content teaching. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 14(3), 227-239. doi: 10.1177%2F1469787413498037.
- Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. Harlow: Longman.
- Hyland, K. (2008). Genre pedagogy and academic writing in disciplines. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 543-562.
- Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discursive construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Jamshidi, S., Rezaei, S., Hassanzadeh, M. & Dehqan, M. (2019). Development and validation of an authorial identity model and questionnaire: A factor Analytic approach. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 8(2), 243-273.

- Kristeva, J. (1986). *The Kristeva Reader*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Kim, S.H. & Saenkhum, T. (2019). Professional identity (re)construction of L2 writing scholars. *L2 Journal*, 11(2), 18-34. doi: 10.5070/L211242088.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.
- Lea, M.R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 32(2), 157-172.
- Lee, A.M.S. & Kirkman, M. (2008). Disciplinary discourses: Rates of caesarean section explained by medicine, midwifery and feminism. *Health Care for Women International*, 29(5). doi: 10.1080/07399330801949574.
- Lewis, J. (2007). Academic literacy: Principles and learning opportunities for adolescent readers. In J. Lewis & G. Moorman (Eds.), *Adolescent Literacy Instruction: Politics and Promising Practices*, (pp. 143-166). NY: International Reading Association.
- Marashi, H & Yavarzadeh, E. (2014). Using critical discourse analysis instruction in argumentative and descriptive writing classes. *Issues in Language Teaching*, 3(2), 209-236.
- McNamara M. S. (2010) Where is nursing in academic nursing? Disciplinary discourses, identities and clinical practice: A critical perspective from Ireland *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 19, 766–774. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2009.03079.x.
- Park, G. (2013). Writing is a way of knowing: Writing and identity. *ELT journal*, 67(3), 336-345. doi: 10.1093/elt/cct012.
- Prior, P. A. (1998). *Writing/disciplinarity: A socio-historic account of literate activity in the academy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Roca De Larios, J. & Murphy, L. (2001). Some steps toward a socio-cognitive interpretation of second language composition processes. *International Journal of English Studies*, 1(2), 25-45.
- Schillings, M., Roebertsen, H., Savelberg, H., & Dolmans, D. (2018). A review of educational dialogue strategies to improve academic writing skills. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 1-14. doi: 10.1177/1469787418810663.
- Swales, J. (2016). Reflections on the concept of discourse community. *ASP* [Online], 69. doi:10.4000/asp.4774.
- Tardy, C. (2009). *Building Genre Knowledge*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

- Van Dijk T.A. (1983). Discourse analysis: Its development and application to the structure of news. *Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 20-43.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. & Trayner, B. (2015). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. Available at <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>.
- Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., & Yates S.J. (2001). *Discourse theory and practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- White, E.J. (2009). A Bakhtinian homecoming: Operationalizing dialogism in the context of an early childhood education center in Wellington, New Zealand. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 7(3), 299-323.
- Wingate, U. & Tribble, C. (2012). The best of both worlds? Towards an English for academic purposes/academic literacies writing pedagogy. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(4): 481-495.
- Winsor, D. A. (1996). *Writing like an engineer: A rhetorical education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zhang, Z. (2017). Discursive construction of professional identity. In Z. Zhang (Ed.), *Learning business English in China: The construction of professional identity* (pp.145-171). London: Palgrave Macmillan.