

Articulating new directions in Identity Construction from a Discourse Analysis

Perspective

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Abstract :

Language is essential to every aspect of human existence. It is a reflection of people's worldviews and identities. It is also a social identification medium used by communities to decipher themselves as a cohesive group of individuals with shared objectives and perspectives. This demonstrates how language serves as an identification avenue and a basic bedrock for action and interaction sine qua non. These language merits are saliently manifested in either spoken or written discourse. Accordingly, language and discourse play a crucial role in the formation and negotiation of identities in these and many other ways. It is also significant to note that, of the repertoire of identities, linguistic identity is the most obviously observable characteristic that is used to position and vibrate a variety of identifications. As such, the purpose of the present study is to investigate some of the discursive processes that are deemed essential and

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substantial to identity construction in discourse as indexicality, contextuality, positioning, and categorization, and to demystify some of the key identity voices as empirical and phenomenological voice . Therefore, identity from a discourse analytical perspective continues to be a vital realm to delineate the key constituent blocks which are constantly multiple and flexible.

Keywords: discourse analysis, linguistic identity, social identification, voice.

المخلص :

اللغة ضرورية لكل جانب من جوانب الوجود الإنساني. فهي انعكاس لوجهة نظر الناس في العالم وهوياتهم. وهي أيضاً وسيلة هوية اجتماعية تستخدمها المجتمعات لفك رموز نفسها كمجموعة متماسكة من الأفراد الذين لديهم أهداف ووجهات نظر مشتركة. وهذا يوضح كيف تعمل اللغة كوسيلة هوية وأساس للعمل والتفاعل لا غنى عنه. تتجلى مزايا اللغة هذه بشكل بارز في الخطاب المنطوق أو المكتوب. وعليه، تلعب اللغة والخطاب دوراً حاسماً في تشكيل الهويات والتفاوض عليها بهذه الطرق وغيرها الكثير. ومن المهم أيضاً أن نلاحظ أنه من بين ذخيرة الهويات، تعد الهوية اللغوية السمة الأكثر وضوحاً التي تُستخدم لتحديد موضع وتأقلم مجموعة متنوعة من الهويات. وعلى هذا النحو، فإن الغرض من الدراسة الحالية هو التحقيق في بعض العمليات الخطابية التي تعتبر أساسية وجوهرية لبناء الهوية في الخطاب مثل الإشارة والسياق والتموضع والتصنيف، وإزالة الغموض عن بعض أصوات الهوية الرئيسية كأصوات تجريبية وظاهراتية. لذلك، تظل الهوية من منظور تحليل الخطاب مجالاً حيوياً لتحديد الكتل المكونة الرئيسية المتعددة والمرنة فيها باستمرار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب، الهوية اللغوية، الماهية الاجتماعية، الصوت

1. Introduction

Human communication pertains to sharing information, carrying out actions, and expressing emotions and thoughts. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, it entails communicating to one another our individual identities as well as those of the social, ethnic, and regional groups to which we belong, our positions on moral and ethical matters, and the political affiliations that we endorse. Not only do we use language to define ourselves, but we also use it to classify and evaluate others, to recognize them, to make comparisons and point out our differences, and to identify ourselves with them. In these and many other ways, language and discourse are essential and substantial to the construction and negotiation of identities. Although identity and discourse analysis have always been closely related, identity has only just

come to be recognized as a valid and independent topic of research in discourse analysis and many other social science fields.

The purpose of the research is to unfold how discourse serves as a crucial metric to demystify a myriad of voices and unravel a variety of spaces in identity construction. Another focus on which this paper serves is to demonstrate that discourse is an important zone for the formation and negotiation of identities and that linguistic identity is a core component that vibrates miscellaneous positions. On the other hand, the aim of this paper is to confirm a salient rationale emerging from the junction of language and discourse. Firstly, it reveals the discursive processes that are essential and substantial in identity formation, such as indexicality, contextuality, positioning, and categorization. Secondly, the premise supporting this reasoning assumes the presence of two realities in discourse, which are phenomenological and empirical. Hence, to achieve the aims of the research, the following questions have been raised:

What are the emerging emphases that identity exhibits?

How does identity predicate in spoken discourse?

How does identity predicate in written discourse?

In response to these questions, this paper will endeavor to highlight a comprehensive analysis of the new resurgence of interests that identity exhibits and to explore the discursive moorings that underpin identity construction, either in spoken or written discursive modalities. The analysis will also seek to reflect on the nature and features of identity.

2. Identity Conceptualization: A Myriad of Spaces

There are numerous challenges in life that we must face full on until we discover a way to overcome them. Fitting in is a true issue that everyone will experience at some point in their lives. The close and complex relationship between language and identity raises the possibility that an individual's identity may only be fully realized within the particular linguistic and cultural context of a particular ethnic group because humans are linguistic and cultural beings.

According to Paulin Djité, who states that "identity is the everyday word for people's sense of who they are" (2006, p.6). This "sense of who they are" can be used as a springboard to further develop the concept. In a similar line several academics make a distinction between two identities: collective and personal. They refer to the process that connects the former with the latter as

"identification". It is evident that most discourse analytical studies prioritize this collective identity, primarily referring to it as "social identity." There is considerable agreement that identity is defined as the verbal construction of belonging to one or more social groups or categories. This term highlights the significance of belonging to a group. To rephrase Djité's essential premise, we may argue that "people's sense of what, who, or where they belong to" is widely used to understand identity.

Examining these two facets of identity, it is salient that identity is more than just a fascinating theoretical concept that is thrust upon individuals. First, humans' need to belong to or be a member of a group simply reflects the widespread interest in social identification. Furthermore, it is evident from the self-definition element that identity frequently serves as a tool for agency and a source of meaning for the individuals involved. Thus, the term "identity" in social science refers to a feeling of belonging that reflects people's drive to define others and themselves.

On one end of the continuum, the contemplation of one's own nature is the first space. Here, the traditional understanding of the self as an autonomous, separate entity has been criticized, leading to a shift towards anti-essentialism. The other end of the continuum, concepts regarding the function of interpersonal communication in the formation, enactment, and negotiation of identities include a second space. In this approach, the emphasis has moved from seeing identity as a personal statement to appreciating the importance of human relationship as the process through which identities are created. From another angle, theorizing the connections between language and identity is a third space where changes have occurred.

Even with the social sciences' growing interest in identity and the explosion of books and articles on the subject, definitions of identity are surprisingly hard to come by, and the ones that do exist exhibit a startling diversity of language and emphasis. Identity can be understood as a characteristic of the individual or as something that arises from social contact; it can be thought of as existing in the mind or as an emerging actual social behavior; it can be linked to the group or to the individual. In addition, it might be seen as essentially relational or personal. Thus, the decisions made have had a significant impact on how identity is conceptualized as well as how techniques for researching its tangible expressions in language are studied.

In addition, and to try to capitalize on this issue, many researchers asserts that identity is a far more flexible concept than can be described in terms of a core set of unchanging common traits. They further stressed that identity is something that one "does," or "performs," and recreates via actual encounters,

discourses, and exchanges between people rather than something that one "has." Therefore, the definition of an individual or member of any social group is not only liable to change depending on the context and is always evolving, but it also depends on one's actions and communications. The relationship that exists between identity and activity or performance suggests that projecting one's identity is associated with specific actions and words in real-world social interactions or communication contexts.

3. Discourse Analysis and Identity

Several definitions of discourse have been offered, including the institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems, an identifiable collection of claims that cohere together, and a collection of social actions that generate meaning. Discourse is also a set of statements that provide a language for discussing a topic as well as a method for developing a certain form of knowledge about it. As a result, discourse refers to both the act of creating knowledge through language and representations, as well as the institutionalization of knowledge, which adjusts and introduces new standards. Although discourse is not fully accessible, it may be traced back to the texts that form its foundation. Discourses are realized through texts, but they encompass much more than words, including the behaviors and larger social and cultural framework that surround and influence the creation and consumption of texts.

On the same line of thought, texts serve three purposes: ideational (forming forms of knowledge and beliefs); interpersonal (assisting in the construction of specific forms of self or social identities); and relational (fostering social interactions). According to discourse analysts these activities make up discourse as a type of social practice and action. However, Discourse analysis encompasses a variety of methodologies. For example, some studies concentrate on the structure of text and talk, while others discuss discourse as a more abstract and general phenomenon that refers to a way of communicating about a specific topic.

Despite these distinctions, which make it "difficult to speak of 'discourse' or even 'discourse analysis' as a single unitary entity," discourse analytic approaches are linked to interpretative and reflexive styles of analysis and share a "common attention to the significance and structuring effects of language," according to several researchers. Therefore, researching discourse involves researching language usage as a social practice. For people who were included in and targeted by specific categories, these classifications consequently had an impact on their "possibilities for personhood." Thus, a focus on how social members classify themselves is inherent in discourse analysis. From another parameter, identity is a continuous process achieved through social interaction,

notably language and communication. As people claim different identifiable social or shared identities, discourse serves as a shared social resource that shapes identity rather than plainly reflecting the beliefs, attitudes, and identities of distinct selves.

As such, social categorization plays a vital role in this process as different person classifications are created, which have implications for both the persons who are classified and the people who create the categories. As a result, meaning and relationship building in speech is a component of identity construction. Research has been particularly useful in demonstrating how categories are a contingent, unstable consequence of certain historical conditions, even though they may appear natural and clear (Hall 1997). Discursive studies of identity, therefore, demonstrate that the individual is a fragmented and ambiguous construction that derives its meaning and self-definition from relationships with others and context.

4. Spoken Discourse as a Zone of Identity Manifestation: Casual Conversation as an Instance:

The continuing, situated interpretation of a speaker's communicative intents is known as spoken discourse, and it is fundamentally shaped by the addressee's actual and anticipated responses. As a result, everyone involved must actively cooperate in the process of creating discourse. Casual discussion is a crucial location for the social production of spoken discourse where people feel most at ease, spontaneous, and themselves during such interplay. Furthermore, a variety of things that happen in casual talks are important for talking about language and identity for asserting individuality "through the exploration of differences" and building unity "through the confirmation of similarities».

Additional research backs up this notion, casual conversation is actually a highly structured, semantic activity driven by purpose, despite its seemingly meaningless appearance and unimportant subject matter. It is a crucial linguistic space for the negotiation of significant aspects of our social identities, including gender, generational location, sexual orientation, social class membership, ethnicity, and cultural and group affiliations. These discussions are driven by interpersonal needs to constantly establish who we are, how we relate to others, and, how we perceive the world.

Researchers such as Egginson and Slade (1997) further contend that conversing casually is not a way for people to "kill monotony," but rather a means of negotiating social identities and extending, defining, and improving interpersonal relationships. Like all spoken interactions, casual conversations are influenced by the relationship between the people speaking, how often they

interact, how involved they are in each other, and how much they feel like they belong to each other. These factors all have an impact on the language used in casual conversations.

Therefore, when we talk or write, we are relating to others in specific ways and sharing with them "something about ourselves. Therefore, identity is a collaborative and multilayered process. Furthermore, expressing one's identity through words is not the only means to define oneself. Instead, it is a socially constructed identity that individuals constantly co-create and re-create via their relationships with one another. This results in various approaches to identity construction with various individuals under various circumstances. Therefore, a person's identity is not something they acquire early in life and retain forever. Instead, identity is fluid and multifaceted, manifold and ever-changing, something individuals constantly create and reassemble via their interactions. With one another and the outside world. Numerous researches indicate identity is a "negotiated experience" in which we define who we are by the way we experience ourselves as well as by the ways we and others reify ourselves.

As a result of our actions and how we choose to belong to or not belong to a group, identities are continually being built and negotiated. When we participate more in certain communities of practice, our identities continue to grow. Moreover, these identities are predicated on shared norms, accepted cultural conceptions, and the ideologies that guide our usage of language, both spoken and written. Examining the construction of spoken discourse requires at least four lenses: indexicality, contextuality, positioning and categorization, and bringing them to focus on identity:

4.1 Indexicality: A term or phrase that is connected to many meanings (or referents) at various times is known as an indexical expression. A range of paralinguistic and non-linguistic cues, including hand gestures and the participants' shared experiences, can influence how indexical statements are understood during a conversation. Philosophers and linguists typically use the term "indexicality" to distinguish between classes of expressions (e.g., noun phrases that refer to a class of objects) whose meaning is claimed to be specifiable in objective, or context-free terms, and those whose meaning is conditional on the situation in which they are used. However, in a crucial sense—that is, a communicative one—the importance of a language statement is always dependent on the context in which it is employed. In this way, pronouns, place and time adverbs, and deictic expressions are only a few examples of how situated language generally functions.

The first sort of order in indexicality is referred to as "indexical order," which is the finding that indexical meanings appear in patterns that provide impressions of stability and resemblance, which can be thought of as "types" of predictable semiotic practice. "Register" is a prime example of this; it refers to a set of grouped and structured language forms that indicate particular social personae and roles, can be used to structure conversational activities such as turns at talk or storytelling. When one writes or speaks in such registers, they are inserting themselves into identifiable (normative) repertoires of "voices"; they can then be a guy, a lawyer, a middle-aged European, an asylum seeker, and so on. Therefore, the metapragmatic organizing principle underlying what is commonly referred to as the pragmatics of language is indexical order.

Direct indexicality refers to a semantic relationship that exists between language and a certain location, act, activity, or identity. One example of this process is the American-English address phrase "dude". The phrase "dude," which is most widely used by young white males, refers to a casual solidarity posture, implying that the addressee and speaker are friendly but not intimate. Young white American males are more likely to embrace this informal solidarity viewpoint than men from other identity groups. Thus, Dude gently assesses youthful, white masculinity. However, these abstract theories of indexicality disregard the actual speaking context, which includes the speech event and the speakers' identities as determined by other perceptual modalities, such as vision.

4.2 Contextuality: The idea that how people present their identities or assign identities to others not only critically depends on the context in which the discourse is taking place, but also shapes that context, making identities relevant and consequential for subsequent talk.

4.3 Positioning: Social agents take on a variety of subject positions within their social contexts. This is determined by the diverse relationships that individuals value at different times and in various sociocultural circumstances. Instead of the static concept of role, scholars reformulated it as the discursive formation of a variety of selves, placing it in a more dynamic framework. The concept emphasizes the idea that identities are relational in nature, as people continuously position themselves and are positioned by others, and that they are multiple because they connect to the many social settings and discursive practices in which people participate. Several experts correctly say that identity is a continuum that runs from "ingroupness" to "outgroupness," where each individual might occupy a variety of roles.

4.4.Categorization: It is undeniable that social identity categories are associated with frequently stereotypical roles, circumstances, traits, and ideologies; these associations then become ingrained in group representations and shared knowledge, which in turn contribute to broader ideologies and beliefs. Categorization is an additional discursive process that is essential to communication and identity development. Identity categories that are employed in discourse represent the types of identities that are more often used in a certain society and historical period in addition to the inventory of identities that are available in the particular circumstance. For instance, the division of people into ethnic groups such as whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc. is a powerful tool for identifying people in the USA, and discourse frequently uses these formulations.

5. Written Discourse as a Zone of Identity Manifestation: Academic Discourse as an Instance

The concept of identity in written discourse is a miscellaneous phenomenon that encompasses two types of realities : phenomenological reality, which is found in people's experiences, and empirical reality, which can be measured and characterized, such as textual features. When attempting to comprehend identity in written discourse, it is critical to differentiate between the writer's identity positions that are contained outside of discourse, such as demographic data , and identity that is constructed and negotiated within discourse and is represented by ideas and a myriad of voice. It is also more than just the collection of its constituent textual elements. As many researchers note, it is actually a social construct that arises from the intricate interplay between many aspects of writing, such as the writer-reader connection, which is mediated through the text within a specific situational context .Therefore, comprehending textual elements is not enough when analyzing identity in written discourse; one also needs to be aware of writers' and readers' perspectives and experiences with identity.

It is worth mentioning, however, that over the past forty years, the concept of voice has undergone significant change. At first, it seemed like a very natural, symbolic use of body language, which is distinctive to each person and may be utilized to identify them. Because writing was seen as a manifestation of the true self, it concentrated on the distinctive individual style nature of writing. A fundamental tenet of this early understanding of voice was that the identity of the writer resided in the material world outside of discourse and was projected through it. Authenticity, or the truthfulness of one's self-representation, was considered a crucial aspect of writer identity in this notion, as noted by identity analysts, who highlighted the necessity of having an authentic self when writing. Although there are different definitions of voice, they appear to be convergent in

the published literature. In order to better understand identity in writing, discourse analysts provide a thorough framework. They propose four elements of writer identity: the "autobiographical self," the "discoursal self," the "self as author," and the "possibilities for self-hood."

Discursively constructed identity in written discourse, or voice, is further defined by IvaniĹc (1998) and Johnstone (1996) as "the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoire" (p. 40). They address the idea of the discoursal self and how it relates to self-representation in academic writing. They also make the point that writers have a variety of options when it comes to how they represent themselves, their relationships with readers, and the knowledge they are discussing in a work.

To do this, one can employ stance elements like hedges (might, perhaps), boosters (certainly, in fact), self-mentions (I, we, mine), and attitude markers (unfortunately, surprisingly), which convey their viewpoint on a proposition. Authors also use personal asides, reader pronouns, appeals to common knowledge, instructions, and questioning as engagement techniques within the framework of one's autobiography.

To describe this aspect of self, discourse analysts draw on the concept of a performer—someone who incorporates social situations and prior experiences into the performance of self. They also draw a comparison between the autobiographical self and the notion of "habitus, which is that of "a person's disposition to behave in certain ways. The discoursal self is the impression created by the features of written speech, sometimes referred to as voice. This idea, which is consistent with Goffman's theory of character as it is portrayed through the writer's performance, is the essence of voice in written discourse. The choice of topic, debating points, and attention to historical detail are examples of non-discourse factors that influence the overall impression. While the autobiographical self plays a role in these assessments, they are also the result of deliberate attempts to construct the self from the viewpoint of the target audience.

Additionally, The experience of being the author that the writer perceives and projects in written discourse is known as the self as author, which is a component of the discoursal self. This concept is comparable to the "author-function" that Foucault (1977) refers to. It is the sense of authorial identity that the writer cultivates and that readers take away from it. Depending on the writer's and the reader's perceived level of confidence and authority, the same piece of writing may be evaluated and judged differently. Gee's (1990) concept of "'Discourse' with a big 'D'" as a "identity kit" (p. 142) connects with the idea of possibilities for self-hood. In other words, discourse is more than just a collection of textual elements; it also represents accepted social norms and

behaviors that enable individuals to create their identities and modes of living. The writer can create an identity that is suitable for the circumstance by utilizing a variety of discourse elements and persuasive techniques from different genres.

Together with the writer and the text, Analysts acknowledge the reader's participation in the definition of voice as the effect. This definition treats voice as a phenomenological term; the reader ultimately perceives the writer's discursive identity, which is formed by the writer's decisions and the textual expressions of those decisions. Putting feature-based definitions of various components of writer identity into context, this definition also takes into account the indexicality of certain textual qualities in establishing social meaning. Put another way, the writer's identity is a component of the interpersonal meaning that is negotiated through the relationship between the writer and the reader, which is mediated by the text, rather than existing alone in the writer, the text, or the reader.

Examining writer identity from a different perspective, a topic that has captured the interest of many academics is the functions and features of texts that contribute to the formation of writer identity (also called textual realizations of identity). Therefore, by identifying and describing the ways in which identity is articulated or generated through textual aspects, text-oriented definitions of voice aid in making some of the discursive repertory accessible. However, an understanding of identity is inadequate without considering the choices made by the writer and the readers' perceptions, which are prompted by a range of discursive and non-discursive variables.

6. Conclusion

The study of identity from a discourse analysis perspective will continue to be an important agenda and a primordial necessity in the field of research. Descriptive studies of various lenses, processes, features and functions will no doubt continue providing important place and space of the role of both spoken and written discourse in identity construction. Identity is a complex and resilient phenomenon, and as such,

- Our identities are further developed as we increase our participation in particular communities of practice. These identities, further, are based on shared sets of values, agreed-upon cultural understandings and the ideologies which underlie our use of spoken and written discourse.

- Since identity is the result of both historical and relational experiences, it is therefore positional and situational. It is situational and strategic rather than essentialist or permanent.

- People are identity carriers because they are context-governed beings. Their identities are not singular

-The polyvalence, or multiplicity, of identity is one of the first points on which most scientists agree. A person may possess multiple identities, each with varying degrees of significance over time.

-The recognition of one's identity by others is a necessary component of identity formation.

-Therefore, a person's identity is not something they acquire early in life and retain forever. Rather, it is something dynamic, flexible, volatile and fluid.

The aim of the study is to elucidate how discourse functions as an essential measure for deciphering a multitude of voices and revealing a range of places in the process of identity building. This research also aims to show that language identity is a fundamental element that vibrates various viewpoints and that discourse is a crucial space for the construction and negotiation of identities. On the other hand, the purpose of this research is to validate a prominent theory that arises from the intersection of discourse and language. First of all, it makes visible the discursive processes—indexicality, conceptuality, placement, and categorization—that are fundamental and significant in the development of identity. Second, the idea behind this logic presumes that there are two realities present in discourse, which are phenomenological and empirical.

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