



Review Article

Authorial voice in writing: A literature review



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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a literature review of theoretical and empirical research related to authorial voice in writing, spanning a period of over 50 years, from 1968 till 2021. The concepts of identity and voice in writing are often used interchangeably; however, some researchers differentiate the two conceptions, determining authorial voice as the writer's identity reflected in writing. Over the span of the past 50 years the construct of authorial voice has undergone a shift from individual to social to a more recent eclectic or 'dialogic' conception of voice. The paper concludes with an outline of a path for further research on authorial voice in writing.

1. Introduction

The writers' ability to use their voice effectively cannot be overestimated. However, the concept of voice in writing has been seen as complex and ill-defined (Atkinson, 2001; Guinda & Hyland, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Matsuda, 2015; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009). Multiple definitions of voice have been suggested and the complexity of this notion has been related to the marginalisation of authorial voice in writing instruction since it is often seen as exceedingly challenging (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003; Stapleton, 2002). However, more recent studies have demonstrated a correlation between writing quality and authorial voice.

In order to address the issue of relegation of authorial voice in writing instruction and to inform pedagogical practices related to voice in writing, it is essential to understand what authorial voice is. To achieve this purpose, this review adopts an exploratory framework and focuses on the following research question:

How is authorial voice conceptualised in the research literature?

The review includes research published between 1968 and 2021, as the earliest publication located in the course of the literature search was the study conducted by Elbow in 1968.

2.1. Voice and identity in writing

This literature review revealed that the concepts of voice and identity are closely related and are used interchangeably in the two literature reviews by Sperling and Appleman (2011) and Stock and Eik-Nes (2016), a theoretical publication by Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles (2011), as well as in a number of empirical studies by Ivanić and Camps

(2001), Hirvela and Belcher (2001), Hanauer (2015), Bondi (2012), Thompson (2012), Hewings (2012), Santos and Da Silva (2016), Xu and Hu (2020) and Zhao (2013) (See the sections 'Voice and identity used interchangeably' in Tables 1 and 2).

However, some researchers try to separate and differentiate between the notions of writer's identity and voice in writing (See section 'Defining voice' in Tables 1 and 2). For example, in her book published back in 1998, Rose Ivanić proposes that identity in writing has four dimensions: 'autobiographical self', 'possibilities for self-hood', 'discoursal self', and 'self as author' (Ivanić, 1998, p. 23). However, it is the 'discoursal self' or 'discoursal repertoires which writers bring to the act of writing' that Ivanić (1998) identifies as 'voice' (p.22) or the impression created of the author through the features of written discourse.

Matsuda (2015) in his theoretical article on identity in written discourse also differentiates the notions of voice and identity in writing, referring to Ivanić's fourth dimension of identity, self as author, or how writers claim authority and establish their authorial presence, as being central to the notion of voice (Ivanić, 1998; Matsuda, 2015).

In addition, Matsuda (2015), points out that 'it is important to distinguish between the identity positions of the writer that are external to discourse, such as the demographic information, and identity as constructed and negotiated through discourse, which is captured by the concept ... of ... voice' and is facilitated 'by written discourse' (p.141). Thus, both Ivanić (1998) and Matsuda (2015) propose that identity in writing is a broader conception which encapsulates authorial voice as discoursal realisations of writer's identity.

In the empirical studies by Matsuda and Jeffery (2012) and Tardy (2012, pp. 34–48) the conceptions of voice and identity are also distinguished. Matsuda and Jeffery (2012) see voice as an aspect of

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Table 1

Authorial voice in writing in theoretical publications.

Author(s) and dates	View of voice in writing
Defining voice Guinda and Hyland (2012)	defining voice as '[a] cumulative process ... that exert an effect on the reader, for whom ... [it is] ... brought into existence, ...; the realisation of ... voice reveals the diversity and vibrancy shaped by conformity to community conventions and the expression of personal proclivities ... because ... Individual preferences [are] accountable to disciplinary practices' (p. 9)
Ivanic (1998)	differentiating between voice and identity, i.e., identity in writing has four dimensions: 'autobiographical self', 'possibilities for self-hood', 'discoursal self', and 'self as author' (p. 23), while voice in writing is reflected in the <i>discoursal self</i> or 'discoursal repertoires which writers bring to the act of writing' (p. 22)
Matsuda (2015)	differentiating between voice and identity, i.e., the identity positions of the writer that are external to discourse, such as the demographic information, and identity as constructed and negotiated through discourse, which is captured by the concept ... of ... voice' and is facilitated 'by written discourse' (p. 141)
Bakhtin (1981)	introducing voice as a social and historical concept: a dialogic view of author's language in general, e.g., 'every utterance' being in part the language of an individual (participating in the centripetal forces of discourse, and in part belonging to 'social and historical heteroglossia' or multi-voicedness or 'the centrifugal, stratifying forces' of discourse (p. 272)
Benwell and Stokoe (2006)	adding to the definition of voice: a diachronic view of identity [and together with voice as an integral part of identity]: from the early modern period identity had been treated as 'a self-fashioning, agentive, internal project of the self' (p. 17); later, it was understood as 'social and collective'; in the post-structuralist age, challenging the limitations of the binary vision of the world, identity is perceived not as either individual or social but rather as 'fluid, fragmentary, contingent' (p. 17).
Devlin, K. (2016)	adding to the definition of voice: a dialogic view of voice where the conflict between the individual authorial voice and the academic conventions 'strangl[ing] individual voice' is brought to the fore. (p. 34)
Prior (2001)	defining voice in writing as a dialogic construct that encapsulates both individual and social perspectives
Voice and identity are used interchangeably Sperling and Appleman (2011)	Voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., 'Although individuals' linguistic accomplishments many much clearer to identify than their identity achievements ... nevertheless, the phrase <i>finding one's voice</i> implies this accomplishment.' (p. 71)
Stock and Eik-Nes (2016)	Voice and identity are used interchangeably (e.g., 'Within the transformative approach of academic literacies research it is not enough to analyse and identify voice features in a text; it is also necessary to conduct interviews and talk about texts which highlight the context, discussing "the struggles to sustain identity as writers while accommodating the demands of the university" (Le Ha, 2009, p. 134). These studies often aim to raise critical awareness and help learners to take control over their writing and their voice ... ' (p.97))
Schwartz et al. (2011)	Voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., 'Within this framework [CDA], identities are typically explored as power spaces in which the articulation of voice is "repressed" (p. 8), or "... narrative identity [is] ... a polyphonic novel within which different voices of self-express themselves in their unique and self-defining ways' (p. 102)
Individual view of voice Bowden (1999)	problematising the individualistic assumption in the notion of voice as practised in writing textbooks and instructional practices
Elbow (1968)	Voice in writing is distinct, strong and sincere, likened to the sound of physical voice
Elbow (1994)	Voice in writing is recognisable, distinct, resonant and likened to the sound of physical voice

Table 1 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	View of voice in writing
Elbow (2007)	writer sounding 'like a person' (p. 176), personal style, recognisable and distinct voice
Ford (1991)	Voice should be authentic
Hamalian, L. (1970)	'[t]he true voice' in writing that 'brings out the spirit of the person' (p. 227)
Harris (1997)	problematising the individualistic view of voice as practised in writing textbooks and instructional practices
Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999)	problematising the individual conception of voice as unique and personal or 'that which individuates a writer from all other writers, as evidenced in that writer's texts' (p. 49)
Stewart (1969)	writer's voice is a commitment and 'true voice' (p. 226)
Stewart (1972)	Voice is unique, authentic, and revealing the individuality of the author
Stewart (1992)	advocating for 'a return of authentic voice' that is unique and can play a role in 'promoting richness and depth of personal experience' (p. 288)
Social view of voice Guinda and Hyland (2012)	defining voice as '[a] cumulative process ... that exert an effect on the reader, ... voice reveals the diversity and vibrancy shaped by conformity to community conventions ... [and ... accountable to disciplinary practices' (p. 9)
Ivanic (1998)	Voice in writing is the <i>discoursal self</i> or 'discoursal repertoires which writers bring to the act of writing' (p. 22) or the impression created of the author through the features of written discourse
Dialogic view of voice Bakhtin (1981)	presenting a dialogic view of author's language in general, e.g., 'every utterance' being in part the language of an individual (participating in the centripetal forces of discourse, and in part belonging to 'social and historical heteroglossia' or multi-voicedness or 'the centrifugal, stratifying forces' of discourse (p. 272)
Benwell and Stokoe (2006)	In the post-structuralist age, challenging the limitations of the binary vision of the world, identity is perceived not as either individual or social but rather as 'fluid, fragmentary, contingent' (p. 17).
Devlin, K. (2016)	A dialogic view of voice where the conflict between the individual authorial voice and the academic conventions 'strangl[ing] individual voice' is brought to the fore. (p. 34)
Prior (2001)	Voice in writing is a dialogic construct that encapsulates both individual and social perspectives

identity as they argue that 'voice in written language [is] a metaphorical concept capturing the sense of identity that comes through when readers interact with texts' (p. 151). Tardy (2012, pp. 34-48) mentions an 'extra-textual identity' (p.68), which is echoed in a recent empirical study by Zhao (2019) drawing a dividing line between authorial identity and authorial voice. Zhao (2019) suggests that the writer's identity includes extra-textual features such as age, gender, and cultural background. Those extra-textual features, according to the analysis of 200 argumentative essays by Chinese-speaking participants, have very limited impact on the authorial voice in participants' writing. Thus, Zhao's (2019) study shows authorial voice as pertaining to text. In contrast, authorial identity is seen as a broader notion that may include extra-textual demographical features, not necessarily reflected in the text.

2.2. Theoretical research on voice in writing

The review revealed that some literature takes a historical view of identity and voice (See Table 1). As Benwell and Stokoe (2006) point out in their book 'Identity and Discourse', a diachronic view of identity shows that it has been perceived differently in different periods of time, which usually reflects the dominant schools of thought in a certain period. That is, starting from the early modern period, identity had been treated as 'a self-fashioning, agentive, internal project of the self' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 17). Later, it was understood as 'social and

Table 2

Authorial voice in writing in empirical studies.

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Defining voice Matsuda and Tardy (2007)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interviews with reviewers of academic manuscripts - textual analysis with the focus on discursive (e.g., the use of transition devices and word choice) and non-discursive (e.g., the use of margins and the choice of fonts) features that help build an impression of the author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defining 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'
Tardy and Matsuda (2009)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - surveys with the editorial board members of journals in applied linguistics, rhetoric and composition - focus on discursive (e.g., the use of transition devices and word choice) and non-discursive (e.g., the use of margins and the choice of fonts) features that help build an impression of the author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defining 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. 34)
Matsuda and Jeffery (2012)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US secondary and postsecondary curricular and various assessment rubrics - the discourse analysis 	'Voice in written language – a metaphorical concept capturing the sense of author's identity ...' (p. 151)
Tardy (2012)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - university writing instructors exploring the students' texts and video interviews about their background, as well as undergraduate ESL students' texts and video recording of the student interviews - textual analysis of the students' writing and the student interview analysis and the instructors' interview analysis, after watching the student videos 	<p>'... I refer to such aspects of identity as <i>extra-textual identity</i>, which I define as aspects of an author's identity that are constructed outside of written communication, based on characteristics like an author's name ...; readers may be aware of such characteristics through demographic data alone ... or through embodies interactions with the author; these aspects of extra-textual identity, like voice, are part of the broader and complex contract of identity and identity construction.' (p. 68)</p>
Zhao (2019)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - argumentative essay by adult ESL writers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adding to the definition of voice by differentiating

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - textual analysis via the comparison of the overall voice salience and voice elements (i.e., hedges, boosters and self-mention) with the extra-textual writer identity elements (e.g., gender and cultural background) 	between voice and identity via the juxtaposition of textual voice and extra-textual identity that had no significant effect on either the authorial voice salience or voice elements
		Voice and identity used interchangeably Bondi (2012)	qualitative
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - academic books and journal articles - discourse analysis with the focus on the lexis related to writer-reader interaction and general lexis (e.g., evaluative words, quantifies, approximators and self-reference) is analysed against the roles of the author within the discourse community such as 'the Recounter', 'the Interpreter' and 'the Academic Arguer' (p. 113) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - voice and identity are used interchangeably (e.g., 'The notion of voice has been discussed from different perspectives in academic discourse studies, often in relation to discursive identity and self-representation.' (p. 101) and 'Studies of writer identity and authorial voice in textbooks usually focus on professional identities ...' (p. 106)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of authorial voice - voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., 'Voice is a multifaceted metaphor that encompasses the ideas of agency, identity, authorship ...' (p. 69)
		Hanauer (2015)	quantitative
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poems written by ESL adult university students - analysis of the human reader ratings of the likelihood that two poems are written by the same poet and computational linguistics to explore differences in specific language features (e.g., imagery and emotive language) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poems written by ESL adult university students - analysis of the human reader ratings of the likelihood that two poems are written by the same poet and computational linguistics to explore differences in specific language features (e.g., imagery and emotive language)
		Hewings (2012)	qualitative
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research studies into the screen-based media (e.g., blogs and wikis) by university students doing a course in literature - textual analysis with the focus on the interaction of personal colloquial voice such as 'I'm not sure why ... I was expecting something more ...' and elements of academic style such as '... fails to conform to genre conventions in a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - voice, stance and identity are used interchangeably (e.g., 'While there is much overlap in the use of the terms "stance" and "voice", for the purposes of this chapter I refer to research which both focuses on the textual characteristics of writing involved in persuasion, evaluation, and judgements, more often grouped under the heading of <i>stance</i> and to

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Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Hirvela and Belcher (2001)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of ways.' (pp. 190–191) - interviews with graduate ESL students and their advisors, as well as the writing samples - textual analysis of the student writing and interview analysis looking at the most dominant experiences and attitudes, voice-related issues and the strategies the students explored to overcome them as they moved from being professional writers in their native language to being novice writers in English 	<p>voice, research which takes a wider perspective and in which the construction of writer identity is foregrounded.' (p. 188)</p> <p>- voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., 'Compositionists often speak of the need to help students acquire a voice or identity in their writing' (p. 83)</p>
Fløttum (2010)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles written in English by ESL scholars from different language backgrounds across a number of disciplines - textual analysis of the research articles 	<p>- cultural identity and voice are used interchangeably</p> <p>- a social view of voice as cultural identity being influenced by the discipline defining the similarities and differences between academic texts</p>
Ivančić and Camps (2001)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - graduate ESL university students' academic assignments - textual analysis with the focus on the development of an analytical framework for describing self-representation in writing, with the focus on the SFL's ideational, interpersonal and textual positioning via textual and student interview analysis 	<p>voice, self-representation and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., '... the lexical, syntactic, organisational, and even the material aspects of writing construct identity just as much as do the phonetic and prosodic aspects of speech, and thus writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer. In this sense, "voice" is not an optional extra: All writing contains "voice" in the Bakhtinian sense of reaccentuating "voice types", which locate their users culturally and historically.' (p. 3)</p>
Thompson (2012)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD theses - textual analysis of the voice elements 	<p>-voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g.,</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Xu and Hu (2020)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doctoral theses and the supervisors' feedback - textual analysis and student interviews 	<p>such as attribution and aversion</p> <p>' ... both writers manage to project voices that establish their own individual identity while showing some respect for disciplinary norms.' (p. 131)</p> <p>- voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., 'Although studying in a Western country, the students held strongly their national identity of being Chinese, an identity prioritising the voice of 'deference to authority' ...; the voice of 'deference to authority' roots inherently in Chinese culture.' (p. 728)</p>
Zhao (2017)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TOEFL iBT argumentative essays by adult ESL writers - the development of the analytical rubric of voice strength - textual analysis with the focus on the linguistic realisations of voice (e.g., hedges and boosters) from Hyland's (2005) model 	<p>- voice and identity are used interchangeably (e.g., the raters also agreed that if they could clearly sense the author behind the writing, they would tend to hear a stronger voice ... when rating that one writing sample used across all the think-aloud sessions, all the raters at different points started to comment in the identity of the writer ... ' (p. 210)</p> <p>- overall, an individual view of voice as writer's presence</p>
Aghbar and Chitrapu (1997)	qualitative	<p>Individual view of voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - essays of the adult ESL writers composed during a short one-week-long composition course at an American university - 'voice elements' in essays (i.e., presence of the author's position in the title, thesis and/or conclusion, raising issues based on personal experience/opinion, expressing agreement/disagreement in relation to the sources of information) 	<p>- an individual view of voice as voice is seen as personal opinion or experience of the author</p>

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Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Blair (1991)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - biographical narratives by ESL school students - textual analysis of voice as a reflection of individual perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -an individual view of voice as a reflection of personal 'knowledge and ... perspectives on life' (p.24) and being 'strong ... [and] honest' (p. 25)
Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - argument essays of the undergraduate students enrolled in an intensive writing university course - textual analysis of the voice features such as 'self-identification' and authorial presence (p. 245) and the overall writing quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an individual view of voice as an indicator of the quality of writing
Hewings and Coffin (2007)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online discussions and essays by master's students - textual analysis of the frequencies of first-person pronouns I and we as well as impersonal structures with it-clauses as well as the writer positioning as, for example, 'I as thinker' or 'Writer plus other(s)' (pp. 134, 135) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an individual view of voice as authorial presence
Jeffery (2010)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comparative analysis of rubrics and writing prompts in relation to authorial voice in the US secondary school context - teacher interviews revealing the teacher perspectives on voice in high school writing - textual analysis of essays and narrative composed in the secondary school setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an individual view of voice as 'style, stance and self-representation ...' (p. 197) the findings indicate the teachers hold an 'expressivist' or individual view of voice 'not compatible with sociocultural and functionalist understandings of voice' (p. 194)
Murphy (1991)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - university admissions essays - textual analysis with the focus on unique and original individuality of the author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an individual view of voice as 'spark and personality' (p. 36)
Pérez-Llantada (2009)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - published manuscripts in English by ESL scholars - textual analysis with the focus on first-person pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an individual view of voice as authorial presence defining the strength of authorial voice

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Petric (2010)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interviews with master's students - analysis of the participants' perspectives on voice
Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English writing composition textbooks - textual analysis with the focus on the underlying assumptions in relation to teaching authorial voice features inductively or deductively and the implications for ESL writers
Ritchie (1989)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - class observations of and interviews with students in a university beginner writing course
Strange and Alston (1998)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - journal entries by master's students and student interviews - insights into the strategies the students applied to acquire someone else's voices in their journals through the analysis of the journal entries and interviews
Social view of voice			
Bondi (2012)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - academic books and journal articles - discourse analysis with the focus on the lexis related to writer-reader interaction and general lexis (e.g., evaluative words, quantifies, approximators and self-reference) is analysed against the roles of the author within the discourse community such as 'the Recounter', 'the Interpreter' and 'the Academic Arguer' (p. 113)
Breivega et al. (2002)	qualitative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles written in English across ESL writers of different language backgrounds and disciplines - textual analysis with the focus on cultural identity in

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Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
de Magalhães et al. (2019)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - academic writing via the use of, for example, first-person pronouns and 'explicit and implicit references' (p. 218) - PhD thesis in English by ESL writers - textual analysis of online conversations among PhD writers and their writing instructor with the focus on the themes of agency, identity and voice in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as existing within different social and academic contexts
Fløttum (2010)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles written in English by ESL scholars from different language backgrounds across a number of disciplines - textual analysis of the research articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as cultural identity being influenced by the discipline defining the similarities and differences between academic texts - cultural identity and voice are used interchangeably
Fløttum (2012)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles in medical academic discourse - textual analysis looking at whether cultural identities [voice] or discipline conventions influence the construction of text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as being shaped by discursive conventions of academic writing in the field of medicine
Gross and Chesley (2012)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - medical research articles - textual analysis with the focus on the category of authorial voice, stance, in particular hedging in relation to contextual factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice, more particularly, stance, as being influenced by such factors as industry sponsorship, the journal where the article is published and the type of study
Gea-Valor (2010)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviews in academic and non-academic periodicals - textual analysis of voice markers (e.g., first-person pronouns, attitudinal and opinion markers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as influenced by academic or non-academic discursive conventions
Hyland (2002)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undergraduate ESL thesis in different disciplines as well as student and teacher interviews - textual analysis with the focus on authorial presence in the form of first-person pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as existing in disciplinary discourses

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Hyland (2005)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles from a number of disciplines and participant interviews - textual analysis and the development of the interactive model of voice that includes markers of stance and engagement (e.g., attitude markers and reader mention) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social view of voice as an interpersonal interaction in academic discourse
Hyland (2012)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - undergraduate students' reports compared to published articles - textual analysis of the voice features (e.g., hedges, boosters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as an aspect of writing 'represent[ing] an understanding of both academic conventions in English and the exigencies of the context of situation' (p. 148)
Kuhi and Behnam (2011)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a range of academic texts in applied linguistics - textual analysis of markers of stance and engagement such as boosters and directives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as being influenced by institutional and genre conventions
Lorés-Sanz (2011)	quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - published research articles in English and Spanish in Business Management - a comparative corpus study of the texts in relation to voice features such as personal pronouns in the two languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as being 'modulate[d] ... to comply with' the expectations of international publishing in the area of Business Management (p. 173)
Matsuda (2001)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - electronic discourse, a web diary, written in Japanese - textual analysis with the focus on discursive (e.g., self-referential pronouns or questions) and non-discursive (e.g., text layout, colour and images) features related to the construction of voice in Japanese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice that problematises the relationship between the individual self of an author drawing the conclusion that individual voice is not entirely the author's, as the voice elements are 'socially available' to choose from (p. 50)
O'Hallaron and Schleppegrell (2016)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elementary (grade 2 and 4) science arguments rated and commented on by the teachers, as well as the US educational national standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as determined by the discipline of scientific writing

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Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Pho (2008)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - and curriculum documents - review of the national standards and documentation and the textual analysis of voice features (e.g., formal style and objective tone) in the student texts - abstracts of published research articles in the fields of applied linguistics and educational technology - textual analysis with the focus on the rhetorical moves (i.e., presenting the research, describing the methodology and summarising the results) as well as the features of voice such as attitude markers and self-reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as being determined not only by the conventions of the discipline but also by the conventions and functions of the rhetorical moves within texts
Silver (2012)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introductions of research articles across disciplines - textual analysis of the articles with the focus on pragmatic and narrative voice within rhetorical moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice, focusing on the disciplinary variations of discourse conventions in academic writing
Stotesbury (2006)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - abstracts of research articles in Economic Sciences - focus on rhetorical structure, explicit evaluation and projection of authorial voice via the use of personal pronouns with the purpose of discovering sub-disciplinary variations. - textual analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social view of voice as being 'subfield-specific' (p. 79)
Dialogic view of voice Fallas Escobar and Chaves Fernández (2017)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - essays and surveys of the second year EFL university students enrolled in composition classes - quantitative textual analysis of voice features (e.g., hedges, boosters and lexical bundles) and qualitative analysis of the surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a dialogic view of voice as individual voices are silenced by the 'dry and dispassionate' academic writing conventions taught in the university composition classes depriving the students of the opportunity to develop individual authorial voice (p.98)

Table 2 (continued)

Author(s) and dates	Research methodology	Data and focus of analysis	View of voice in writing
Hyland (2008)	qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research articles across eight disciplines - textual analysis with the focus on language features of voice sing the interactive model of voice including markers of stance and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - a dialogic view of voice as in [a] academic writing, ... a site where this sense of voice is generally welcomed as readers often look for evidence rather than opinion. As a result, students learn to efface their personalities when they write ... ' (p. 5)
Ramoroka (2017)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - essays in English by EFL university undergraduate students in Media Studies and Primary Education, interviews with the student participants and their lecturers - textual analysis of the essays with the focus on the interactional metadiscourse markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - problematising the relationship between personal voice of the author and the limiting discourse, as the students' individual voice is 'overridden by the disciplinary conventions' and underlining the dialogic nature of academic writing where the interaction between the author and the reader is essential
Santos and Da Silva (2016)	mixed method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - abstracts published in English by ESL scholars - discourse analysis of culture-specific voice features (e.g., personal forms and long sentences) and academic guideline-indexed language choices (e.g., template sentences and nominalisations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dialogic view of voice where the tensions between the individual uniqueness of Portuguese voice and the discourse convention of publications in English - voice and identity are used interchangeably, e.g., ...signs of "a Portuguese identity" in author's voices such as personal forms, move signalling, ... (p. 1)

collective'. In the post-structuralist age, challenging the limitations of the binary vision of the world, identity is perceived not as either individual or social but rather as 'fluid, fragmentary, contingent' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 17). Being an integral part of identity, the notion of authorial voice has changed in line with the notion of identity, demonstrating the shift from individual to social to the eclectic combination of the individual and social aspects in their dialogic interaction with each other.

2.2.1. Individual characteristics of voice

The individual view of voice closely ties voice in writing to the spoken human voice in a sense that everyone's voice in both speech and writing is unique, distinct and identifiable. A number of the empirical and theoretical studies published between 1968 and 1999, for example, Elbow (1968, 1994), Ford (1991), Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) and Stewart (1969, 1992) as well as in few later studies reporting on the student and teacher perspectives (Jeffery, 2010; Petrić, 2010) see voice

through this individualistic lens as they discuss and assess voice in terms of how stylistically recognisable it is, as well as in terms of its presence or absence, authenticity and sincerity (See section 'Individual view of voice' in Table 1).

Indeed, the earlier definitions of voice in writing that emphasise individual voice often establish close connections between metaphorical written voice and the human voice as vocalisation. Similar to seeing the notion of voice as individual vocalisation, Elbow (2007) argues that writers may develop a written voice that is unique, stylistically recognisable and authentic. In the same vein, exemplifying the use of voice as an individual stamp, Stewart (1972), refers to an authentic authorial voice that sets a student apart from others despite the common experiences the writers may share.

Two of the studies conducted in 2010 indicate that the writers and writing instructors perceive authorial voice as a reflection of the author's individuality in writing. More specifically, Jeffery's (2010) study, conducted in a secondary school setting, showed that most of her 20 teacher participants defined voice from an individual expressivist perspective, seeing voice as authorial presence, authenticity and expending the metaphorical view of voice as vocalisation to an abstract notion of voice as 'the author's soul' (p.101).

In line with Jeffery's (2010) study providing some insight into how teachers may understand voice, Petrić's (2010) research demonstrates that students emphasise the individual qualities of voice as well. Interviewing 30 master's degree students about their understanding of voice in relation to their dissertation writing, she found that most of their definitions fell under the category of individual personal voice as many students equated voice with ownership, authority or opinion.

2.2.2. Social characteristics of voice

A number of publications in the late 1990s problematised the individualistic assumption in the notion of voice as presented in writing textbooks and instructional practices (Bowden, 1999; Harris, 1997; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996) (See section 'Social view of voice' in Table 1).

Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996), for example, associated the notion of voice with the ideology of Western individualism, pointing out that the concept of individual voice, prevailing in North American composition classrooms, is hard for both ESL and non-ESL students to grasp. Later, Hyland (2002, 2008) pointed out the importance of social context in constructing voice as writers choose specific discourses and align their work with particular texts and authors when constructing authorial voice. In particular, Hyland (2002) shows that writers within a discourse community often use similar ways to project their authorial voice. In this corpus-based discourse analysis, he explores the use of directives in undergraduate L2 writers and published academic authors and draws a conclusion that both experienced and novice writers are driven by the scope of the social and disciplinary conventions. In the same vein, Gea-Valor (2010) exploring voice through various linguistic features in book reviews, suggests that an author's apparent textual voice is not independent of social aspects of writing, such as genre and audience, but rather is tied to those aspects in crucial ways.

2.2.3. Dialogic characteristics of voice

Two theoretical publications by Matsuda (2015) and Tardy (2012, pp. 34–48) point out that various conceptions of voice exist on the individual-social continuum (See section 'Dialogic view of voice' in Table 1). On the one end of this continuum, there is a personal orientation or traditional conception of voice that sees voice as an expression of unique individuality. On the other end of the continuum, there is a socio-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 within genres, disciplines and discourses. Occupying the space between these two extreme positions is another conception of voice: a socio-constructivist or dialogic view (Matsuda, 2015; Tardy, 2012, pp.

34–48). In particular, Matsuda (2001, 2015) and Prior (2001) point out that this dialogic view of voice draws its inspiration from the sociocultural vision of language expressed in the works of Bakhtin (1981) and accounts for both the individual and social nature of voice, recognising how individuality and social conventions are interdependent.

To shed light on the dialogic conception of voice, this literature review takes a closer look at the idea of the mutual coexistence and dialogic interaction between individual and social aspects of language that inspired this eclectic view of authorial voice. More specifically, this dialogic view of language is emphasised in Bakhtin's (1981) work 'Dialogic Imagination'. In his collection of essays, Bakhtin (1981) talks about 'every utterance' being in part the language of an individual (participating in the centripetal forces of discourse) and in part belonging to 'social and historical heteroglossia' or multi-voicedness ('the centrifugal, stratifying forces' of discourse) (p.272). Bakhtin's analogy between the dialogic relationships of individual and social in language and the centripetal and centrifugal forces in physics also suggests the unavoidable confrontation between the oppositely directed vectors, which ultimately keep the system of discourse and, more broadly, the system of language in balance. Indeed, Bakhtin's (1981) view of dialogue is rather broad and all-inclusive as it also comprises the interaction between the individual writer and the audience, which results in co-construction of voice and involves the impression the text leaves on the reader. In the same vein, Tardy (2012, pp. 34–48) warns that if the writer's predictions about the reader do not coincide with the discourses that readers bring to a text, a writer's voice may 'misalign with the identit[y] ... assigned by readers' (p.40).

Matsuda (2001) also sees voice in terms of its effect on the reader. He describes voice as 'the amalgamative effect of the use of language features that authors 'choose from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires' (Matsuda, 2001, p. 41). However, even more importantly, Matsuda's definition offers a solution to the 'false dichotomy' (Tardy, 2012, p. 39) of individual versus social, accounting for both individual and social aspects of voice mediated by written discourse in its dynamic contexts.

2.3. Empirical research on voice in writing

2.3.1. Focus on individual voice

The bulk of empirical studies that emphasised the importance of individual aspects of voice date back to the 1970–1990s (for example, Aghbar & Chitrapu, 1997; Blair, 1991; Hamalian, 1970; Murphy, 1991; Ritchie, 1989; Stewart, 1992; Strange & Alston, 1998). Although these studies vary in their participants and settings, they are similar in their strong advocacy for teaching students how to project their individual voices (See section 'Individual view of voice' in Table 2).

In the tertiary setting, for example, Stewart (1992) strongly advocates for an authentic and unique voice to be taught in composition classes for university students. He likens a writer's voice without individuality to Brahms's Violin Concerto in D Major without 'the essential passion and fire ... which are the fundamental essence of the piece's greatness' (p.280). He even extends the metaphor to compare the composition of a text without the uniqueness of individual voice to the construction of a human being unable to breathe and essentially losing its human qualities. After the analysis of the works of a number of experts in composition teaching and some professional writers, Stewart (1992) concludes that 'any good writer has a single identifiable voice' (p.288) and warns the reader about the dangers of writing without individual personality and experience as potentially leading to all the evils of modern society, which is already too materialistic and essentially soulless.

In the high school setting, Hamalian (1970) and Murphy (1991) share the results of their intervention programs for L1 high school writers, emphasising the importance of an original and sincere voice in writing. Hamalian (1970) starts his paper by saying that '[m]uch bad prose written by students sounds as though it had been ground out by a

sausage machine or produced with labour pains' (p.227). Through this utilisation of vivid imagery in his opening statement, Hamalian (1970) not only projects his individuality but also reinforces his argument in favour of a unique personal voice. Then, after looking at the experimental projects such as The Voice Project at Stanford University as well as his own teaching experience, he highlights the different ways of projecting individual voice and even suggests that elements of creative writing can be fed into expository writing in order to make it more original, unconventional and closer to common speech. '[O]nly in his [or her] own unique, personal, individual voice', Hamalian (1970) concludes, 'unrestrained and uninhibited can ... [the writer] communicate to us the experience of being alive ... ' (p.230). Murphy (1991), reporting on the results of her intervention program aimed to invoke spark and personality in her composition students' voices, provides a list of techniques for finding individual voice in writing. Among other recommendations, these techniques include a reminder that voice in writing has a connection to the spoken voice and should be clear and sincere.

Another study conducted in the high school setting by Blair in 1991 deals with ESL writers underlined the importance of sincere individual voice in writing. Blair (1991) analyses narrative voices of immigrant children in her English composition classes in a secondary school in the US. She looks at how the incorporation of the immigrant literature as a stimulus for the ESL students helped her invoke 'private' 'intimate' voices, which are more common for writing in L1 rather than in L2. These 'strong, honest voices' Blair aims to bring forward in her ESL students 'emanate from their knowledge and perspectives on life' (Blair, 1991, pp. 24, 25). By providing an example of one of her students displaying powerful individuality and authority in her voice, Blair celebrates her pedagogical success in creating the conditions where her students' individual voices are clearly heard in their compositions.

It should be noted that most of the studies focused on the individual perception of voice, were conducted in English composition classes where participants composed mostly narrative prose, a genre stimulating the projection of unique individuality on the part of the writer. In fact, focused on individual characteristics of voice and being mostly intervention action research studies aimed at addressing immediate problems in composition classrooms, these studies do not apply any concrete analytical frameworks for voice analysis, relying on a very intuitive perception of voice.

2.3.2. Focus on social voice

The social and discoursal realisations of voice are brought to the fore mainly by means of the analysis of the conventions of disciplines, cultures and genres within which the texts are created (See section 'Social view of voice' in Table 2). A number of empirical studies have explored voice to investigate variations related to the social and cultural context, for instance, how the disciplinary field or the genre have impacted the writer's voice (for example, Bondi, 2012; Breivega et al., 2002; Gross & Chesley, 2012; Hyland, 2008; Hyland, 2012; Fløttum, 2010; Fløttum, 2012; Kuhl & Behnam, 2011; Lorés-Sanz, 2011; Pho, 2008; Stotesbury, 2006; Silver, 2012). Studies by Breivega et al., in 2002 and then Fløttum in 2010 and 2012, comparing scientific articles in different languages and different disciplines, concluded that the impact of the discipline on the writer's voice is greater than the impact of the first language. Another study examining the variations of different 'disciplinary voices' was conducted by Hyland (2008), who compared specific interpersonal features that construct authorial voice in research articles in different disciplines. Using his interactional model as an analytical tool, he found more stance markers in the soft than in hard disciplines and explained that this was due to the different disciplinary communities' ways of knowledge construction.

Other studies of variations of authorial voice in different disciplines have focused on specific parts of research articles. Both Pho (2008) and Stotesbury (2006), for instance, focused on abstracts of research articles. Pho (2008) compared abstracts in the fields of applied linguistics and

educational technology and showed similarities regarding various linguistic features of authorial voice in one discipline. Stotesbury (2006), in turn, studied the abstracts in the subfields within economic sciences and found a more impersonal stance in the abstracts in humanities than in natural sciences. In the same vein, Silver's (2012) analysis of introductions from microbiology, history of science and art history showed significant variations in the ways the writers construct their voice. Silver (2012) identified two main voices as 'paradigmatic' or conceptualising voice and 'narrative' voice (p. 203). The paradigmatic voice was the most common in introductions from microbiology where the authors were more objective and empirical. In contrast, the anecdotal narrative voice was found in introductions from the history of science and art history where the writers were more inclined to engage the reader and experiment with their authorial voice to achieve a rhetorical purpose.

When studying authorial voice within one discipline, cultural differences seem to come to the fore. For instance, Lorés-Sanz (2011) examined 'the interplay of cultural and disciplinary factors' (p. 173) in research articles within the discipline of business management, written by L1 and L2 writers in English and Spanish. Focusing on the use of first-person pronouns, she found most author visibility in the English texts written by L1 writers and least in the Spanish texts written by Spanish writers.

A cultural impact from a different angle was shown in Gross and Chesley's (2012) study. They showed how contextual aspects such as industrial funding might influence the writer's voice. Analysing the use of hedges in research articles, they found that researchers presented their results 'in a way that encourages readers to give more credence to their claims than their evidential base permits' (Gross & Chesley, 2012, p. 90), and they found fewer hedges in articles with industrial funding than in those without.

Genre, being an essentially socially conditioned way of communication, also has an impact on the writer's voice. For example, Bondi's (2012) comparison of academic textbooks and journal articles revealed that evaluative language and the voice of the 'Academic Arguer' is more prominent in journal articles whereas the voice of the 'Recounter' and 'Interpreter' is more prominent in textbooks.

The most recent studies that focused on the contexts of authorial voice, while differing greatly in the scope, methodology and aims, highlight similar issues related to the topic of authorial voice in academic discourse and come to very similar conclusions regarding the importance of rhetorical conventions of the disciplines and genres for students' authorial voice. For instance, O'Hallaron and Schleppegrell (2016) and Ramoroka (2017) point out that there is little consensus among writing instructors about what authorial voice is and what linguistic choices student writers should make in order to project their voices more effectively. Another concern expressed in most recent studies is related to the vulnerability of the individual voice of an author when confronted with the conventions of the genres they compose (de Magalhães et al., 2019; O'Hallaron & Schleppegrell, 2016; Ramoroka, 2017). DeMagalhes et al. (2019), O'Hallaron and Schleppegrell (2016) and Ramoroka (2017) concur when it comes to the discussion of the implications for the teaching of authorial voice, pointing out that it is essential to make ESL students aware of the importance of authorial voice in academic writing and the language features that help project voice. They also indicate the importance of teaching authorial voice explicitly, bringing to the fore specific requirement and expectations of the disciplines and genres the students write within.

2.3.3. Focus on dialogic voice

The significance of empirical studies that take a dialogic perspective on voice cannot be overestimated because they reflect the most recent eclectic view of authorial voice through both individual and social lenses. In these studies, equal importance is attached to the individual and social aspects of voice perpetually co-existing in any text while at the same time being in constant confrontation with one another (See

section 'Dialogic view of voice' in [Table 2](#)).

For instance, challenging the conventions of 'the monolithic essay', [Devlin \(2016\)](#) compares the academic style guidelines with the actual work produced by academics, drawing attention to the significant discrepancies between the two. While describing a standardised academic essay as a 'dry', 'flat', 'formulaic', 'fossilised', 'turgid and dull', 'lamentable restriction', 'clogged with nominalisations', she argues that in the times of digital literacies, when information is passed on via a variety of modes and in an increasing number of unconventional ways. As a result, the individual voice of a writer is essentially at war with the postulated genre of an academic essay. Elaborating on the metaphor of war, [Devlin \(2016\)](#) talks about academic writing conventions 'killing the pronouns' and 'strangl[ing] the individual authorial voice' (pp.34-37).

In the same vein, two recent empirical studies by [Fallas Escobar and Chaves Fernández \(2017\)](#) and [Santos and Da Silva \(2016\)](#) deal with the challenges strong authorial voices come across when trying to be heard within the conventions of their disciplines and prescriptive genres. [Fallas Escobar and Chaves Fernández \(2017\)](#) found that although some ESL students in university composition courses in a Costa-Rican university have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of boosters/hedges and stance-taking strategies, they showed a certain resistance to the inclusion of these voice-related language features in their essays. This finding was illuminated by their opinions and perceptions that the use of lexical bundles, in particular, obscured their voice and felt alien to them. Some students altogether failed to see how some linguistic and rhetorical devices could translate into the development of their own voice. The findings indicate the difficulty the writers encounter when trying to find the middle ground between the common discursal features of academic writing and their desire to project their own voice. All in all, [Fallas Escobar and Chaves Fernández \(2017\)](#) conclude their study with a warning that 'the composition class can become a space where attempts at nurturing students' voice can actually threaten, suffocate or suppress it' as the students are exclusively taught the genre conventions or 'the contextually valued ways of academic writing' (p.121).

The problem with projecting your personal individual voice in academic writing seems to become even more urgent when it comes to more mature and experienced ESL writers as is shown in the study by [Santos and Da Silva \(2016\)](#). Their study of abstracts by Portuguese linguists traced a gradual disappearance of individual features of authorial voice, such as frequent use of self-mention, over a period from 2001 till 2010, as the Portuguese researchers were trying to comply with the norms of academic writing in English. [Santos and Da Silva \(2016\)](#) conclude their study by saying that the writers are torn between the standards of academic writing in English and their individual voice in Portuguese.

Rather than focusing on either individual or social characteristics of voice, the above-mentioned studies deal with the dialogic interplay and even a rather confrontational dialogue between individual aspects of authorial voice within sociocultural contexts of academic writing.

3. Discussion

This configurative review aimed to provide insights into authorial voice in writing as a concept in the research literature. The review revealed that in the literature on voice in writing the notions of writer's identity and writer's voice are often used interchangeably. Thus, in order to provide a clear definition of authorial voice, it was necessary first to differentiate the notions of voice and identity in writing. In fact, the review revealed some studies that indicated the difference between the two notions. Drawing on [Matsuda's \(2001, 2015\)](#) explanation of voice in writing, this literature review concludes that authorial voice is the identity of the author reflected in written discourse, where written discourse should be understood as an ever evolving and dynamic source of language features available to the writer to choose from to express their voice. To clarify further, authorial identity may encapsulate such extra-discursal features as race, national origin, age, or gender. Authorial voice, in contrast, comprises, only those aspects of identity

that can be traced in a piece of writing. Not only does this definition solve the issue of the confusion between the notions of the writer's voice and identity by separating the two concepts, but it also solves the false dilemma of the binary, either individual or social, view of authorial voice revealed by the literature review. Indeed, the definition incorporates both individual and social dimensions, encapsulating the context-dependent and changeable nature of individual voice in writing.

This review also revealed that the most recent empirical studies bring to the fore the dialogic interaction between the unique personal voice and the restrictions social or discursal conventions, especially the conventions of academic writing, place on the expression of authorial individuality.

It is hoped that more empirical studies on voice in writing will take the dialogic perspective and look at authorial voice via this non-binary eclectic lens. In particular, research taking the dialogic perspective on voice is crucial in the academic writing settings as it is in this context that the tension between the individual uniqueness of the writer's voice and the limiting discursal conventions appears.

4. Limitations

This review is limited in several respects. First, despite the limitation of looking at the research published only in English, the review looked at the studies conducted in different countries. Second, the sample of this review is void of grey literature (e.g., working papers) and includes only published work. Despite the fact that this inclusion criterion decreased the sample size, it arguably improved the quality of literature included in the review. Third, the review looked at the literature on authorial voice in writing without discriminating according to gender, linguistic or cultural background of the participants or their age with the purpose of gaining a broader understanding of the concept of voice in writing. The review looked at the studies conducted in various contexts, from high school to thesis and scholarly publications as in this review the development of authorial writing is seen as a continuum across various settings starting from high school and going all the way to doctoral writing. A more discriminatory approach may shed more light on the differences between the research focused on writers of different gender, first language, country of origin, age or more specific context of writing in academic settings.

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